
God and Money

A Sermon by the Rev. CanonCarolynne G. Williams
The 24 Sunday after Pentecost
Ephesians 1:11-23

In Christ we have obtained an inheritance. That inheritance puts all of us, as Christians, into a place of responsibility. That acceptance of responsibility toward God allows us to manage what we have been entrusted with.

To restate the words from our September 2010 stewardship letter:

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, to each of you who has financially supported the cathedral this year. Every cent has been used with prudence and with hope. And God is using your gifts, too. The use of time and talent is certainly an integral part of our ministry on and off of the hill of this magnificent place of God." (*Cathedral Times*)

This question is asked in Luke 16:12. The disciples are having a conversation with their leader. The leader says, And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?

It is suggested that we, as saints of God, cannot faithfully serve God and wealth equally. We will embrace one and despise the other. Where our treasure is, is where our heart is. We, in our human condition serve first where our heart is.

God uses money to strengthen our trust in Him.

It is often through money that God can clearly and objectively show us that God is in control. If we trust God and accept our positions as stewards and managers of God's possessions, then stewardship and our relationship with God will become congruent. The deeper and truer meaning of giving back to God will escalate to the top of our list for living and giving.

God uses money to develop our trustworthiness. Our lives, revolve around making, spending, saving and using money. If God can trust us with money, God can trust us, as Saints of God with even greater responsibilities.

God uses money to demonstrate God's faithfulness.

Moses reminded Israel that it was God who would give them the power to make wealth. We are encouraged through that example of the Israelites to remember that our true security is not in our check books, but is in God.

When we as saints of God have a strong and lively sense of the continued goodness of God, the creator of the world, then our trust moves from being only dependent upon ourselves in our minds eye, and moves toward being filled with wisdom. Wisdom that comes from the one who views us all as saints.

Building relationship with God leads to building meaningful relationships with those outside of ourselves. Wisdom moves us all toward being filled with the inheritance that we are expected to share with others. Wisdom that comes from not wringing our hands and heads in these anxious times. God given wisdom that enables one to not obsess about what we shall eat, drink or wear.

Not worrying does not imply that these things don't matter. Of course they matter. The point is looking closely at the order of priorities. God first, returning to God first what has been given freely to the saints of God, and everything else will follow in its natural order.

When we put the world first and all that is in the world, material possessions, we will find that it becomes moth eaten in our hands. When we put God first, especially as saints of God, we will continue to find that the world and all of its complexities will be added for good measure. Remembering of course, that God is in control.

God will honor those who honor him.(1Samuel 2:30)

"Warren Buffet was a timid man who shied from confrontation and needed people to cushion him from life's rougher edges. His fears were personal, not financial; he was never timid when it came to money. His passionate yearning to be rich gave him the courage to ride his bicycle past the house with the awful dog and throw those last few papers in Spring valley, where he grew up. It sent him to Columbia, seeking Ben Graham, after Harvard turned him down. It made him put one foot in front of the other, calling on people as a prescriptionist, while they rejected him over and over. It gave him strength to return to Dale Carnegie after losing his courage the first time. It forced him through the decisions in the Salomon crisis to make his great withdrawal from the bank of reputation."

It lent him the dignity to face years of almost intolerable criticism without counterattacking during the internet bubble. He had spent his life contemplating, limiting, and avoiding risks, but in the end he was braver than he realized himself.

His passion for business and others lead him to give most of his fortune away.

Given away to the Bill and Melinda Gates foundations. Entrusted to people who are prudent and financially responsible for every penny.

Warren Honored God. God is honoring Warren.

We all have an inheritance. An inheritance that says that we in this place which touches many other places and people throughout the world must honor God. We must honor God if we truly believe that we have an inheritance. Not the material kind, even though is often necessary, but an inheritance that says we are indeed putting God first. We are trusting God with what has been given to us. Let us account for this gift in ways that count.

As we go to the altar with our pledge or our intention to pledge to God, let us remember that we are ultimately strengthened by our trust in God.

Repeat the words of Hymn 293. Verse 1:

*I sing a song of the saints of God, patient and brave and true,
Who toiled and fought and lived and died for the Lord they loved and knew.
And one was a doctor and one was a queen, and one was a shepherdess
on the green: they were all of them saints of God and I mean, God helping, to be one too.*