

Giving
Mark 8:34-38
March 12, 2017

We are in the second week of our sermon series, Rooted. We are getting ready for Good Friday and Easter and through what we traditionally call Lent, we are looking at the disciplines of faith that keep us rooted in Jesus Christ. This morning we come to the Spiritual Discipline of Giving.

This discipline recognizes that all we have is God's. My favorite book of the bible is Haggai – a random minor prophet jam packed with words of wisdom and guidance for our everyday life. One of the common themes in the book is God's frustration over how the people are living. They are caring only for themselves and their houses instead of caring for the poor in their midst and the temple that needs rebuilt. In one of God's instructions to the people, God says, "Your silver is mine, and your gold is mine." And then God will go on with instructions on how the people are to live. God is saying to them thousands of years ago, and to each and every one of us that everything we have is God's to begin with. That's key for us as we begin to discuss this spiritual discipline.

ALL WE HAVE AND OWN IS GOD'S.

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. (Haggai 2:8 NLT)

So, that's the first underpinning of the spiritual discipline and the second key to this discipline is that our giving is a spiritual issue. "How we use our money, for ourselves, for others and especially for God's Kingdom is a spiritual issue." (Whitley, 169) Money is one of the taboo conversational items in our culture. And it is very easy for us to compartmentalize our lives. I believe in Jesus, but Jesus doesn't affect my wallet. But actively practicing this spiritual discipline reminds us on a daily basis that our giving is a spiritual issue.

GIVING IS A SPIRITUAL ISSUE.

"How we use our money, for ourselves, for others and especially for God's Kingdom is a spiritual issue." (*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald Whitley, p. 169)

As I mentioned earlier, we are walking with Jesus through what is often called the Passion – Jesus' journey to the cross and resurrection on Easter morning. Today our scripture begins the journey. The eighth chapter of Mark is a turning point in the gospel. From this moment on, Jesus prepares for Jerusalem and passion week. He sets his face on Jerusalem. The gospel becomes fast paced with the use of the word "immediately" and every decision leads Jesus to the cross. This morning Jesus prepares his disciplines for the next eight chapters of the book. READ Mark 8:34-38

Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. ³² As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. ³³ Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's." ³⁴ Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ³⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. ³⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? ³⁷ Is anything worth more than your soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

So, an 'immediate' thought about this scripture is that it has very little to do with giving and how we use our money. AND that's why I LOVE this passage for this morning, because it has everything to do with money ... and actually every aspect of our lives. Jesus is preparing to give his life on the cross – every decision from this moment

on leads to Good Friday and eventually Easter Sunday. And at the very beginning, Jesus gathers the disciples and the entire crowd of people to define a disciple. He begins this discourse by describing his own life. As always in Jesus' ministry and in this gospel – his actions set the tone for our lives. And so, he describes what will happen to him. ***Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead.***

Now here comes Peter. Poor Peter, we often talk about how Peter is the one to really get it sometimes and the one to REALLY screw up sometimes. And this would be one of those “Oh Peter” moments. Peter does not like what Jesus has to say. Peter doesn't want to hear about the Son of Man, Jesus, being rejected and dying. That's not Peter's definition of Messiah. And so Peter takes Jesus aside. ***As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things.***

Here's the thing about Peter in this moment and Jesus points it out right quick. ³³ ***Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. “Get away from me, Satan!” he said. “You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's.”*** I really like how it is translated in the NRSV and I think that gets back to the original Greek. ***“Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”*** Peter is the disciple in the gospels that embodies what it means to be human. In moments like this, we are to put ourselves in Peter's shoes. And Jesus points out that Peter is thinking about worldly things. Peter is more concerned with himself and the success of the world than Jesus defining life as a disciple. Now getting back to this morning's spiritual discipline, this is exactly how we respond to God when we withhold our finances and our giving. We are setting our sights on human things and not on God's world, divine things.

WE DISOBEY GOD WHEN WE WITHHOLD OUR GIVING.

“Get away from me, Satan!” he said. “You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's.” (Mark 8:33 NLT)

Jesus here is defining Discipleship and stating that he is going to give his life on a cross. Jesus doesn't withhold from God – instead he gives absolutely everything he has, right down to his very life. And this is how Jesus says we are to live. He doesn't mince words or pull punches here. The scripture goes on to say he gathers the crowd. That's important for Mark, because now all who believe Jesus are included in his next words ... including us.

³⁴ ***Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ³⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. ³⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? ³⁷ Is anything worth more than your soul?***

Jesus gives his life and instructs all of his followers, the disciples and the greater crowd that following means giving everything. Hanging onto your life will lose it. ***“What do you benefit if you gain the whole world, but lost your own soul in the process, is anything worth more than your soul?”*** How many of you value your money more than your soul? You can have all the money you can accumulate and leave a huge insurance plan and 401k and lose your heart in the process. Your giving is an extension of what is going on with you and your heart and your relationship with Christ. Christ gives everything; he literally gave his whole heart and life to his love for us. And he asks that very much from us. When we withhold, and feel we are secure in our bank accounts and spend on whatever we want, our love of Christ gets lost in our own wants and desires.

Now here is where we will take an aside, because when we talk about the spiritual discipline of giving, are we talking about tithing? Well yes and no. We at CrossPoint, the United Methodist Church and the tradition of the Church has been for thousands of years to use tithing as a benchmark. It's like one line. Or rather I really like to think of it as the limbo stick. It's a goal to meet, but it is not the end all be all of itself. That limbo stick can rise when you hit one goal. In fact that's where this scripture can be really enlightening, because Jesus is saying that we are to give everything. That is his example in his life, death and resurrection and then his instruction to us in

this scripture. ***“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.”*** Take up your cross is not just an illustration for Jesus – it’s not a metaphor. For Jesus and his life and how he wants us to live, the cross is a VERY REAL example to give absolutely everything we have. And so in the context of giving, the tithe we could say is a beginning. It is an act of obedience to give God 10% and live on 90%. As Dave Ramsey says, if you can’t live on 90% of your income than you cannot live on 100%. (said online 8/8/12) We set our minds on worldly things and live even beyond our means.

IF YOU CAN’T LIVE ON 90% OF YOUR INCOME THAN YOU CAN’T LIVE ON 100% – DAVE RAMSEY

You see that gap of 90% to 100%, that 10% is called a tithe. It comes from the very beginning of God’s Word in Genesis and all through the scriptures. It is a beginning and Jesus took it another set further to calling us to give everything. This isn’t about hosing you for your money to pay the church bills. This is about living on what God has giving and giving ourselves in trust back to God.

Look at the step chart that is in your worship folder. This is an example our giving at CrossPoint Church. We say we live out our faith by Growing in Christ, Giving and Leading others to Christ. And here we see our giving laid out. Find where you are ... Now there are many ways to discuss how to change this. An example would be to look at where you spend \$10 each week. Cut out one lunch out at work and pack one day and give it to God. Exclude one movie a month and a redbox to increase your giving by \$20. Take your tax return and instead of using it as a freebie in life – yea I’ve been waiting to buy ... give it to God. And these are great examples and ways to start. AND your giving is a heart concern for Jesus. He is instructing his disciples and the crowd on how to live, especially because Peter just set his eyes on the things of the world instead of on God’s desires. Sit down and review your budget and your spending and take the plunge. Move yourself up one or two steps. Adjust your giving up a percent or 3%. Jesus is clear here in this scripture. ***If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.*** ³⁶ ***And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?*** ³⁷ ***Is anything worth more than your soul?***

GIVING IS TRUSTING AND TRUSTING IS GIVING.

If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. ³⁶ ***And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?*** ³⁷ ***Is anything worth more than your soul?*** (Mark 8:35-36)

Now how will you live this out? Peter was clearly rebuked and Jesus instructs all of us. ...

HOW WILL YOU OBEY AND PRACTICE THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF GIVING? _____