



Liturgical Day: The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: June 12, 2009

Sermon Title: The Gift of Giving

### Stewardship Skit –beginning of service

Pastor Dave and Andy are on the church driveway with cones and signs that say, "Parking: \$5.00." Pastor Dave jokingly asks each car driven by a member for \$5.00, to pay for parking. If they seem reluctant, Andy hands them a \$5 bill, and they are free to hand that to Pastor Dave. If the car of a non-member pulls in, they receive a complimentary parking pass. At the beginning of the service, the Assisting Ministers welcome the Assembly and begin the service. When cars have finished coming into the parking lot, Pastor Dave (still dressed in his Parking Lot Attendant garb) addresses the congregation:



Thank you for your patience this morning, as we worked you over in the driveway. Now you can tell all your friends this week that the church you attend has become so popular, that they are selling spots in the parking lot on Sunday mornings. That actually was

a pretty effective exercise – I think we made a bunch of money. Although I don't know how much longer Andy can afford to stand across the driveway from me with a fist full of \$5 bills. Maybe we'll rotate the practice, and let each leadership team member get a chance to do that on a regular basis.

That is how some organizations work, you know. Not the part about the leadership team members; but there are many organizations, even some organizations that have traditionally relied on contributions, that have switched to a fee-

FIRST LESSON  
AMOS 7:7-15

PSALM  
PSALM 85:8-13

SECOND LESSON  
EPHESIANS 1:3-14

GOSPEL LESSON  
ST. MARK 6:14-29

SEMICONTINUOUS SERIES:  
2 SAMUEL 6:1-5, 12B-19  
PSALM 24

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O GOD, FROM YOU COME ALL HOLY DESIRES, ALL GOOD COUNSELS, AND ALL JUST WORKS. GIVE TO US, YOUR SERVANTS, THAT PEACE WHICH THE WORLD CANNOT GIVE, THAT OUR HEARTS MAY BE SET TO OBEY YOUR COMMANDMENTS; AND ALSO THAT WE, BEING DEFENDED FROM THE FEAR OF OUR ENEMIES, MAY LIVE IN PEACE AND QUIETNESS, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR AND LORD. AMEN.

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for-service basis. I'm not aware of any Christian congregations that have done this, although we can imagine what that would look like, can't we? I'm sure it wouldn't take long to estimate what it costs us to provide each service offered here at Saint Peter, and develop a menu. Maybe it would include:

	Parking	\$5 / car
Worship Service Attendance:		\$25 / worshipper
	Baptism:	\$150 / event
	Wedding:	\$350 / event
	Funeral:	\$250 / event
Sunday School Registration:		\$50 / student

That certainly would be one way to fund ministries. And the parking lot scheme actually has some merit: I'd enjoy visiting with each of you in the driveway every Sunday morning.

The truth is, we don't operate Christian congregations that way. We generally don't develop ministries, and try to sell them to you. I've been in churches where that has been done. I've seen financial campaigns that present to the congregation the plans that are on the table. They'll specify how much those plans will cost: say, this year it costs us about \$25 per Sunday per member. And then they persuade participants to donate as much as it costs to be involved.

We don't do it that way. What we offer here is free for anyone who wants to participate: members and non-members alike. Even the parking is free, for every event we schedule. (As a matter of fact, if you are upset that I fleeced you for \$5 this morning, see me after the service and I'll refund your money.) We are quite serious about that. We have no intention of charging for what takes place here.

That leaves a question, then, doesn't it? How is it that we pay for ministry? Obviously there are a number of expenses that we have here. It costs money to build and maintain and operate this facility. We have a fairly small paid staff, but we try to compensate them fairly. There is cost involved in program materials, and other day-to-day operating expenses like that..

Honestly, we depend on you to support those needs. And we ask you to do it in this way: don't give to Saint Peter because you feel guilty about how much it costs to provide this service to you. Don't give to Saint Peter because you think the programs are important, and need support. Don't give to Saint Peter because you hate it when people like me stand up in front of the congregation and talk about money.

Instead, we ask that you give to Saint Peter because you are excited about what God is doing in your life. We ask that you give to Saint Peter because of the salvation you have received through Jesus Christ. We ask that you give to Saint Peter because of the difference it makes for you to be a follower of Jesus Christ. We ask that you give to Saint Peter because it is one concrete way to show God how grateful you are. We ask that you give to Saint Peter because it is a way for you to give, as if we were giving directly to God.

That is how we give to God, through financial support of our home church. The only question left, is how much. That is the one question I get the most, especially from those who are new to the church. "How much should I give?" There is no one answer to that question, of course. Some of us have a great deal of money, even in these challenging financial times, and some of us have very little. Some of us have been growing in our ability to give for a long time, and some of us are just getting started. Some of us have discovered that it is a blessing to be able to give, and some of us have yet to experience that. So we will all give at different levels, based on our experience and our available resources. There is no one formulae for everyone's giving.

Instead, let me give you a target to shoot for. The only Biblical model for giving to the church is the tithe. From the early days of Israel, and continuing through the church of Jesus' day, the Bible instructs the faithful to tithe to the church. What that means, is that you and I are instructed to give 10% of our annual income to support the work of the Gospel each year. Now we could get buried in details if we want. I am thinking of questions like, "Do I tithe on my gross income, or my net income, or the adjusted gross income on my tax returns?" Honestly, questions like that take the heart out of our joy, and make it very hard for us to give in a way that is thankful. The answer I usually give is this: "What are you tithing on now?" If you are not tithing on your income at all, start by tithing on your adjusted gross income. Those of you with clever tax attorneys might really like that plan! But then, once you are appreciating what it means to give at that level,

you can move to tithing on your net income. Give that some time, and when you'd like to feel even better about your support of ministry, you can move to a tithe of your gross income. There are some among us who have enjoyed this so much, that they even are giving more than a tithe. But the point is this: start where you are, and make for yourself a plan to grow into becoming a tither. I can guarantee that it will be a rich blessing for you, as you begin to experience what it means to live as a grateful person. And I can assure you that if everyone in this congregation tithed, your elected leaders at Saint Peter wouldn't have to wonder how we are going to get through the summer and continue paying all of our bills.

Why am I sharing this message with you today? If you've paid attention to our income graph, I'm sure you know. We've been running a bit behind all year, but it hasn't been bad. Unfortunately, June was a hard month for us, and we are now some \$24,000 behind our 2009 income projections. But what concerns me even more is that if you combine the giving from Saint Peter members who made a pledge last fall, that group alone is behind nearly \$20,000 this year. So the point of my little parking lot skit is this: it is very important that those of us who are supporting members at Saint Peter step up to the plate and make a difference. Let's get caught up on our giving. Let's make the ministries of this church strong. Let's show the world that even when things are tight, and we might not be buying quite as many lattes as we used to, our support of Christian ministry is still one of our top priorities. And let's show to one another that a church where giving is based on our gratitude to God, is a lot stronger than a church where our giving is based on what we get out of the church programs.

So we want you to give with joy, because your giving is based on your gratitude to God. And what's more, we want you to grow in joy, and grow in giving. And we know that as you do, this church will become stronger and stronger. And God's work will be done. Thanks for your support. Let's do our best through the rest of the summer, and let's make sure the ministries of this congregation are an expression of our deep and passionate love for the God who has done so much for us.

Amen. Let's get back to worship.

David J. Risendal, Pastor (September 2, 2009)

### **Gospel Lesson; English Text:** <sup>i</sup>

<sup>6:14</sup> King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." <sup>15</sup> But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." <sup>16</sup> But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

<sup>17</sup> For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. <sup>18</sup> For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." <sup>19</sup> And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, <sup>20</sup> for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. <sup>21</sup> But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. <sup>22</sup> When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." <sup>23</sup> And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." <sup>24</sup> She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." <sup>25</sup> Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." <sup>26</sup> The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. <sup>27</sup> Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, <sup>28</sup> brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup> When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb. <sup>ii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> A list of Bible lessons for the coming weeks is available at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Lectionary.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> St. Mark 6:14-29, New Revised Standard Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

## Gospel Lesson; Greek Text:

<sup>14</sup> Καὶ ἤκουσεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρρδης, φανερόν γὰρ ἐγένετο τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔλεγον ὅτι Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων ἐγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐνεργοῦσιν αἱ δυνάμεις ἐν αὐτῷ. <sup>15</sup> ἄλλοι δὲ ἔλεγον ὅτι Ἡλίας ἐστίν· ἄλλοι δὲ ἔλεγον ὅτι προφήτης ὡς εἰς τῶν προφητῶν. <sup>16</sup> ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἡρρδης ἔλεγεν· ὃν ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην, οὗτος ἠγέρθη.

<sup>17</sup> Αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Ἡρρδης ἀποστείλας ἐκράτησεν τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ ἔδησεν αὐτὸν ἐν φυλακῇ διὰ Ἡρωδιάδα τὴν γυναῖκα Φιλίππου τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι αὐτὴν ἐγάμησεν. <sup>18</sup> ἔλεγεν γὰρ ὁ Ἰωάννης τῷ Ἡρρδῃ ὅτι οὐκ ἐξεστίν σοι ἔχειν τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου. <sup>19</sup> ἡ δὲ Ἡρωδιάς ἐνείχεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἠθέλεν αὐτὸν ἀποκτεῖναι, καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο. <sup>20</sup> ὁ γὰρ Ἡρρδης ἐφοβείτο τὸν Ἰωάννην, εἰδὼς αὐτὸν ἄνδρα δίκαιον καὶ ἅγιον, καὶ συνετήρει αὐτὸν, καὶ ἀκούσας αὐτοῦ πολλὰ ἠπόρει, καὶ ἠδέως αὐτοῦ ἤκουεν. <sup>21</sup> Καὶ γενομένης ἡμέρας εὐκαιροῦ ὅτε Ἡρρδης τοῖς γενεσίοις αὐτοῦ δείπνον ἐποίησεν τοῖς μεγιστάσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς χιλιάρχοις καὶ τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς Γαλιλαίας, <sup>22</sup> καὶ εἰσελθούσης τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτοῦ Ἡρωδιάδος καὶ ὀρχησαμένης ἤρρεσεν τῷ Ἡρρδῃ καὶ τοῖς συνανακειμένοις. εἶπεν ὁ βασιλεὺς τῷ κορασίῳ· αἰτήσον με ἐὰν θέλῃς, καὶ δώσω σοι. <sup>23</sup> καὶ ὤμοσεν αὐτῇ [πολλὰ] ὅ τι ἐὰν με αἰτήσης δώσω σοι ἕως ἡμίσεως τῆς βασιλείας μου. <sup>24</sup> καὶ ἐξελθούσα εἶπεν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτῆς· τί αἰτήσωμαι; ἡ δὲ εἶπεν· τὴν κεφαλὴν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτίζοντος. <sup>25</sup> καὶ εἰσελθούσα εὐθὺς μετὰ σπουδῆς πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα ἠτήσατο λέγουσα· θέλω ἵνα ἐξαυτῆς δῶς μοι ἐπὶ πίνακι τὴν κεφαλὴν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ. <sup>26</sup> καὶ περίλυπος γενόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς διὰ τοὺς ὄρκους καὶ τοὺς ἀνακειμένους οὐκ ἠθέλησεν ἀθετῆσαι αὐτὴν. <sup>27</sup> καὶ εὐθὺς ἀποστείλας ὁ βασιλεὺς σπεκουλάτορα ἐπέταξεν ἐνέγκαι τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἀπελθὼν ἀπεκεφάλισεν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ φυλακῇ <sup>28</sup> καὶ ἠνεγκεν τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ πίνακι καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὴν τῷ κορασίῳ, καὶ τὸ κοράσιον ἔδωκεν αὐτὴν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτῆς. <sup>29</sup> καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἦλθον καὶ ἦραν τὸ πτῶμα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔθηκαν αὐτὸ ἐν μνημείῳ. <sup>iii</sup>

## First Lesson:

<sup>7</sup> This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"See, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel;

I will never again pass them by;

<sup>9</sup> the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,  
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,

and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

<sup>10</sup> Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. <sup>11</sup> For thus Amos has said,

'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.'

<sup>12</sup> And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; <sup>13</sup> but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."

<sup>14</sup> Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, <sup>15</sup> and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' <sup>iv</sup>

<sup>iii</sup> St. Mark 6:14-29, The Greek New Testament, Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, (© 1983, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart).

<sup>iv</sup> Amos 7:7-15, New Revised Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).