

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

12 November 2023

Such as I Have

Text: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." *Acts 3:6*

The book of Acts takes up the story of Christianity where the Gospels leave off.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit came in a unique way, and the apostles moved forward dynamically and daringly to tell the story of the risen Christ.

Of course the book of Acts tells only a few of the many wonderful events that must have occurred. The Holy Spirit led Luke to record the visit of Peter and John to the temple, where they healed a man who had been lame from birth.

How strange Peter's words must have sounded when he said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee;" but how exciting Peter's deed when he took the man by the right hand, lifted him up, and through the power of the Holy Spirit he was healed.

A double miracle occurred that day!

The man learned to walk and leap at the very moment he was healed.

A great stewardship lesson is present in this story.

We are to do "what we can with what we have where we are for Jesus' sake, today" and never wait for a greater opportunity nor for a time when we have greater abilities and resources.

Money isn't everything.

Too often when we speak of stewardship, we only think of money.

How thrilling to see a story where money is not set forth as the most important thing.

In fact Peter came close to minimizing it.

He said plainly, "Silver and gold have I none" and then proceeded to work the miracle.

Does the time ever come in the life of a church, or a religious organization, when money can actually be a stumbling block?

Thomas Aquinas, an outstanding religious leader of another generation, once visited the pope and was shown all the treasures of the Roman Church.

The pope said to Thomas, "Well, Thomas, no longer can the church say, 'Silver and gold have I none'. Thomas replied, "Yes, Holy Father, but have you ever thought that the church is in danger of also not being able to say, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk'?"

We must be careful in our day not to evaluate our local churches and mission boards in terms of budgets alone.

Pastors and Missionaries of other days were not nearly as concerned about a "cost of living" raise as they were a "cost of loving" raise.

Let us be careful, very careful, to keep our priorities correct.

Money is important.

We do not want to be all about money but it does take money to accomplish things.

It takes money to carry on God's work in today's world.

God's Word says much about the stewardship of possessions, and the giving of money.

In Paul's second letter to the church at *Corinth*, chapters, 8 and 9, are devoted to the matter of giving.

He said, "Therefore, as you abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this grace also."

He pointed out that our supreme example in giving is the Lord Jesus Christ who, though rich, became poor that through his poverty we might become rich.

God has given to some people the ability to make "big money."

Their duty is to set aside an even larger part of that money for the work of the gospel, and to help

others.

In the Old Testament days, the tenth was the minimum.

Certainly a Christian would not want to give less to spread the Christian faith than an Old Testament Jew gave for his faith.

In fact, counting all of the special offerings and supplementary tithes, the Old Testament saint was commanded to give far more than the tithe.

Money is important.

We live in a world far different from that of Peter, John, and Paul.

There was, of course, a monetary system in that day, but money is far more essential as a means of exchange than it has ever been before in the world.

And more than ever before, the importance of propagating our faith is clear.

We must lead people to Christ, and soon, or our way of life, as we know it, is in serious jeopardy.

What do you have?

Whether we use the terms talents and abilities or gifts when we speak of what we have to offer God in service, we must answer the question "What do I have to offer my Lord?"

And another question follows closely: Am I willing to give myself, including my talents, abilities, and gifts, to be used anyway God sees fit?

When General John Pershing landed in France with the American Expeditionary Force in World War I, he presented himself and his army to General Ferdinand Foch, commander of the Allied Forces, and said, "Our men, our equipment, our resources, all that we have are yours. Use them as you see fit."

God is certainly waiting to hear every Christian say, in essence, the same thing.

Stewardship is giving "such as we have" to our Master unreservedly for use in the service of his kingdom.

Everyone who believes in Christ and is dedicated to him has great possessions.

They are, however, spiritual resources.

We should find our greatest joy in sharing the gospel with others by lip and by life.

This, however, does not relieve us from the responsibility of supporting God's work financially.

We cannot evade our responsibility in financial things by rationalizing that we are "spiritual" and therefore are not required to bring financial gifts.

In the Old Testament, even the Levites gave tithes of the tithes.

On the other hand, giving money does not release us from the duty of serving in other ways.

Stewardship involves both finances and lifestyle.

It is not a case of "either or."

We are obligated to the "both and" principle.

Time, talent, tithe, influence, all that we have belongs to God to further His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

As I said last week, God only wants it all.

At least he wants us willing to give it all.

All we have, all we are, committed to him for his purposes.

Jesus set the standard of service.

And he set it high.

What seems to be too high for anyone to reach.

We achieve it through grace and faith.

We do not deserve what we have.

If you do not have what you want be thankful that you do not have what you deserve.

Grace is that part, having more than we deserve.

Then faith equips us for service.

Our task, and goal, is to, "grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ."

How can we grow into Christ?

We grow by stability of Christian convictions.

We are to stand firmly on the Word of God, our anchor in this life.

We grow by sincerity of Christian love.

Dealing truly in love.

Our manner of life is to be sincere and true, genuine love without diversion to divide our allegiance, without hypocrisy to deny our witness, without divisions to hinder our purpose in him.

Truthing in love, love for Christ, for one another, for those who are lost.

We grow by the solidarity of the Christian community.

All members of the church are knit and joined together.

What is for the good of one, is for the good of all.

How great and how high is Christ's goal for his church?

For the perfecting of the saints.

For the building up of the body of Christ.

Until we attain the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full complete person.

God perfects us in our journey on earth.

If, we permit him to do so.

If we commit all to him.

If we serve God and our fellow humans.

If we believe he can and will.

Then relax and let him do his work in and through us.

For his glory and the furthering of his kingdom.