

ALDRERGATE UMC OF BUTTE, MT
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Pastor Matthias Krier

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All Saints Day

Message

Where is Your Treasure?

Matthias Krier

We cherish our treasures... but the question is what are our treasures or where are our treasures? There is no doubt that our children and grandchildren are treasures, well, at least most of the time.

Once there was a young boy who was moved to help the church in their finance campaign:



The story around the widow giving out of her poverty it's very humbling. However, I wonder why at the end of this story, Jesus did not say, "Go,

thou and do likewise.” Doesn’t it make you wonder if we may have missed the original intent of what Jesus was trying to teach here. Remember just prior to this story of the *widow and the mite* is Jesus chastising the religious leaders and their false piety and hypocritical behavior. Let’s take a second look at our scripture for today:

38 As he taught, he said, ‘Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places,³⁹ and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets!⁴⁰ They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.

So keep in mind the context of this admonishment to the scribes and religious leaders at the time of what the religious establishment was doing to those who were marginalized and impoverished.

With this in mind, let’s hear again, this passage with fresh ears and eyes:

41 He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums.⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.⁴³ Then he called his disciples and said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.⁴⁴ For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.’

Maybe, Jesus, was not lifting this up as something to aspire to? Maybe he was chastising the religious folks who were guilt-tripping those to give when they really were not in the position of giving. Since Jesus was chastising the religious leaders just prior to this passage I believe Yeshua was setting up a teaching moment. What exactly was this teaching moment? Was Jesus

condemning the hypocrisy as well as the system that would encourage a widow to give beyond her means. She was actually giving what she had to live on into the treasury. And again, Jesus did not say, *'Go thou and do likewise.'*

We have often heard that this story was to inspire us to give more and unfortunately preachers have far too often guilted folks to give beyond their means.

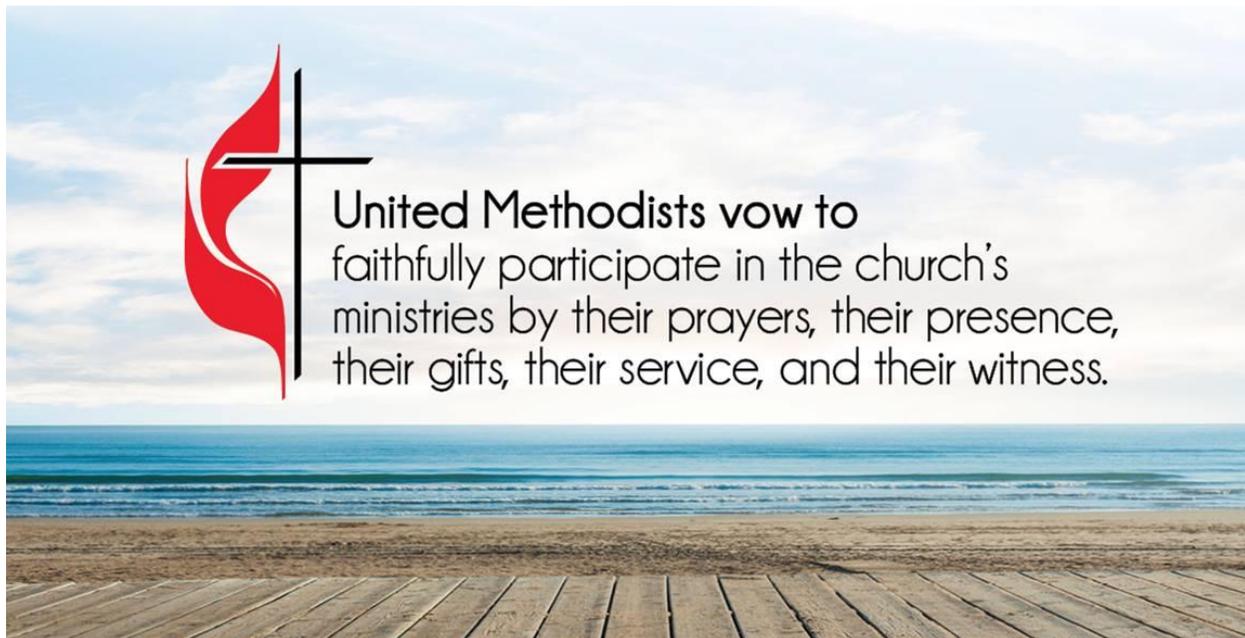
We ought not to be guilted into tithing or giving 10% or more of our income. Tithing comes naturally, just as naturally as those growing in the Spirit take time for prayer and meditation. Those who are growing in their faith, do not have to be guilted into taking time for prayer and meditation. It just comes naturally. The same is true for tithing or striving to tithe one percentage point at a time to church and to charity.

Once upon a time there was a man



who asked God in prayer: should I tithe on my gross or net income? And a voice from heaven replied, *"I would be happy with either."*

Giving of ourselves in every way ought to come naturally as we deepen our relationship with the Divine. As we awaken to our Oneness with the Divine, we no longer feel obligated to give. As we love God with all of our heart, with all of our mind, with all your soul and with all our strength ... and as we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, giving of ourselves will come naturally and not feel like an obligation. Knowing and experiencing this empowers us to be true to our vow when joining the church:



Unless we step up as we are able to in offering our prayers, our presence, our gifts (*both spiritual and financial gifts*), our service and our witness, we will not grow closer to the kingdom as a church and we will not make the impact we could make in this community and beyond without a collective effort. We are in this together!

Pause for just a moment as you meditate on this vow and see if the spirit affirms you for who you are and what you are doing or whether the Spirit is nudging you in some new directions?

PAUSE

Over the years, my wife and I have strived to tithe to church and to charity. And when we are unable to tithe, we strive to step up one percentage point at a time per year.

This church and other churches have truly been blessed when dedicated church members tithe their estates or leave legacy gifts to the church. It has become more and more apparent that while the church strives to raise enough funds to meet operating expenses, it is a challenge when large sums of money are needed for capital improvements. Most major institutions rely on significant donations from donors to continue their vision of service to their community.

The same is true for the church. Unless individuals leave significant legacy gifts for the church, it places a heavy burden on members and attendees to keep up on the necessary improvements while striving to meet operating expenses.

There is a story that happened not too terribly long ago in a community not too far away. The pastor of a church found out that longtime church members donated a million dollars to a local university. When the pastor heard this knowing that their church needed significant improvements in their church he decided to call on Mr. Mrs. Jones. After being served some coffee from Mrs. Jones and engaging in some small talk, the pastor said, "I understand you donated a million dollars to the university. I was curious why you didn't donate that money to the church for needed improvements." Mr. Jones replied, "Because you didn't ask."

I am asking on behalf of the church for those of you in a position to tithe or to donate a special gift or possibly to even offer a future legacy gift to do so. Ideally in a perfect world and where a community is not affected by a pandemic, to raise enough money for operating expenses. However, due to circumstances beyond our control that may not always be possible. Generous legacy gifts then, can be used for capital improvements and to birth new programs and support ministries of the church when needed.

We are deeply grateful for those who have made significant donations in the way of one time gifts as well as legacy gifts.

In a few moments, we will prepare for the Sacrament of Holy Communion in the singing of a hymn.

In preparation of this sacred meal, hear verse two of this hymn:

*Turn our worship into witness in the sacrament of life;
Send us forth to love and serve you, bringing peace where there is strife.
Give us, Christ, your great compassion to forgive as you forgave;
May we still behold your image in the world you died to save.*

May we open our hearts and our minds of how we will offer our *prayers*, our *presence*, our *gifts*, our *service* and our *witness* in the months and years to come to bring about the kingdom of God here on earth!

Amen!