

McCabe United Methodist Church  
The Spirit of Stewardship (Part 2)  
I Corinthians 3:10-11 \* Luke 12:35-40: October 19 & 20, 2013  
Pastor Rick Fossum

This is the second Stewardship message in a series of three. Next weekend will be our *Consecration Weekend*. This is the time when we will both dedicate and celebrate our gifts to God through this church. I thank you in advance for being generous stewards. We are a blessed people. Next Sunday, we will also have a *Consecration Dinner* provided by our youth. The dinner will begin at 11:15 and you are all invited.

Listen to these words from Paul again, “**According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it.**” (NRSV)

Today, it's our turn. Paul words are directed to us. We are the builders building on the foundation first laid by Jesus Christ, added to by Paul and then all the saints who have gone before us. Now, we're the builders. It is our turn to build. What the Kingdom of God will look like once we get finished building our part is up to us.

I know several farmers who are ‘*Share Croppers*’. Are you familiar with the term, ‘*Share Cropping*’? *Share Cropping* means that a farmer works in a field he or she doesn't own. The landowner supplies the land. In some cases, the landowner might also supply the seed, fertilizer and possibly the machinery. When the harvest is finished, the *Share Cropper* compensates the owner of that field by sharing a percentage of the crop with him or her. This is *Share Cropping*.

In a way, you and I are *Share Croppers*. God created this world. God still owns this world. And wonder of wonders, God put us in charge of it which makes us *Share Croppers*. Taking care of this world, or our little corner of it, is our responsibility. Thanks to God, we have all the resources we need to build on God's solid foundation.

Today, we'll focus on our time and talents. There's an old saying that goes like this: “**Take care of the small things . . . and the big things will take care of themselves.**”

This would be a good lesson for my Minnesota Vikings, but not today.

I believe taking care of the small things is how God expects us to live as Christians. We've been given all the resources we need. We have time and we have talent. Our job as *Share Croppers* or Stewards is to use our time and talents to make our world a better place. It's just that simple and just that hard.

For some people, it's not easy sharing their time and talents or their money with anyone . . . not even with God. There's an attitude that goes like this: **"It's mine! Why should I share? I did all the work! Let other people take care of themselves."**

This attitude reminds me of the farmer who was rich, but cheap. He wouldn't part with any of his money. One day, his minister paid him a visit. He was hoping to get the farmer to open up his check book a bit. The minister pointed out to the farmer how God had blessed him with fertile land that grew good crops and how God had blessed him with sunshine and rain to help his crops grow. **"You know,"** the minister said, **"this farm is really on loan to you from God. You should be more grateful and generous."**

**"Well Pastor,"** the farmer replied, **"I don't mean to sound ungrateful, but you should have seen the mess this farm was in when God was running it without my help!"**

In our lesson from Luke, we heard Jesus give this warning to people like that farmer, **"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit."**

**"I'm coming back,"** Jesus was saying. **"You don't know when that will be, but I'll be back. Be ready. Be prepared. Be dressed for action. Have your lamps lit. Use your time and talents and use them now because you never know when I'll return."**

And then Jesus told them a parable about a master who goes away for a while. His servants are left with the responsibility of taking care of the place while he's gone. The servants have two choices. They could neglect their duties to their master and do as they please. Or, they could continue serving their master by doing what was expected of them even though the master wasn't there.

This is the position we're in *Share Croppers*. Each one of us has been given 24 hours a day to use as we please. We've also been given our own unique set of talents and abilities. We have a choice. We can use them for our own benefit or we can use them to serve the Lord.

There's a book called *"Rescuers: Portraits of Holocaust Survivors."* In this book, researchers interviewed 105 people who had provided 'safe houses' for Jews living in Germany during the Nazi reign of terror. If they had been caught protecting the Jews, they would have been thrown in jail or even killed.

The researchers found that many of these rescuers had a history of helping

others before the war. Some had visited people in hospitals, some had helped out poor students, and some had helped take care of stray animals. They were in the habit of using their time and talents to help make the world around them better even if it meant risking their lives.

Using our time and our talents as *Share Croppers* is a habit we should acquire. Like all habits it takes time to develop them.

This is one reason why I like our new catalog called '*Servant Opportunities*'. Have you looked at one of these catalogs? In this catalog, you'll find many opportunities to develop positive habits by using your time and talents around this church and community.

Another positive habit we can develop is participating in *our Family Link* program. It's an investment that will help you and your family. Fifteen minutes a day is all that's required. Fifteen minutes a day spent with your family or a friend or a neighbor growing closer to each other and to God.

By the way, I am proud of this church and all of you. I know many of you are already using your time and talents to serve the Lord. And I also know that many of you have been doing it for years. This church could not survive without your help. What you do for McCabe matters. It matters a lot. Your service is important and I thank God for all of you.

In seminary, we were taught the 20-80 rule. Are you familiar with it? The 20-80 rule says this: about 20% of the people in a typical church do 80% of the work. I believe that the percentage at McCabe is a lot higher than 20%. I don't know what our percentage is, but I know many of you are participating in our programs and ministries, our activities and missions at McCabe. Again, I thank you.

A man had recently lost his wife. He received many cards from people expressing their sympathy to him and his family. He received one card from a lady who belonged to his church. She happened to be a widow. He remembered this card above all the others. She sent him a book of stamps. They didn't cost a lot, but she knew that he'd have to send out thank-you cards thanking people for their gifts of money, food and flowers. These stamps were one less thing he had to worry about. It was a small thing, but important.

It's called taking care of the small things. Someone once said, "**Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something, and if everybody does something, everything will get done.**"

It works like this: You put your time and talents along side of mine and mine

along side of the person sitting next to you and so on and so on and pretty soon our little acts of service turn into big things.

There's an old story about two men who were in a rowboat together. Suddenly, one of the men started to saw a hole in the bottom of the boat. He defended himself by saying he could do whatever he wanted to do because the hole he was making was on his side of the boat.

The other man pointed out that they were both in the rowboat together and cutting a hole in the bottom of the boat, even on his side, would affect both of them.

Sometimes, it's easy to forget that we're all in God's world together. And if we want this world to be a better, healthier place, it will take all of us using our own time and talents to make it so.

A lady asked Jesus, "**Lord, I would like to know what heaven and hell are like?**"

The Lord led this lady to two doors. He opened one of the doors and she looked inside. In the middle of the room was a large round table. In the middle of the table was a large pot of stew which smelled delicious.

The lady noticed that the people sitting around the table were sick looking, malnourished, and hungry. They were holding spoons with long handles that were strapped to their arms and they found it impossible to reach into the pot of stew and feed themselves. The handles were longer than their arms.

The lady shuddered at the sight of their misery and suffering.

The Lord said, "**You have seen hell.**" The Lord took her to the next door and opened it. It was exactly like the first one. There was a large round table with a large pot of stew in the middle. It also smelled delicious. The people were equipped with the same long-handled spoons, but here the lady noticed that the people were well nourished, healthy looking, laughing and talking.

The lady said, "**Lord, I don't understand.**"

The Lord said, "**It's simple. The people in this room have learned to feed and help each other. This is heaven.**"

And this is how *Share Croppers* serve the Lord. We use our time and talents to make the kingdom of God better not only for ourselves, but for all of God's people.