

## **“Yours, Mine, and Ours”**

**First Presbyterian Church  
Pastor Dave Carlson  
November 17, 2019**

**New Testament Lesson: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11**

**Old Testament Lesson: Leviticus 27:30-34**

When I do pre-marriage counseling for a couple leading up to their wedding, I always ask about money – whose money is it? Younger couples typically come in planning to maintain separate bank accounts, and maybe form a joint account for household expenses.

I guess that could work, but anyone who’s been married knows that money is a big issue. With money, it’s not really about whether you have a lot or a little or something in between. It’s about what money means to us.

We go to war over money, people get murdered for money, some go hungry and homeless while others can’t spend enough – or make enough, in their vain attempt to seek happiness through money. And of course, sometimes marriages rise or fall because of money or the lack there of.

Money just has a way of driving a wedge between people. That’s why I encourage couples to bring all their money together for their use as a couple and as individuals – what’s yours is mine and what’s mine is mine – oops!?! Did I say that wrong? I did. Just seeing if you’re awake.

Of course, the goal of marriage is “what’s yours is mine and what’s mine is yours” – sharing everything together as each person supports the needs and desires of the other, with no dollar-sign-shaped wedge getting between them. That’s my desire for couples getting married, and that was the Apostle Paul’s desire for people coming together as churches.

In today’s New Testament lesson, Paul is writing to the church members in Corinth, encouraging them to not let money become a wedge between them and their Christian brothers and sisters in Macedonia. Turns out the Corinthians were rich and the Macedonians were poor. And Paul, being a good pre-marriage counselor, wants them to come together in the larger Church family of faith.

Last week I preached on Love and Marriage, pointing out that the gift of Christian marriage – and all heart-to-heart relationships, everything from best friends to married couples – is a foretaste and celebration of our union with God, through Christ. The greatest gift we have from God is our close, loving relationships with one another, lived out in Christlike fashion.

Today, as we contemplate – and perhaps revisit – our pledges to the ministry of First Church, let's not let money or the love of money put a wedge between us and God, between us and our commitment to Christ.

What causes that dollar-sign-shaped wedge to wiggle its way in between us and God? For the Corinthians, it was outside forces putting a strain on their financial resources. Not only did they have to meet their own day-to-day needs, but they had other things to save for and give to.

Well, that's life, isn't it? There are always demands on our money, and plenty of places to put it to good use. Most of them are quite rational – the cost of school, retirement, future big expenses, recreation and family outings. Neither the Apostle Paul nor I nor First Church wants you to neglect any of these.

And you don't have to, even when giving generously to the church. As Paul says, "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work."

This means that the true benefit of giving to the church is your sharing in every good work of the church – whether it be the ministry and outreach of First Church or the regional and global ministry of Presbytery and the PC(USA).

Through the gifts and talents that you bring to First Church, you are part of something so much bigger, something reaching all the way up to God and all the way back to God's people, everywhere. As Paul said, "You share abundantly in every good work." Truly, you do, as a member or friend of First Church.

Not only do you have a share in the good works of Christians everywhere, but your giving of time and talents and treasures at First Church is directly tied to the blessings of your life. God blesses you when you bless others.

As Paul says, "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness." In other words, when you give of yourself through the church, God multiplies that gift and grows it as a blessing to others.

But there's a catch. The blessing is proportional to the giving. Or as Paul says, "The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." So, how do we know how much to give?

Well, the only way our money and time and talents become a blessing to us or anyone else is if we dedicate them to God's use. And the only way to do that, is to follow God's will, God's instruction, God's teaching when it comes to giving. As it says in the Leviticus passage read by Bob this morning, one tenth of all that the Lord has given to us has already been set aside by the Lord as holy. This means that we are free to use and enjoy 90 percent of everything the Lord has given to us, including our money, while 10 percent should be set aside as holy to the Lord.

Now, I don't know how much anybody here gives. That's between you and God. Frankly, my only concern about what anybody gives is that your giving be a blessing to you and yours and ours, that is, to the people we serve – our church members and friends and our community members and people throughout the world.

There is no doubt that church members and friends, community members and people throughout the world will be – and are being – blessed by First Church. And that is a blessing to you, as a member or friend of First Church. God is pleased by your faithful participation in church.

God's greatest desire for you individually is that you be blessed in abundance through your giving and participation. And that means stretching yourself to give a tenth of your money each year to the Lord, at a minimum. If you are already tithing – giving a tenth – Amen to that! Yuri and I are, and then some.

Yuri and I give a tenth of our income because we trust God more than we trust this world. We give a tenth of our income because we love God more than we love money. We give a tenth of our income because it is returned to us 10 times over, in the blessings of our lives, yes, but even more importantly, in the faith that it builds in our hearts, an undying faith that we can do what God desires of us without fear of want or need.

This doesn't mean that people who give to the Lord do not have want or need. They do – Yuri and I and everybody does. But what it does mean is that our wants and needs are not that important to us compared to our faith in God.

Paul says that when you give as the Lord desires – joyfully, whether out of abundance or need – “You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us,” through the church.

People praising God because of you – now that, my friends, is priceless. That is a blessing beyond measure. That is what God desires for us and for you and for all God's people –

blessings beyond measure, through our prayerful, faithful giving of our time and talents and treasures. Amen.

### **PASTORAL PRAYER**

Lord of all Creation, by your command we, the daughters of Eve and the sons of Adam, have been placed as caretakers and stewards of this world we call home.

To us you have given the right and responsibility to manage this earth and the wealth it produces.

Some of us have more placed in our keeping, others less, but we share the same obligation to use and manage the resources you have placed in our temporary custody as wisely as we can.

Thank you for this great privilege and responsibility. Thank you for the abundance of your love and provision.

We offer praise to you for all the blessings of our lives, and for your call upon us to use those blessings to bless the lives of others.

It is in Jesus Christ that we pray, using the words that he taught us, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**