


“A Generous Spirit”
Sunday, November 5th, 2017
22nd Sunday after Pentecost

 **Proverbs 11:24-25a (NRSV)**

*“Some give freely, yet grow all the richer;
others withhold what is due, and only suffer want.
A generous person will be enriched.*

[On Screen]

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks, be to God.

[2ND Service: Affirmation of Faith]

[Hold up packet of seeds] This little packet contains hundreds of seeds.

Some of you are gardeners and know way more about this topic than I do.

But, I wonder what happens if I plant a single seed from this packet.

My guess – Not much! The seed might grow, or it might not.

Planting a single seed will not produce a very large crop of anything.

So, what happens if I plant this whole packet of seeds?

I think I'd have a better chance of getting something to grow and that my yield would increase dramatically.

Let us pray... Lord, scripture frequently uses images of planting and harvesting as metaphor for the way we utilize the many blessings you have shared with us. This morning we pray that you will be with us and help us to discern your will for the garden you have given us to tend. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

[MESSAGE]

It's interesting to me that so much of our faith journey is depicted in terms of planting seeds.

Evangelism is sometimes equated with planting seeds; often, these are seeds we will never see fully grown.

We imagine our own faith as a seed planted in Sunday school or VBS that grew over time into the mature faith we hold today.

Stewardship is one more area where planting results in growth that we may not have anticipated.

It's about each person giving what they can so that gifts can be combined to produce a bountiful harvest in mission and ministry.

That is the basis for the United Methodist apportionment system; churches combine their resources to have a bigger impact in the world.

When we look at the image of the seed packet, we realize that, if you give a little, you will not receive much in return.

However, if you give a lot, you will experience great joy.

God increases our capacity to give as we give more.

Don't get me wrong – this **IS NOT** the “*prosperity gospel*” where you give your money to the church expecting to get rich in return.

When we give money to God, we will not necessarily be blessed with monetary riches, but we might be blessed in other ways.

Here are just a few examples of the blessings realized from generous giving.

- You will experience joy in knowing that you have helped someone else.
- You will better understand the Christian perspective on money and possessions.
- You may realize that God's blessings, not things, bring true happiness.

Some of us are old enough to remember Bing Crosby in the movie, **White Christmas**, singing:

*“When I’m worried and I can’t sleep,
I count my blessings instead of sheep.”*

This movie, like so many films from the “*Golden Age of Hollywood*,” was really about helping people unselfishly.

In this case, a group of entertainers helping a man save his family business.

For their efforts, each character received their reward in the form of some intangible, but precious blessing.

Take a minute to watch this classic movie sometime; you may be surprised to find a stewardship message in a Bing Crosby movie.

I'd like for you to think about a time when you helped someone else by sharing your blessings.

How did you feel knowing that your action helped another person?

How did you feel at a time when someone helped you through a tough time?

How does sharing what we have with others show God that we appreciate our blessings?

These are the kind of questions we need to be asking ourselves as we notice how much we have.

We need to remember the first of the Ten Commandments: ***“I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me.”***

It's really about our priorities and goals.

Aesop tells of a dog with a fine slab of meat in his mouth who crossed a bridge over a river and saw his reflection in the water.

Thinking it to be another dog with a larger piece of meat, he let go of his own his own and dived at the other dog to take it.

He surfaced with nothing, and his dinner washed away in the current.

This fable is an example of what happens when we make money or possessions our most important goal — ***we can wind up losing everything!***

The Bible reminds us that if we make money our goal, then we will never be satisfied or have enough money.

So, the question is: How do you think God wants us to use money.

I believe that God wants us to be **good stewards** of money.

One of the primary definitions of the word
“steward” is: *“a person employed to manage
someone else's property.”*

You see, our money is truly **God's** money.

God has given us money to manage in God's best
interest.

Money, if used wisely, can be a source of blessing.

However, money is certainly not our only blessing
or even the most important blessing.

Having a generous spirit means realizing that
everything we have been given is intended to be
used to glorify God.

We honor and glorify God when we care for God's
people on earth.

The local church is the primary place for mission,
ministry, and disciple-making.

Your generous spirit keeps the local church alive.

[Closing]

I invite you to pray a prayer like this one every day:

Dear God, too often I take your blessings for granted.

Thank you for everything that you have given me. I have so much compared to many people. Help me to share generously with others. I want to be a generous giver of my time, my money, and my things. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.