



Sermon, November 20, 2016
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Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

Thanks Living, Thanks Giving: “Save All You Can”

Scripture: Proverbs 22:1-9

- A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
and favor is better than silver or gold.
- 2 The rich and the poor have this in common:
the Lord is the maker of them all.
- 3 The clever see danger and hide;
but the simple go on, and suffer for it.
- 4 The reward for humility and fear of the Lord
is riches and honor and life.
- 5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse;
the cautious will keep far from them.
- 6 Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray.
- 7 The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of the lender.
- 8 Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,
and the rod of anger will fail.
- 9 Those who are generous are blessed,
for they share their bread with the poor.

Opening Jokes: A Few Things to Chuckle Over:

Will Rogers said: “Just be thankful you’re not getting all the government you’re paying for.”

Denny J. Brake says: “You never know how much you have to be thankful for until you have to pay taxes on it.”

A Sunday School teacher asked her class: “Who decreed all the world should be taxed?” A young girl answered: “the Democrats.” (Okay, that was a giveaway to all you Republicans. We all know that taxes are as old as kings, kingdoms and governments.)

Three friends – a surgeon, an engineer, and a politician – were discussing which of their professions was the oldest. The surgeon said; “Eve was created from Adam’s rib – a surgical procedure.” The engineer

replied: "Before Adam and Eve were created, order was created out of chaos, and that was an engineering job." The politician said, "Yes, but who do you suppose created the chaos?"

Throughout all of the chaos of the recent election, one theme became a major driving force: the loss of jobs, and the frustration of huge segments of our population at no longer having jobs, or being forced to seek out underpaying, menial labor jobs that cannot support their families. Financial uncertainty and instability rode through this election like one of the horsemen of the Apocalypse. Money is at the center of human anxiety, it is at the center of personal self-worth, it is at the center of the divisions in our country and the world. The Bible talks about money, Jesus talked about money, John Wesley talked about money. That is why we in the church talk about money. The church has talked about money from the very earliest days.

St. Augustine talked about it in terms of how personal greed and the hoarding of wealth and possessions is a cause of turmoil in the world: "Those who wish to make room for the Lord must find pleasure not in private, but in common property.... Redouble your charity. For, on account of the things which each one of us possesses singly, wars exist, hatreds, discords, strife among human beings, tumults, dissensions, scandals, sins, injustices, and murders. On what account? On account of those things which each of us possesses singly. Do we fight over the things we possess in common? We inhale this air in common with others, we all see the sun in common. Blessed therefore are those who make room for the Lord, so as not to take pleasure in private property. Let us therefore abstain from the possessions of private property—or from the love of it, if we cannot abstain from possession—and let us make room for the Lord." *Saint Augustine (354–430 CE) [Commentary on Psalm 131]*,

You recall John Wesley's Three-Point Rule on the Use of Money: "Gain all you can; Save all you can; Give all you can." That second point, "Save all you can," relates to the non-greed-driven use of money to attend to supplying our true needs in life, so that the surplus can be given away to the Lord's work. Wesley puts it this way: "Do not throw the

precious talent into the sea. Do not throw it away in idle expenses, which is just the same as throwing it into the sea. Expend no part of it merely to gratify the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life. Be content with what plain nature requires." Saving to Wesley meant not wasting our money on anything beyond what is necessary to live. Just because we have so many choices does not mean we need to spend money on everything that catches our eye.

But this raises the thorny question: What is truly needful? (**Get congregational responses**). Let me offer this criteria: Only that which contributes to achieving our created potentiality, fullness of life, or life achieving its full intentionality.

Since Wesley's time, many people have addressed what it is that human beings need not simply to survive, but actually to thrive. Recall that Jesus said that he came that we might have life in its fullness. Wesley aims at an austere, non-frivolous life, because spending money on one's own pleasures deprived the needy of money that would help them simply to survive. It is the origin of the idea to live simply so others can simply live. At any rate, people such Abraham Maslow and others have developed lists and hierarchies of human needs. In our own Bible studies, we discussed some of these. Maslow's hierarchy of needs – 8 steps, or categories.

1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.
2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, etc.
3. Love and belongingness needs - friendship, intimacy, trust and acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love. Affiliating, being part of a group (family, friends, work).
4. Esteem needs - self-esteem, achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, managerial responsibility, etc.
5. Cognitive needs - knowledge and understanding, curiosity, exploration, need for meaning and predictability.

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6. Aesthetic needs - appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc.
7. Self-Actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.
8. Transcendence needs - helping others to achieve self actualization

For the next few minutes, I would like you to take out the Sermon Reflection sheet and look at the Survey of Needs on the right hand side. Take your own Personal Survey, by filling in what you perceive to be the needs you have under those eight categories, and list the ways that you meet those needs. Just complete Step 1 here.

For Steps 2 and 3, I want you to go home and attach monetary and time-quantified measures to how those needs are met. Look at your checkbooks or bank statements. Look at your calendars. How much are addressing your true needs? Then after you have done that, look at Step 4. What is left over?

(Allow people to begin looking at their Sermon Reflection Sheets)

I would like to close today with a quote from Lakota Sage Lame Deer: "Before our white brothers came to civilize us we had no jails. Therefore we had no criminals. You can't have criminals without a jail. We had no locks or keys, and so we had no thieves. If a man was so poor that he had no horse, tipi or blanket, someone gave him these things. We were too uncivilized to set much value on personal belongings. We wanted to have things only in order to give them away. We had no money, and therefore a man's worth couldn't be measured by it. We had no written law, no attorney or politicians, therefore we couldn't cheat. We were in a really bad way before the white man came, and I don't know how we managed to get along without the basic things which, we are told, are absolutely necessary to make a civilized society." (from [John Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions](#)).

This week, go home, look this over and ask yourself: "What is it of all that that I have that I truly need, and what is it of what I have that God needs to bless the world through me?" And then come back and celebrate what you and God discovered together.