

“Earn All You Can. Save All You Can. Give All You Can.”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for First UMC Grand Junction, Sunday, November 17, 2024

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ
website: <https://www.fumcgj.org/>

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 7-9 [NLT]

OPENING

(*Dialoguing with Steve... David to open the sermon with his anecdote from the book on Sabbath and being grateful to God for something as simple as the new day, functional limbs, etc. and the other things mentioned in the reading from his book.*)

(*David’s words of entry into the above...*)

TO THE SCRIPTURES

(*Steve*) Speaking of gratitude as the basis of our giving, David, that’s what Paul was emphasizing in the reading from 2 Corinthians 8 that Kathy just shared with us. It was the Macedonians’ gratitude for what they’d experienced of life in Christ that motivated them for what they did in the way of giving. I especially like v. 5 that says they even did more than what Paul had hoped, “for their first action,” Paul said, “was to give themselves to the Lord and to...[his ministry], just as God wanted them to do.”

And this reminds me of the passage just in the next chapter that we included in the *Stewards of God 2025* reflection sheet we sent out a couple of weeks ago.

(*David to work through 2 Cor 9:7-9...*)

(*David to transition to Matthew 16:24 by saying something to the effect, “What Paul is talking about here is not equal giving but equal sacrifice. And that reminds me of a challenge Jesus put out to his followers that Matthew records in 16:24 – “If any would be my followers...”

And I wonder how often I’ve thought about my giving as being sacrificial

SERMON THOUGHTS

(*Steve*) Right! And you know, David, our Christian traditions word it differently, but express this idea of sacrificial giving in terms of the word “tithe”. What was it that you were sharing with me about Luther’s approach to this?

(*David...reading from Luther*)

(*Steve*) And John Wesley, writing some 200 years AFTER Luther said it this way: “Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.”

(*A little expansion on this. Wesley and estimates of his lifetime earnings and dying with only the change in

his pockets and in his dresser drawer at home.*)

It comes down to what you named earlier, David, in the question you raised, “What am I capable of” in terms of giving that is important.

(*David*) It helps to have a “non-mathematical” visual for this whole business of tithing, don’t you think?

(*Steve*) Definitely – and I actually came prepared for that this morning! (*”Ten Apples” tithe illustration*)

(*Then:*)

The challenge for us as Christian disciples is to see the tithe not as the ceiling on our generosity but as the floor. Many will say that they spread out their tithe among the church and many other worthy causes. But we are challenged in the Scriptures and in our tradition to give the whole tithe to the Church and then give to other causes we might find worthy.

Our congregation does this in many ways, among them our monthly MAC offerings (\$7,100+ through September!), Mission Ministry Team support, and UWF mission giving.

And just like this Lutheran / Wesleyan goal of “tithing plus” applies to us as individual disciples, our denomination holds the tithe + before us as the goal for congregations that make up the Annual Conference.

We call this, very intentionally, “Mission Shares”, and

it amounts to a tithe +3 percent or 13% of our giving that goes to the larger denomination. This is the direct analog to the offering Paul was writing about in 2 Corinthians, collecting a “love offering” from the churches in Greece to bring to those in need in Jerusalem.

CONCLUSION

(*David – Wrap us up with a reference to “My Action” from the green sheet.*) Next week...

(*Steve to close in prayer*)