

## Devotions for the Week of March 3, 2019

### LARGE-PRINT

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

### Sunday, March 3, 2019

**Read Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 5:1-2; Mark 12:41-44; &  
2 Samuel 24:18-25.**

Paul tells us, *“I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy [devoted, consecrated] and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable [rational, intelligent] service and spiritual worship”* (Romans 12:1, Amplified Bible).

We are called to offer all our gifts, all our intelligence, all our energies, all our time, all our dreams and decisions and desires up to God. Why do we do this? We do this *“...in view of all the mercies of God.”* Because of all God has done for us...we offer God back our lives. We are willing to sacrifice ourselves for God and others for this is, not only *“well pleasing to God,”* but is *“reasonable”* considering all God has done for us.

As John tells us, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (3:16). Paul goes on to tell us in his letter to the Ephesians that we should be *“imitators”* of Christ, following the *“example”* Christ set for us, offering Himself as a sacrifice for the world; thus, we are to sacrifice ourselves for others.

One area in which Christ asks us to sacrifice, that many of us do not like to talk about, is money.

In Mark, we read the story of The Widow’s Mite. Witnessing the donations made by the rich men, Jesus highlights how a poor widow donates only two mites, the least valuable coins available at that time. But, Jesus observes, this sum was everything she had to her name, while the other people gave only a small portion of their wealth. Jesus praises the widow’s gift.

When it comes to giving the attitude of the heart makes all the difference. When I write a check for my taxes to the I.R.S., that governmental agency could care less about my heart's attitude. The I.R.S. does not care if I give grudgingly or willingly, lovingly or angrily, joyfully or sadly. All the I.R.S. is interested in is the bottom line. But it is not so with the Lord. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:7, "*So let each one give as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.*"

Jesus praised the widow's gift for it was from the heart. It was from the heart because it was sacrificial. The widow was putting in two mites (equal to 1/100 a denarius or 5 minutes labor at minimum wage), all she had, out of love for God. Jesus says that the widow has "*put in more than all.*" Not more in amount, but more in personal sacrifice. As William Barclay writes, "*The amount of the gift never matters as much as its cost to the giver, not the size of the gift but the sacrifice.*"

God sees our hearts. Are we giving cheerfully out of love for Him? Are we giving sacrificially? Take time tonight to examine your giving and the heart behind your gifts.

## **Monday, March 4, 2019**

### **Read Hebrews 11.**

Not only are we called to give out of obedience, putting God first in all things including our finances, but we give in order to leave behind a spiritual legacy. The definition of the word "*legacy*" is "*something received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past.*"

Many times, the word "*legacy*" is used to define a gift of money given to someone through a person's will upon the time of his or her death. But when we talk about "*leaving a legacy*," we can be talking about so much more than money. We want to be about leaving a spiritual legacy. And in order to leave a spiritual legacy, we must be intentional in doing so.

In Paul's letter to the Hebrews, he describes the many men and women that have gone before us and have had faith. In chapter 12, Paul says, "*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress.*" This "*huge*

*crowd of witnesses*” left a “*legacy*,” a “*legacy*” that is everlasting and has affected lives throughout the centuries. God gives us the same goal; God wants us to leave a spiritual legacy with the gifts that He has given each of us.

Ask yourself a few questions. Who is the one person that has made the greatest positive impact on my life? Why was that person able to have such a significant impact? Who has God placed in my life and in my circle of influence that I might make an impact on? How might I have an impact on someone else’s life with the resources and gifts I have been given; how might I make a spiritual impact in the world?

We leave a spiritual legacy when we give to others in the name of Jesus, when we feed, clothe, care for our neighbor, both far and wide. We also leave a spiritual legacy when we, the church, the body of Christ, provide a place where people can come to know and love Jesus Christ. Over a century ago a group of families began building a spiritual legacy that was named North East United Methodist Church. Over the years this church has touched many, many lives, and brought many people closer to Christ.

May we be about continuing the legacy that was started long ago. Might we build upon the past an even greater legacy for the future, touching lives throughout North East and the surrounding area with the love of Jesus. Just think of the day we will meet many of these people in heaven; we will see the fruits of our faith and works. Just imagine hearing the words, “*Well, done, my good and faithful servant.*”

**Read I Peter 2: 1-10.** You are a “*kingdom of priests, God’s holy nation...This is so you can show others the goodness of God.*” This is why we give. Out of gratitude for what God has given us, we give...we work to leave a legacy...helping others come to know what we have discovered...Jesus Christ.

Just take time today to thank God for His love for you and for the privilege of being able to show others God’s goodness and love in Jesus Christ...thank God for the resources He has blessed you with in order to give to others.

## **Tuesday, March 5, 2019**

### **Read Ecclesiastes 5: 10-15.**

What is one roadblock to our giving? As the wealthiest man on earth, Solomon learned that affluence doesn't satisfy. One of the greatest roadblocks to giving is materialism and the tendency for many of us to constantly run after mirages, clinging to the myth, as Randy Alcorn says, that the "*things [we] can't afford will satisfy [us].*" Yet, Solomon's money never ran out and he tried everything, bought everything. He says in Ecclesiastes 2:10, "*Anything I wanted, I took. I did not restrain myself from any joy.*" Solomon's conclusion was that "*everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.*"

We must continue to remind ourselves that the items around us in this world are not the genuine items, that our treasure is in heaven. The things of this world will not bring us happiness; the things of this world instead enslave us. In a culture that shows us a million commercials by the time we are twenty, it is hard to not want. I certainly see the effect of these many advertisements and the materialistic culture around us in my own life. And there are still many times I succumb to it.

Are we focusing on what we truly need? Are we recognizing that the treasures of this earth will not bring happiness? Have we looked around our homes and at how we spend our money, and asked ourselves what we are chasing after? Pray that God will show you ways you can chase more after heavenly treasures.

## **Wednesday, March 6, 2019 – ASH WEDNESDAY!**

### **Read Job 42 & Jeremiah 18.**

Ash Wednesday is a day of repentance and it marks the beginning of Lent. Ashes were used in ancient times, according to the Bible, to express mourning. Dusting oneself with ashes was the penitent's way of expressing sorrow for sins and faults. An ancient example of one expressing one's penitence is found in Job 42. Job says to God: "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*"

Ash Wednesday is the day that we express our remorse and sorrow for the many ways we have disobeyed God, the many ways we have hurt

others, the many ways we have ignored our Savior. It is a time to confess these sins and to invite God into our hearts to begin to clean once more...To say, *“Lord, I invite you in...go ahead and do your work...root out those areas of my life I need to change...those things I need to empty myself of to make more room for you...those habits I need to start that I might be closer to you...those attitudes that must be destroyed so I can be more like your son, Jesus Christ.”*

This is a time to fight with our pride, our gossip, our hatred of others, our prejudices, our unwillingness to listen to someone who differs from us...it is a time to wrestle with how we forgive, what is on our “history” when it comes to surfing the internet, how we treat our wives and if we are fulfilling our roles as Godly men, how much time we are spending in prayer and the Bible. This is a season where we are to wrestle with the serious issues in our lives that are holding us back from growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ...we are to wrestle with God like Jacob wrestled on the shore of the Jabbok river, all night until we are completely spent...and at the end of the Lenten season, when we walk in on Easter Sunday, that which we have given up will be gone for good and we will be new creations, having taken one step closer to our goal of becoming just like Jesus.

God speaks through the prophet Jeremiah, *“This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand...”*

God takes His prophet Jeremiah down to the potter’s house and shows him the potter spinning the clay and molding it into a vessel. At times the potter has to smash the clay and begin anew or work it over to make it smoother...Like the potter with his clay, God molds us...molds us and fashions us...but only if we allow Him can we truly get to the imperfections deep within...God won’t force Himself deep inside...We

have to go with Him...allowing Him to help us root out everything that is contrary to the One who created us.

Will you go “down to the Potter’s House” this Lenten season? Will you let God in, allowing Him to mold you more into the likeness of His Son? Will you let God do His Work in your life?

### **Thursday, March 7, 2019**

#### **Read Matthew 6:25-34.**

Another roadblock to giving. Unbelief and insecurity. God tells the Israelites in the Old Testament to test Him on giving. God says through the prophet Malachi, *“If you do [give] I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you!”*

Later, Jesus said how God would care for His people and one should not worry about tomorrow. We must trust that God, through His people, His church, and His Holy Spirit, will provide our needs. Sometimes it is hard to trust because it just doesn’t add up on paper and we are insecure about what the future holds as the stock market fluctuates and the economy takes a turn for the worse. But as Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29, *“You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who haven’t seen me and believe anyway.”*

Are you trusting God with your future? Are you trusting God with your tomorrow? Pray that God will give you a peace knowing that He will take care of you, you can trust “all” your life to Him.

### **Friday, March 8, 2019**

#### **Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Matthew 6:19-24.**

Randy Alcorn, in The Treasure Principle, writes, *“You can’t take it with you – but you can send it on ahead...It’s that simple. And if it doesn’t take your breath away, you’re not understanding it...If we give instead of keep, if we invest in the eternal instead of the temporal, we store up treasures in heaven that will never stop paying dividends. Whatever treasures we store up on earth will be left behind when we leave. Whatever treasures we store up in heaven will be waiting for us when we arrive.”* Jesus said, in Matthew 6:32-33, *“Your Heavenly Father already knows your needs, and he will give you all you need from*

*day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.”*

*“The one who plants generously” will make a huge impact on the world...“will get a generous crop”...an impact that will grow ministries, show people God’s love, perhaps even lead people to a saving and eternal relationship through Jesus Christ...“The one who plants generously” will leave a legacy after they have gone...“Their good deeds will never be forgotten.”*

I love the song, “Thank You,” by Ray Boltz. He sings, *“I dreamed I went to heaven...”* In heaven, he has people, one after another, come up to him, thanking him, for giving his time, gifts, and money to the Lord, sharing with him the difference it made in their lives. One man comes up to him and says that he is in heaven because of the man’s gift of a few dollars that went to a missionary who shared the Gospel message with him. The chorus is, *“Thank you, for giving to the Lord...I am a life that was changed.”* At the end of the song, Jesus stands with the man who has experienced this expression of what his life met to so many and says, *“My child, look around you...For great is your reward.”*

Will we *“lay up treasures upon earth”* or will we *“lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven?”* Take time tonight to pray about your giving, the impact you want your life to make on the world.

### **Saturday, March 9, 2019**

**Read Luke 12:33-34; Psalm 49:16-17; Acts 20:35;**

**2 Chronicles 1: 1-13 and 2 Corinthians 9:7.**

There are many roadblocks to giving.

Prejudice. The belief that *“Charity begins at home”* has caused many of God’s gifts to not be used to touch the lives of people of different color and culture.

Control. Many times, we want to know exactly what our dollar will be used for so we either designate our gifts or don’t give.

Not Seeing the Big Picture. Many times, we cannot see how our gifts can be used through the church to touch lives around our community and around the world.

And there are multiple other reasons we sometimes don’t give. In 2 Corinthians 8:7, Paul said, *“See that you also excel in this grace of*

giving.” John Wesley said, *“Money never stays with me. It would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find its way into my heart.”*

Hudson Taylor wrote, *“The less I spent on myself and the more I gave to others, the fuller of happiness and blessing did my soul become.”* As it says in Proverbs, in our giving we will be made rich. We have been created in God’s image and God is a giving God, and God promise in our giving, we will find true treasure.

Ask God to show you what is blocking you from giving sacrificially to the work of God in this world. Ask God to use you to bless His church and others.

**And Don’t Forget to Invite Someone to Church Tomorrow!!!**

### The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Head Usher Troy Winkey has effectively used sad puppy dog eyes to guilt paritioners into giving 3.7% more than Sunday’s Troy is not ushering .