

Stewardship Sunday 2018 BJK

There is a story about American comedian Jack Benny. Jack had a reputation for his stingy character. One day, in a skit on his radio show, a would-be robber stopped him on the street, poked a gun into his ribs, and said, "Your money or your life." Jack didn't say anything. After a long pause, the robber said, poking his ribs several times. "Do you hear me? Your money or your life." Benny quipped, "I'm thinking, I'm thinking." A pastor was inspired by this story and used the theme from that skit for his sermon on stewardship Sunday. The title of his sermon : "Your Money or Your Life." After the sermon, the choir started singing their anthem of the day. The title of the anthem was the familiar "Take my Life."

Stewardship Sunday is often misunderstood as a fundraising occasion for the church. But actually stewardship is not about giving to the church. There are more than 2,300 verses in the Bible that are related to money, wealth and possessions. One third of Jesus' parables are related to these topics. The teachings of the Bible about money and wealth are not about you should give to the church so that your church can pay the bills or pay its parish share or even pay your clergy. So what is Stewardship about if it's not about bills or parish share or clergy stipend?

In fact, all the teachings about Stewardship in the Bible begins from this. Genesis Chapter 1 verse 1: 'In the beginning *God* created the heaven and the earth.' This is the first thing the Bible tells us from the very beginning. 'In the beginning *God* created the heaven and the earth.' Everything we have, all the stuffs we enjoy are here from God and through God.

Now don't get me wrong, I am not saying having is bad. Or you should feel guilty about having things. I too have things. I like my things. MY smart phone. My lap top. My car. I like My playstation. I have a house. Well I don't own a house. I live in a house that the church has let me live. What the Bible tries to

tell us is not whether having things are good or bad but how we should deal with things. Because there is a temptation in the way we deal with things. This temptation has a name. Meism.

In Meism, everything is about me. I have just said, I like my things. MY smart phone. My lap top. My car. I earned it. I deserve it. It is all about me. It is all for me. It is here because of me. Some might say. So what? What's mine is mine. I don't see any problem. But this often goes further step. Not just saying it's all mine. But it becomes me. I have this nice jacket so I am cool. I drive this car so I am successful. I live in this place so I am important. We do all this don't we? I do. If we do not take care in dealing with the things we own, there is a danger that we may become what we own.

We own things and enjoy things and soon things begin to own us. From it's all mine, it's what I own to saying I am what I own.

It doesn't stop there. If I am what I own. If my worth is defined by my net worth. If I am only as good as what I own. Then soon I am gonna want more. Because I can never have enough. I can never have the best. There will always something better. There will be always someone have more.

More. This is the very first temptation that was ever made by the devil. When God created the world. He made Adam and Eve and gave them everything they need. He said to them. See all this. It's all yours. I want you to enjoy and thrive. I want you to be happy. But then, the devil approached them. He asked Eve "Is it true that God said you cannot eat from any tree in here?" Eve said, "No. We can eat from all the trees in here." The devil said, "Oh yea, but not that one. You see, that one is better one. That one will make you better, like God."

That is exactly what Satan's temptation to Jesus was about. Jesus was God's chosen one. He was given God's grace abundantly. He had the power to get anything and achieve anything. The devil knew this. So he approached Jesus in the

same way he approached Adam and Eve. "Are you really Son of God? Why don't you then turn these stones into bread. Show how good you are. Why don't you stand on the highest place and rule over all. Prove yourself that you are the best. Or why don't you jump so that God will send his angels to serve you. Just to show all how important you are." Isn't this the same temptation we face in our daily lives?

What is at the heart of Satan's temptation here? Meism. It's all about me. And that is what exactly Jesus stood against. 'It's not about me. My power is not about me. My status is not about me. My gifts are not about me. They all come through God and for God. I am not what I own. I am God's chosen one. His son. His daughter. He made me in his image. And he blesses me richly every day.

Stewardship is not about opening your wallet. It's about opening hearts and opening your eyes, to be able to see the blessings that you have day by day. To see how much God loves you. How much he has given to you. Blessings can only be blessings when we are able to see them as blessings. Gifts can only be gifts when we are to see them as gifts. The devil always tries to make us to be blind to the blessings we have. Instead he makes us to see what we don't have, to want more. Stewardship is about making declaration; that we are not what we own. We are God's children. His beloved sons and daughters. Everything we have is through God and for God. So we rejoice not in things we own but in him. And we rejoice by giving thanks to him.

Stewardship Sunday is about rejoicing in the abundance of God's grace. So let's just take a moment and see what blessings are there that we can be thankful for as a church. So we are blessed with so many young members of the church and a vibrant Junior Church. We are blessed with wonderful music and a wonderful choir. We are blessed with so many families who come for baptisms, weddings and funerals. We rejoice in our worship, beautifully decorated every week by our flower ladies. They are amazing. We are grateful for the

fellowship and the discipleship we share. We were able to pay our full parish share as a member of this Diocese. We are grateful for the welcome of this church to those who are homeless and vulnerable through Night Shelter. Oh, Let's not forget the roof. It doesn't leak! No buckets are required. And many others things. In All Saints' we have been blessed so richly. And it is your generosity through which we receive and share those blessings.. You have been so generous. All of you. So thank you. And God bless you.

God has blessed this church so much through you for his work. So we have been discerning where God is calling us to be. So we are in the process of drafting our Mission Action Plan. We believe that God is calling us to grow. Not just in numbers but in faith, in love through discipleship, studying, prayer. We believe that God is calling us to serve our community and neighbourhood through pastoral visiting team and outreach work such as Night Shelter. We also believe that God calls us to flourish and to know that we are loved. So we would like to enrich our common life in the parish through events and children's work.

There are plenty reasons for us to rejoice. And we are excited about where God is calling us to be. So let us be encouraged, let us be thankful. Let us conclude with the prayer for our Mission Action Plan.

Gracious Heavenly Father, help our church here at All Saints' to grow in holiness, unity, effectiveness and numbers. Draw us even closer to you and to those around us. Give us enthusiasm in our faith, and wisdom in sharing it with young and old. Open our eyes to new opportunities, our lips to sing and speak of you, and our hearts to welcome the stranger. Grow your kingdom in us and in the world, through the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.