

Church of the Rock
St. Albans VT
January 19, 2014
Sunday AM 1 & 2

Stewardship From the Kingdom Perspective

INTRO: Over the past number of weeks, Pastor Roland, has been teaching us about the stewardship of our finances. This is important! Did you know that a major part of Jesus' teaching was about finances? I believe he did that because he knows how easily our money and our things can consume our attention and priorities.

Last week, Pastor Karrie, shared with you on the big and important topic of stewardship of our life and the importance of being obedient to Christ and His teachings. We are all stewards or caretakers of the resources that God has placed in our care: Our money, our time, our relationships, our skills and gifts. We have a responsibility to God and will answer for how we have used these resources that He has placed in our care.

Text: Ephesians 4:1-16 (NLT)

Ephesians 4
New Living Translation (NLT)

Unity in the Body

4 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. ²Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. ³Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. ⁴For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. ⁵There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.

⁷However, he has given each one of us a special gift^(b) through the generosity of Christ. ⁸That is why the Scriptures say,

"When he ascended to the heights,
he led a crowd of captives
and gave gifts to his people."^(b)

⁹Notice that it says "he ascended." This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world.^(c)¹⁰And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Today, I hope to share with you some thoughts from Scripture that you may have heard before...but if you look deeper, these things could transform your entire life and perspective! I hope today to give you a new perspective on your role and purpose in the world!

I. God's Coaches: The Pastors.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NLT)

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³

A. Explain.

1. I believe that calling your Pastor a "Minister" is a misnomer (wrong name).
2. I believe that it has contributed to a consumer mentality and perspective in the US church: The "Minister" does the "Ministry"...we watch and enjoy! That's what we pay them for...right?
3. This is not Biblical. In the scripture the Church...the people of God ARE the "MINISTERS!" They do their "Ministry" in the marketplace as they live their lives!
4. Being a part of the church is a participation sport, not an observation event.

B. Illustrate:

1. Football: 22 people on the field desperately needing a rest, being watched by 60,000 people in stands, who desperately need some exercise.

2. Can you imagine what a football game would be like if everyone came down off the stands and joined in the game! Wouldn't that be crazy fun?
3. The Pastors are really, biblically, supposed to be the Coaches (Not the players on the field)...and everyone is supposed to be out of the seats in the stands, playing the game! And the audience... the King of Kings! God himself...cheering us on!
4. Let me put it another way...how would north western Vermont be different if some missions agency suddenly set over 300 full time, on fire, Jesus loving missionaries loose on the St. Albans area? Take minute! Picture it!
5. Now realize...God has already done it...in the church family called Church of the Rock! ... that God has placed us here to bring his life, and hope and joy to this corner of the world! We ARE his sent ones! We are ALL His "ministers" to this broken world!

C. Apply:

1. Have you ever heard of the "80/20 Rule" – Normally in church work, 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people.
2. It doesn't have to be that way...actually, it shouldn't be that way. Our job as Pastors is to help prepare and equip you to be good stewards. People that will one day stand before the King of Kings, he will review your life with you, and then hopefully say... "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter in to the Joy of the Lord!"
3. Before anyone gets too freaked out by what I am saying...please understand this...serving the King with your personal mix of interests, passions, gifts and abilities is what God has created and designed you to do! And God is pre-planning and setting up great stuff for each of us to be involved with!

4. Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

5. God has and is creating opportunities for YOU to be involved in HIS KINGDOM work in this world!
 - a. You have a place and a purpose!
 - b. That place MAY be in some role in the church family, it may be in some role in the community.

- c. Person at grocery store saying that their PT, seasonal job was their opportunity to reach a specific group of people who don't know Jesus!
 - d. There are others who say things like "My job is my ministry!" but if after 5 years of being there you have had no significant spiritual conversations, you have not built any significant friendships that go beyond the work environment, and NO ONE at your work knows that you are a follower of Christ...you might want to re-think whether or not you are actually doing any ministry.
 - e. Are you making God's Kingdom real in the World?
6. Let me take it a step further...there are things that you will never learn, and ways that you will never grow and mature in Christ if your Christian life is summed up by sitting in a pew on Sunday mornings.
 7. Getting involved in what Christ is doing...that is the FUN stuff! Being there and being a part of the action when lives are changed and people encounter Christ's love...that's where the thrill is!
 8. There are spiritual muscles that you need to exercise and use to learn and grow in Christ...you will ONLY use them and grow in these areas as you get involved in God's Kingdom work and DO SOMETHING!
 8. Please remember: What you do right now is far less important than the fact that you are involved and doing something with Christ!
 - a. Dusting pews- 3 yrs later, Pastoring.
 - b. Like riding a bike...you can't steer unless you are moving.
 - c. Just do something! Get involved somewhere!

D. Coaching Question(s):

- 1. How have you been personally learning and growing in Christ lately?**
- 2. How are you investing in God's Kingdom personally?**

II. God's Goal for us and our Gifts: Maturity, Wholeness and Unity.

Ephesians 4: 13-16 (NLT)

¹³This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so

clever they sound like the truth.¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

- A. Explain: Look at the Words the Apostle Paul uses to describe God's goal for us as "the church:"
1. Unity in our faith. (Unity is not sameness, but oneness of direction...that direction is toward Christ!)
 2. Knowledge of God's Son. (Knowing who Jesus is and what He is like...reading the scripture, spending time with Him in prayer and worship, learning how to live a life of obedience to Christ and his teachings.)
 3. Mature in the Lord.
 - Measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ (living a Christ-like life).
 - Not tossed around by new teachings.
 - Not deceived by lies and false teachings that sound like truth.
 - Instead: We Speak the Truth in Love.
 4. The Result: A community of faith that builds, encourages and helps itself to grow, heal, and move forward as each member (person) is doing what God created them to do!
- B. Illustrate: God's goal is a healthy, growing, nurturing, self-caring and outward reaching church body! The problem is...it's full of broken people!
1. The Perfect Church...just fell out of being perfect the moment you walked in the door!
 2. So, we have a lot of grace for one another, because sooner or later, you will need a lot of grace too!
 3. What happens if you don't use a part of your body? It atrophies. It get's weaker, and smaller. How do you strengthen it? Use it.
- C. Apply: God's Word has promised that if we are all doing what we are were created to do in this body...this church family...that we will ALL benefit and grow...and I believe that the body it's self will grow as others are drawn in to become a part of this dynamic, purposeful, encouraging, healing, helping, reaching community!
- D. Coaching Question(s):
- 1. What does it really mean to grow in spiritual maturity?**

2. What does “Biblical unity” mean and how important is it really?

III. God’s Perspective: The Kingdom.

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NLT)

. ⁴For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. ⁵There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.

A. Explain: How can we do this? How do we get started on the journey?

1. Albert Einstein Quote: “We can not solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them”

2. Behaviors are an outflow of our words, our words flow out of our thoughts, our thoughts are shaped by our beliefs, our beliefs are built on our paradigms (World View). (Matt 15:1-20)

3. So if you want to change your life...you must change your world view and your paradigms.

B. Illustrate: I want to share with you three paradigms...that I call The Ladder of Christian Maturity: 3 Steps of “Christian” Perspective: Maturity and growth

1. Self Focused Perspective. Individual Christian Life.

- a. What’s in it for me?
- b. Consumer Christianity.
- c. Focus on Individual salvation.

2. Local Church Focused Perspective:

- a. Local Church or Faith community.
- b. What is in it for us? (What is tangible, local, right at hand.)
- c. Focus is on my churches’ needs. “We” focused.

3. The Church (universal) Focused Perspective:

- a. The Body of Christ. God’s big story of human history all over the world!
- b. Focus is: What is God doing? and What does God want?
- c. Like the trucker who drove off the bridge rather than hitting stopped cars.
- d. God’s Big Eternal story that we are a part of, but he is the star of!

- e. What seems right and proper and justifiable from one perspective can be meaningless from a higher perspective!
- f. The more mature you are, the less selfish you are.

C. Apply:

1. 3 levels applies to Political involvement...
 - a. Those who are involved in politics to keep their personal property tax rates as low and possible, and keep “undesirables” out. In national politics, those who will say and do anything to keep themselves in office and keep the money flowing.
 - b. Those who want what is best for the community. Those who will vote what they believe is best, even if it costs them money, support or an elections.
 - c. Those who do what is right, because it’s the right thing to do.
2. 3 Levels applied to family...
 - a. Like a baby...the world revolves around you. “It’s all about me! It’s not about you! ‘Cause you should do things my way!”
 - b. Member of a Family or community. Sometimes that reality doesn’t hit until you become a parent...my life is NOT my own! I am responsible to others and responsible for others!
 - c. Role as a member of the human race. (Like Corrie Ten Boom’s family during the Holocaust...they were not Jewish, yet they put their own lives at risk to help people did not share their faith, and some that they did not know...because they were human beings!) You understand that you have a responsibility to serve the world and make the world a better place. It’s a totally different way of living!
3. 3 Levels applied to the life of Jesus (Crucifixion)...
 - a. On the individual level...the pain of the Cross was too much to bear... “If it be possible, take this cup from me!”
 - b. On the group level...it didn’t make sense...He had gathered a group of thousands of followers, he had done great miracles, including raising the dead, and Jews from all over the world were present...it was a perfect time to revolt against the Roman empire and re-establish the Kingdom of David in Jerusalem.
 - c. From the Kingdom perspective...He needed to die, so that all the world might be saved!
 - d. And that is level of thinking, believing and living that Christ is calling us too!

D. Coaching Question(s):

- 1. What level do you tend to live on?**

2. What gift has God placed in your life to be used for His Kingdom?

Conclusion:

Challenge Questions:

- * How have you been personally learning and growing in Christ lately?**
- * How are you investing in God's Kingdom personally?**

- * What does it really mean to grow in spiritual maturity?**
- * What does "Biblical unity" mean and how important is it really?**

- * What level do you tend to live on?**
- * What gift has God placed in your life to be used for His Kingdom?**
- *What is God asking you to change or do NOW?**