

*“Living to Get, Living to Give, Giving to Live”**Pastor Randy Orndorff**“Choose Your Measuring Cup”**Nov 4, 2018*

Key Text: Luke 6:37-45

I. Introduction: You Choose Your Cup

If you had to choose a measuring cup to symbolize your level or willingness to give, to forgive, to encourage others, to sow seed and offer good fruit, what measuring cup would you be working out of?

The smallest? The middle cup? Or the larger one? Today’s scripture suggests that by the measure you use, it will be poured back to you. And look, there’s no fluff there, no additives. Just the real thing. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together to be sure there’s no air or pocket preventing the most you can have. Even to running over!

For the measure you choose to use, it will be measured back to you. Please understand tithing and giving and living generously is what a disciple of Jesus Christ does. Giving is part of what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

II. The Stewardship Journey—What’s In Your Heart?

We begin a three-part series on Christian Stewardship today leading us up to Gratitude Sunday on November 18th where each of us will be invited to prayerfully consider the measure we will use to give back to God, who has given us all we have and only asks we give back 10% to the work of building his kingdom. I would like to let you know all your Leadership Team has already turned in their commitment cards—100%. Thanks, Leadership Team, for modeling a generous spirit and commitment to God’s work.

And friends, we do not want anyone to give out of obligation or duty. We hope each of you tithe and give out of gratitude and thanksgiving with joy in your heart for the things God has done in your life, even if you or I have faced some challenges along the way.

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit..., the good person brings good things out of the good stored in their heart.”

Just know that whatever is in your heart that is what is going to flow out. Good or bad.

And my best guess is what’s in your heart is what will determine which measuring cup you will choose to use.

III. The Spiritual Life is Centered and Anchored in God

Evelyn Underhill, in *The Spiritual Life*, puts it this way, “For a spiritual life is simply a life in which all we do comes from the center, where we are anchored in God”.

Consider the power and awe inspired by the mighty Mississippi River, or any other river you may have been on. I’ve been on both the North and South forks of the Shenandoah, the Rappahannock, Mattaponi, and Pomonkey, and several white-water rivers out west. The sound and flow of the river fills us with a sense of peace and joy. Amidst the peace and joy also exists a powerful current that needs to be taken seriously. Imagine being on the river and losing an oar—and then having an engine that won’t start. Looking around, you discover you are without an anchor and you can guess what happens next. You’re drifting rapidly downstream with the current which, by the way, depending on where rocks, waterfalls, and dams are, could be deadly.

Ephesians 3:16-17, Paul speaks about us being rooted and grounded. Paul says here, “I pray that according to the riches of God’s glory, He may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with

power through God's spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love."

So, along with Evelyn Underhill speaking of being anchored in God and Paul's analogy of being rooted and grounded in love, we recognize true stewardship begins with love, we recognize true stewardship begins with the realization that we are called to live our lives being rooted, grounded, and anchored in the love of God and the outflow of our hearts, hands, mouths, and from our so called "pockets" will be a reflection of how rooted, grounded, and anchored we are.

IV. We Get Swept Away

How many of us spend most of our lives being swept away by the currents of life, the demands of our jobs, family, education, and even church responsibilities? We search in vain for a rope or an anchor. We think if we could only make more money if only I could save more money, if only I had a better car, or faster phone or computer.

And still we find ourselves being swept downstream. True stewardship begins with a life that is rooted, grounded, and anchored in God's love.

V. Getting to Log Out of Our Own Eye

If it is not, what ends up flowing out of the heart are the other things Jesus mentions here in Luke 6.

We will not be able to lead anyone to Christ because we don't lead ourselves very well. Like a blind man leading a blind man, we may well end up in the ditch. We'll tend to be critical, judgmental, condemning, unforgiving. We'll fail to see the log in our own eye. I was recently cutting out a stump that was rotting with my chainsaw. At first, I didn't have my glasses on and sawdust was blowing into my face from a particular cut and position. I stopped and put on my glasses and that helped, but it wasn't soon enough. I got sawdust in my eye and I rubbed it, and it bothered me most of the day and evening. I got water and washed it out, but from time to time things were still blurry and I could not see clearly. Once the sawdust was out, I could see clearly.

Is it possible you are critical of, or judge others and don't realize there is a log in your eye?

Out of the good stored up in our hearts will come giving and forgiving actions, encouraging words, the ability to lead others and invite others into a life changing relationship with Jesus.

VI. Stewardship is Everything We Are

Stewardship, as we learned in September, embodies everything we are. How we lead our lives, our families, our work, our schedules, our calling from God, and our money and resources.

Today, you have in your bulletin a stewardship card that has a symbol of a measuring cup. I invite you to think about and answer these questions. Am I living to get or living to give? And in what way might my life be transformed if I begin to live to give? And in what way might my life be transformed if I begin to live to give?

These questions are also found on your Prayer Guide you received in the mail this week. You'll notice a back and forth movement using the words "getting" or "giving". Such as, "God so loved the world He gave"...versus in I Timothy 6:9, "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction".

VII. Are We Living to Get or Living to Give?

So, use your stewardship calendar to look up scriptures and compare a life of getting versus a life of giving and discover what God's word has to say on the subject and how a follower of Jesus is to respond. And

then choose the measure which you will use. The average United Methodist gives 2.7% of their income back to God. The biblical standard for a disciple of Jesus is 10%. Could you step up a cup? That's a big step of faith to open up your heart and trust God to meet your needs while you honor God with your best.

And please know, it's not just the giving of your money. It is also the commitment you make of your time and talents. It's Whole Life Stewardship. So, the ways in which you serve matter. It's part of the overflow of your heart and your gratitude to God. People who give always feel better about themselves and life in general and it's tremendously helpful to get your focus off yourself and your needs by helping others.

So, working with our children and youth and discipling and loving them is a big deal!

Being part of our hospitality team and Flame Café, a big deal!

Sharing your faith with others, inviting people to know Jesus and to fellowship in the church, a big deal!

Good can't flow from our hearts if we do not put our faith in action. If we all have gifts from God, then we all have something we can contribute to in this process of intentionally making disciples.

So, be in prayer about your financial commitment for 2019 and in your time and talent commitment of where to serve God. Don't over commit, don't under commit, but every part of the Body needs to commit and choose which measuring cup you'll choose and use.

And be sure to look at the Giving and Spending Sheet so you see where your support is going and then come out this Thursday evening, November 8th to Your Church Conference at 6pm and vote on our strategies, goals, budget, and nominations and consider the direction we are headed in as a church family. Our Town Halls and many conversations here have led us to this point this fall.

VIII. What We Hope For and Dream to Be

Friends, we want to be a church for children, youth, young adults, families, seniors: for All God's Children.

We want to be a church who disciples all our people to be more like Jesus.

We want to be a church family who cares for the lost, those far from God—who will go out and find them and help them see there is no better way to live than the Jesus way.

We want to be a church that rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep. That's why All Saints Day is part of what we do.

We want to be a church that veers away from being critical, judgmental, unaccepting, looking out for ourselves and condemning. We have to take the planks out of our own eyes.

We want to be a church family that seeks to use the big measuring cup, learning to freely give for freely we've received so we can freely give.

We want to be God's people grounded, rooted, and anchored in love for God and each other and for those yet to be part of our church family. Children, youth, and adults of all ages.

Learning, Leading, and Loving together as we learn to Live to Give and, ultimately, how our giving of ourselves and all we are leads us to giving to truly live.

IX. What Size is God's Measuring Cup?

As you come to receive these gifts of bread and wine, take time to consider all God has given to you and the life you have. Think of how Jesus gave his life that we might have life.

Think of the size of the measuring cup God used and still uses. Which cup will you and I choose to use, remembering with the measure we use, it will be measured back to us. Don't give to get, give to live!

X. Closing Prayer

Let us Pray:

O most holy, loving, generous God. Thank You for giving us so much. We are aware on All Saint's Day that You do give and take away and yet Job said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord". We recognize these bodies won't last forever, but how we lived our lives will, because we, as we lay down our lives and commit all we are to You, will be honored in eternity.

Just thanks, God, for giving to us Your grace, Your love, Your mercy, Your forgiveness so freely. Help us find ways to give back to you.

In Jesus' Name,

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Amen.