

Day 16, Oct. 16th: Overcoming Fear

Read 1 Kings 17:8-16

“Elijah said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid! Go and do what you said. Only make a little loaf of bread for me first...’” -1 Kings 17:13a

One of the great paralyzers in our lives is fear. It can keep us from pursuing dreams, from building relationships, or even from following God’s call. It is also a primary road block to generosity.

In today’s story from Scripture, we learn that a little flour and oil is all the woman from Zarephath has left. She has planned to use it to prepare a final meal for herself and her son. Elijah offers an alternative. Give up what you have, and God will make sure you continue to have enough. Reading the story, we can understand how the woman would be afraid...until we realize that her original plan merely extends her life and that of her son by only one day. God has a much better plan in mind.

There is a strong temptation for us to practice a theology of scarcity. We fear that there will not be enough, and so we hoard what we can in an attempt to feel more secure. But what do we really gain by our hoarding? Another day? Another meaningless possession? Time and time again, the Bible reminds us to have a theology of abundance. We can live with hope and confidence that God’s grace is bigger than our fears. We can give freely and even joyfully to the work of bringing the kingdom to earth as it is in heaven, trusting that everything will be okay.

Do you approach life as if there is not enough or more than enough?

If you had no fear, what would your level of participation in this campaign look like?

How could “Forward, Faithfully” represent a new opportunity for you to trust in God’s provision?

Day 17, Oct. 17th: A Lesson in Generosity

Read Luke 21:1-4

“He said, I assure you that this poor widow has put in more than them all.” -Luke 21:3

There is more to generosity than meets the eye. We have a tendency to judge generosity by the size of the gift. Viewed this way, a gift that has several zeroes at the end is more valuable than one that does not.

Certainly, we should be grateful for persons who have the capacity to make such gifts and are willing to do so. Yet, Jesus teaches us a very important lesson today. Generosity has less to do with size and more to do with sacrifice. When someone only gives what is easy or comfortable, or as the passage puts it “out of their spare change,” is that really generosity, even if the amount is large? The two small coins from the widow meant more to Jesus than all the other gifts that day because they were truly a sacrifice.

As we move forward faithfully at Memorial, consider how we might be a part of making it happen, sacrifice is an important concept to remember. If we offer our best rather than our leftovers, God’s blessings will surely overflow.

Imagine Jesus, sitting in the temple, watching everyone approach the offering box. As you put yours in, does he say to himself, “spare change” or “sacrifice”?

What kind of gift would represent a sacrifice for you in this endeavor?

Day 18, Oct. 18th: Loosening Our Grip

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19

*"Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others."
-1 Timothy 6:18*

There's an old saying that goes, "He who dies with the most toys wins." Some people seem to live as if they believe this is the case. They blindly fritter away their lives pursuing, accumulating, and hoarding, only to wonder in their sunset years if any good has come of it.

More recently, an alternate version of this quote has made the rounds on bumper stickers and t-shirts: "He who dies with the most toys...still dies!" This version sounds more like the parable Jesus once told about the man who kept storing up stockpiles of supplies for himself and his family only to lose his life long before he could need or enjoy them. (Luke 12:13-21)

Today's Scripture also cautions us about putting too much value or hope in our stuff. When it comes to our relationship to our possessions, Mother Teresa puts it this way: "What God gives you is not to be kept under lock and key, but to be shared...Let us ask God, when it comes time to ask God for something, to help us to be generous." And when we discover the joy of giving, Paul says we will "take hold of what is truly life."

How would you describe your relationship to your possessions?

Have you discovered the joy of generosity?

Day 19, Oct. 19th: All Together

Read Exodus 35:1-29

"All the Israelite men and women who were eager to contribute something for the work that the LORD had commanded Moses to do brought it as a spontaneous gift to the LORD." -Exodus 35:29

Moses had just come back from Mt. Sinai, Take 2. You may remember that Take 1 hadn't gone so well. When Moses arrived back at camp that time, he found the Israelites do-se-doing around the golden calf. This time when he comes down, he gathers them together to announce a building project of God's choosing.

They need something tangible to help them remember God's presence daily. After all, this is going to be a long journey through the wilderness, and they've already shown how quickly they can forget who got them out of Egypt in the first place. So, Moses tells them, if everyone contributes what they can, together they have the resources necessary to construct the project. The words in Exodus that describe the people's response leap off the page: "All...were eager to contribute."

In the life of every congregation, there are times when God's people are called to come together to accomplish something significant for the sake of the kingdom. Not every person's contributions will be the same, just as we read about that extraordinary project in the wilderness. One thing is for sure, though: the best results are produced when all the congregation participates and everyone is eager to contribute.

What do you imagine is possible if all the congregation of Memorial eagerly participates in this campaign?

Day 20, Oct. 20th: From the Heart

Read 2 Corinthians 9:7-11

“Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart...” -2 Corinthians 9:7a

By now, you realize that this endeavor is more about faith than it is about money. Alongside others in the Memorial family, you have spent time reflecting on how an offering as a part of the campaign can be a sign of your faith. You have been praying, “Lord, what do you want to do through me?” Soon, you will have the opportunity to answer that question in a very tangible way by making your financial commitment to support our “Forward, Faithfully” campaign.

As we all prepare to make those commitments, Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians are very helpful to us as well. For those who have been reflecting and praying, there is a point at which an answer will come from the heart that just feels right. It will be a decision that is reached without guilt or coercion. It will be a level of commitment that, while perhaps stretching you out of your comfort zone, also brings a sense of peace.

The generosity that results from all of us making our decisions prayerfully will overflow in “many expressions of thanksgiving to God.” We will see the fruit of our sacrifice as we witness new ministries emerge among us because of the good work we have shared in this endeavor.

Is there any anxiety that you still need to release before you make your commitment?

Have you prayed to the point where your heart is ready to provide you with the answer?