



“From Jesus’ fullness

we have all received,

grace upon grace.”

John 1:16

It’s God, Not the Economy!

The Rev Paul Sadler, Sr., pastor of Mt. Zion Congregational, UCC, Cleveland, made a yet-echoing sermonic statement to our church several years ago. He took an empty bucket and dropped two pennies in it. Those two pennies made a lot of noise that day—not unlike the two fish and loaves in the gospel that fed the multitude.

Rev. Sadler did this to illustrate the noise made by a lone woman who gave just two coins, but that was all she had. He underscored how

the noise of that stewardship was noticed by Jesus in the midst of the parade of givers—she gave *all* she had. While others calculated due to the economy, she gave all she had! Was her offering market or faith-driven? Did she believe that God was broke, too?

God said “Let there be light” to a formless and void earth. Chaos became order from God’s three-word sermon, “Let there be!” Let there be faith that God can and will supply our needs according to God’s riches in glory. Let us break the silence on stewardship! It’s God, not the economy!

Rev. Ozzie Smith, Jr.

Covenant UCC, South Holland, Illinois

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



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There's Something Here You Can Give

I have been to more than a few board meetings lately where the economy dominates conversation--each meeting seems to want to send the hungry away from its called mission. There seems to be much *knee-jerk* reaction to the economy, but little *knee-bent* response to the economy. It seems that the Bible has been replaced by the budget. Has God run out of resources, too? Is God frightened by the market? Did not God cre-

ate both the bull and the bear? Did David not say in Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?”

Remember when Jesus fed a crowd with just five loaves of bread and two fish? Grace multiplies: grace upon grace. Yet it seems to me that we as a people of faith are missing the grace and have come to see the loaves and fishes as an insufficient snack. Do we see the fish and loaves *as is* or *as if*? Can we hear Jesus say, “You give them something to eat”? Jesus is making an *as if* statement—*as if* God is still able to do something, as if God is not broke!

Have we allowed the *as is* of our times to tank our faith? There is still a leap of faith in that lunch of loaves and fishes and in these times. There is something *here* you can give! Jesus calls, *as if* we can still hear and, in faith, give them something to eat.

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Give When and Where It Hurts!

When the very self-assured disciples come to Jesus to brag about all they had taught and accomplished, Jesus just tells them to go to a deserted place and rest awhile. He seems to ignore the disciples’ progress report. Was this a way of helping them to stop keeping score on deeds? Later, the same bragging disciples want to shoo away the crowd around Jesus, saying the people would soon be hungry and there weren’t enough resources to feed them. To this, Jesus

sends out another request seemingly oblivious of the facts: “You give them something to eat.”

How do we hear Jesus here and now? Are we sending stewardship opportunities away because of the economy, or are we yet giving in spite of what seems insurmountable? Jesus had no calculator or budget committees—he was and is the source, still! He gives the disciples and us a challenge to not send opportunity away, but to take care of it when and where it presents itself—even when and where it hurts.

Giving when and where it hurts recognizes not only that God is still speaking, but that God is not broke! “You give them something to eat” calls us to look beyond the economy, knowing that our little becomes much when placed in the Master’s hand. Opportunity is not something to be shooed away but something to be shown the love of God through grace-filled and cheerful giving—even when and where it hurts.

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God is the Source of all Resource!

To be a steward is to take care of what God has generously given—to be responsible and accountable to each other and the land, caring for the abundance God has provided. Now more than ever is the time to remember the abundance that comes from God, to remember that God is not broke, never has been, and never will be!

Stewardship is mindfulness of Jesus as the source of grace upon grace, God as the source of all resource!

Stewardship is the restraint of remembering that the least of these still go to bed hungry. Stewardship is the restraint of remembering that God is not affected by the stock market, that God is still speaking, and God is able, too. Stewardship is remembering that God is the source of all resource! Stewardship is grace-filled giving: grace upon grace!

Rev. Ozzie Smith, Jr.
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Weekly Giving if the Percentage Is
 (Rounded to the nearest dollar)

Annual Income	Monthly Income	Weekly Income	2%	4%	6%	8%	10%	15%
\$8,000	\$667	\$154	\$3.00	\$6.00	\$9.00	\$12.00	\$15.00	\$23.00
12,000	1,000	231	5.00	9.00	14.00	18.00	23.00	35.00
16,000	1,333	308	6.00	12.00	18.00	25.00	31.00	46.00
20,000	1,667	385	8.00	15.00	23.00	31.00	39.00	58.00
25,000	2,083	481	10.00	19.00	29.00	38.00	48.00	72.00
30,000	2,500	577	12.00	23.00	35.00	46.00	58.00	87.00
35,000	2,917	673	13.00	27.00	40.00	54.00	67.00	101.00
40,000	3,333	769	15.00	31.00	46.00	62.00	77.00	115.00
45,000	3,750	865	17.00	35.00	52.00	69.00	87.00	130.00
50,000	4,167	962	19.00	38.00	58.00	77.00	96.00	144.00
60,000	5,000	1,154	23.00	46.00	69.00	92.00	115.00	173.00
75,000	6,250	1,442	29.00	58.00	87.00	115.00	144.00	216.00
100,000	8,333	1,923	38.00	77.00	115.00	154.00	192.00	288.00
125,000	10,417	2,404	48.00	96.00	144.00	192.00	240.00	361.00

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