

**A sermon preached by the Rev. Jeanne Leinbach  
at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Cleveland Heights, Ohio  
on October 9, 2022**

*2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19*

Let's get right down to it...today is the kickoff of the Annual Stewardship Campaign, the time of year we reflect on the role of our faith in our lives, and then make a financial pledge to support the ministries of this parish for the following calendar year, now for 2023. Why is the kickoff in October? To give us all a few weeks to be thoughtful about the amount of our pledge and then to give the staff the time needed to put together a reliable budget for the next calendar year. How do we determine our pledge? We all give to different organizations. How do we determine how much to pledge to the church? The Rev. Dr. Daniel Matthews is a former Rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in New York City – well known as Trinity Wall Street. Matthews differentiates four types of giving: charity, philanthropy, fundraising and stewardship. **Charity** “is a response to a crisis or immediate need.” Giving to the current humanitarian efforts in Puerto Rico and Florida due to the recent devastation from the hurricanes is a good example.

**Philanthropy** “is like an investment. It is the act of giving money with the intention of improving the welfare of a community or organization over the long-term.” **Fundraising** “asks us to give to a project such as a building or a capital investment. It is a necessary procedure for developing hospitals, schools, and the arts.” Charity, philanthropy and fund-raising have something in common... “all treat the individual as the owner of the money.”

The fourth type of giving, **stewardship**, is different. In stewardship, “God is the owner and the giver is simply returning a portion of what God has given.” All we are, all we have comes from God. In our culture that values self-reliance, we lose sight of this fundamental fact of life, this essential fact of life: all we are, all we have comes from God. Humanity, our existence,

comes from God. Our ability to reason, to be educated, to earn a living, comes from God. Our ability to create, which gives rise to the arts, comes from God. Our ability to heal, which gives rise to medicine, comes from God. Our ability to be inspired, to be motivated to pursue our passions, comes from God. Our ability to care, to be compassionate, to nurture the bonds of our common humanity, comes from God. All we are, all we have, comes from God. The discipline of stewardship, of once a year reflecting on the role of our faith in our lives and making a financial pledge to support the ministries of this parish community is all about giving back a portion of what God has given us. In gratitude, we give.

In the Gospel passage this morning from Luke, Jesus, while on his way to Jerusalem, encounters ten men, all with leprosy, all who ask for mercy. Jesus tells them to go to the priests, which by Mosaic Law is how a cleansing ritual is completed. While the ten are turning and going on their way, they find themselves healed. However, only one of them, the Samaritan, the foreigner, turns back to Jesus and gives thanks to God. Jesus points out the discrepancy. Why aren't the others giving thanks to God? Jesus tells the one who turned back, who turned toward God, "your faith has made you well." The Samaritan is well, beyond physical healing. He is emotionally well. Gratitude to God makes us right with the world. Living a life of faith is all about living a life of gratitude.

We confirm gratitude as fundamental to our faith every Sunday in worship. Perhaps the words have become rote and so, overlooked. Let's take a fresh look. We have four Eucharistic Prayers in the Book of Common Prayer: A, B, C, and D. Though the four versions vary in form and content, all four begin with the same words, the words that frame the entire prayer. All four Eucharistic Prayers open with these words: "The Lord be with you." The people respond: "*And also with you.*" "Lift up your hearts." "*We lift them up to the Lord.*" "Let us give thanks to the

Lord our God.” *“It is right to give our thanks and praise.”* It is right to give our thanks and praise. Let us hear these words anew every Sunday. Let us remind ourselves every Sunday that being grateful to God is a cornerstone of life. As John Buchanan, former Pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago sermonizes, “Being grateful and saying thank you are absolutely at the heart of God’s hope for the human race and God’s intent for each of us.”

Probably not-all-that surprising are the studies, which show that grateful people are more hopeful. More informing are the studies, which show that gratitude improves physical health. God’s gift of healing comes full circle: emotional healing leads to physical healing. We all experience stress and need to remain aware of the impact of stress. Studies show that living in gratitude reduces the detrimental impact of stress on our health. It is right to give our thanks and praise – God shows us the rightness of gratitude through our being, our body and soul. Gratitude makes us right with the world. It is right to give our thanks and praise for God’s life-giving, life-sustaining, life-enriching, eternal love. We show our gratitude by giving back a portion of what God has given us.

Importantly, the funds we give back are necessary for our seeking, our serving, our loving God, together in this faith community. Our only funding source is our parishioners. Also, importantly, the funds given are expensed efficiently, and shared abundantly. So many benefit from the ministries of this parish: worship, formation, pastoral care, outreach, and fellowship.

Let’s give the discipline of stewardship it’s due. Let’s set aside time over the next few weeks to reflect on our faith, reflect on life lived together in this community, reflect on the impact on this world of sharing God’s love. Then, let us thoughtfully consider how much we are able to give back. Nothing is more constant, nothing is more true in our lives than God’s love, God’s forgiveness, God’s inspiration, God’s hope, God’s peace. Let us live in gratitude to God

for all we have, for all we are. Please know that I am deeply grateful for your gifts which fund the ministries of this parish, and I am deeply grateful to be on this journey with you. Amen.