
Graphics and Audio Notes

- There **will** be a sermon starter video.
- There **will** be notes and / or scripture to show on screen during the sermon.

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about how generosity can be a launchpad for other people.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because when we are generous toward God we find freedom for ourselves and bless others.

What is the context of this sermon?

This series and sermon is adapted from Defying Gravity resources from Tom Berlin published through Abingdon Press.

What are the next action steps?

Complete an annual giving commitment card

What is the good news? What is the bottom line?

The good news is that when you are generous, you bless people.
You launch others. That is what our church attempts to do.



Metadata

Topics

- Give
- Worship

Sermon Books of the Bible

- Luke
- Matthew

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, generosity, giving, stewardship, steward, tithe, proportional, generous

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26th Sunday after Pentecost
Defying Gravity - When We Get It Right
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://bit.ly/2dvHP3c>

November 13, 2016
Luke 16:10-13
Preaching Target Word Count: 1,928
Audio Online at <http://bit.ly/2fNSV23>
Video Online at <http://bit.ly/2fMq6WH>

Mugs - A Way to Say Thank You
Invitation
Closing Prayer

Luke 16:10-13, CEB

¹⁰"Whoever is faithful with little is also faithful with much, and the one who is dishonest with little is also dishonest with much. ¹¹If you haven't been faithful with worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹²If you haven't been faithful with someone else's property, who will give you your own? ¹³No household servant can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Response to Scripture

One: The word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Introduction

Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

Listen for God's Word

I invite you to listen for God's word today.

Place for Notes

You can find a place in your bulletin to take notes or, if you prefer, in the event for this worship service in the Bible app on your mobile device

Tool for Spiritual Growth

When you learn something new, have a question, make a connection with your life or hear anything that will help you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ as you worship, grow, give, serve and share, write it down.

Then, use these notes as a tool to help you grow in your faith in the days ahead.

Prayer

Will you pray with me?

O God, use these words to speak good news, so that, as individuals and as a congregation, we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you, and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Terra Cotta Army

Have you ever heard of the Terra Cotta Army? It is fascinating. The Terracotta Army is a collection of sculptures depicting the armies of Qin Shi Huang (CHIN SHE HWONG), the first emperor of China. He ruled at a time when various provinces were at war with one another. A great military leader, he conquered province after province and

created one nation, launching the Qin dynasty, for which China probably was named. Qin Shi Huang had an expansive vision for his country. His public works projects included the unification of diverse state walls into what later became the Great Wall of China and a massive new national road system.

Concerned with Death

One of the emperor's greatest concerns was his own death. He undertook a futile search for an elixir of immortality, which he did not find. Realizing that he would in fact die one day, he used his wealth and power to build a city-sized mausoleum for himself. Craftsmen created a life-sized terra cotta army to guard it.

We have a picture of some of this army, let's take a look...

[Show 2016-11-13 Sermon 2 - Terra Cotta Army]

The purpose of the warriors, cavalry, soldiers, and horses was to protect the emperor in his afterlife. The army took years and years to build.

Resources Focused on Self

By the time Qin Shi Huang died in 210 b.c., his mausoleum was surrounded by more than 8,000 soldiers, along with chariots and horses. When you see look at pictures and diagrams of the terra cotta warriors and horses, you cannot help being amazed at how China's first emperor focused his resources on himself and his experience of the afterlife.



Jesus and Generosity

Kingdom of God

Two hundred years later and 4,000 miles away, a Jewish rabbi named Jesus of Nazareth began teaching people about another kingdom, called the kingdom of God. Like Qin Shi Huang, Jesus was bringing people together, but not in a nation of physical boundaries or a dynasty based on birthright. Jesus was welcoming people into a kingdom that would extend over every national boundary and unite people across time.

Be Generous with Love

Rather than teaching people to amass fortune and power in this life or creating a false sense of security for the afterlife, Jesus taught his followers to be generous with love, forgiveness, and kindness. He taught them to be careful about the unusual gravity of money, wealth, and possessions that would draw them away from God's kingdom.

Rich toward God

Key Scripture: Luke 12:20-21

He told a story about a man who had an unusual harvest. The man, rather than sharing the harvest, decided to build a bigger barn to hold it so he could sit back and eat, drink, and be merry! So he built the bigger barn.

Jesus finished the story in this way in Luke 12:20-21:

"But God said to him, 'Fool, tonight you will die. Now who will get the things you have prepared for yourself?' This is the way it will be for those who hoard things for themselves and aren't rich toward God."¹

Key Scripture: Matthew 6:19-21

This is such an important saying, this injunction to be rich toward God. Both Qin Shi Huang and Jesus were teaching about the afterlife. One built the ultimate bigger barn, a palace mausoleum guarded by terra cotta warriors he thought would support him in eternity but which were covered over with dirt and slowly broke apart; the other, Jesus, would have none of that.

He told people to be rich toward God and specifically said, in Matthew 6:19-21:

"Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."²

Kingdom of God is Here

Why did Jesus teach us these things? Because he wanted the best for our lives. He wanted us to finish our lives with the knowledge that we were already in the kingdom of heaven. We do not have to fear death because the Kingdom is not some place in a three-story Platonic universe where there is heaven, earth, and hell. The kingdom of heaven is not some far-off land. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, which are used interchangeably in the Gospels, are here and now whenever we do the will of God and align our lives with God's purposes. We have no fear of death, because Jesus' offer of salvation, once received and experienced for the gift it is, secures our lives to the life and care of God.

¹ Luke 12:20-21, CEB.

² Matthew 6:19-21, CEB.

Assurance in a Generous Life

Jesus told us to live a life generous in every way so that we would have assurance of our salvation, confidence that we would spend eternity with God, and a sense of significance and goodness in the life we live here and now.

Bless Others in a Generous Life

I think there was a second reason Jesus taught his followers to be generous: he wanted you and me to bless others. Rather than gather our resources to ourselves, he wanted us to be a launch pad for other people.

Be a Launchpad for Others

Imagine if you not only had the joy of freedom for yourself and you lived as such a supportive, encouraging and loving presence that when other people were around you it felt as if they had just been lifted up.

Does that make sense?

Let me give you a visual for this.

The “Blob”

Let's take a look at this video.

[Show 2016-11-13 Sermon 8 - Blob Video]

This took place at a camp called Summer's Best Two Weeks. This thing is called the “blob.”

You have someone at the end of the blob - they want to be launched.

Here she is - waiting to be launched.

So, here's someone climbing to a platform above the blob. Somebody has to jump onto the blob and when they jump she flies through the air. Does this not look like a good time?

So, as you do the jump, the launch happens and it's great. It's both being launched and helping other people find their freedom. Everybody is having a good time.

[Video shows camper waiting at the top of the tower]

Except if you have a mild fear of heights.

So, this camper is confronting a very real fear - what will happen to me if I try to launch someone else? What if I take this jump off the end?

Other people don't have the fear. They are launching and they are being launched. They are joyful. They are having a great time. When you don't have fear, you can do this.

[Video shows camper waiting at the top of the tower]

But...

It took this camper a while to do this. Imagine 45 minutes or an hour or so...

Then, finally, without being pushed, he finally does it. And then, he has the opportunity to be launched. Now, look at his face.

[Video freezes on face at height of jump and

There... and there.

Barriers to a Generous Life

So many of us have never entered into a generous life, because we are just like this camper on the platform.

We think that if I am generous with anything, my time, my talent, my money - I won't have it for myself.

I don't want to take time to volunteer at the church because then I won't have that time to myself. If we would just take the plunge, we would catapult someone else to joy.

The place where it is hardest is money. The last thing that Christians typically surrender is their money. It's because we believe that we can't lower our lifestyle or limit our wants. I can't pull back or change my lifestyle, because, if I do I may not be secure in the future, I may not have what I want now, I won't be happy.

Transition

What if, Jesus is right? What if it's not how much I pull together with my terra cotta warrior army? What if, instead, it's about what you give away and what you do when you become rich toward God.

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that when you are generous, you bless people.

You launch others. That is what our church attempts to do.

Call to Action

This year has been an exciting year for us. We have seen an increase in worship attendance, small groups participation, offering received and people serving beyond the walls of the church.

We have received 29 new members, with 16 of these persons deciding to follow Jesus for the very first time or for the first time after a long time. We had an incredibly successful capital campaign and are preparing for the renovation of our sanctuary beginning in January.

In the year ahead, we are making plans for renewal in our worship services, launching new small groups, developing a partnership with Skelly Elementary School and continuing to invite people to come to know Jesus through First United Methodist Church.

These ministries and the stories of people blessed are the true riches of life.

Invitation

So often, all that people are going after is terracotta warriors.

Invitation to Annual Giving Commitment

As our final act of worship today and as a symbol of defying financial gravity, we will present our annual giving commitments. If you have not already done so, I invite you to complete the annual giving commitment card that you find in your bulletin.

Mugs - A Way to Say Thank You

I invite every household that completes a commitment card to pick up a mug on your way out of worship today. This simple thank you for your annual giving commitment is the same mug that will be given to our first time visitors in the year ahead as a way of saying thank you for worshipping with us.

Invitation

God invites us to a generous life - to launch others and be launched into life that really is life.

Will you pray with me?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, I am sorry for all the times in my life when I mess up.

And if anything comes to mind, ask God's forgiveness.

Forgive me of my sin and all that I know is wrong.
Thank you that you died on the cross and rose for me.
I trust you with my life.
Help me receive your forgiveness.
Please fill me with your Spirit and help me to follow you.
In your holy name, Amen.