

This message was prepared for the Tontogany Presbyterian Church by Rev. Pamela Short
The twenty first day of September, in the year of our LORD two thousand and fourteen.

Bible Texts (New Revised Standard Version)

Exodus 35:1-36:7

Moses assembled all the congregation of the Israelites and said to them: These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do: 2 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy Sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. 3 You shall kindle no fire in all your dwellings on the Sabbath day. 4 Moses said to all the congregation of the Israelites: This is the thing that the Lord has commanded: 5 Take from among you an offering to the Lord; let whoever is of a generous heart bring the Lord's offering: gold, silver, and bronze; 6 blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine linen; goats' hair, 7 tanned rams' skins, and fine leather; acacia wood, 8 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 9 and onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and the breastpiece. 10 All who are skillful among you shall come and make all that the Lord has commanded: the tabernacle, 11 its tent and its covering, its clasps and its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; 12 the ark with its poles, the mercy seat, and the curtain for the screen; 13 the table with its poles and all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; 14 the lampstand also for the light, with its utensils and its lamps, and the oil for the light; 15 and the altar of incense, with its poles, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance, the entrance of the tabernacle; 16 the altar of burnt offering, with its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils, the basin with its stand; 17 the hangings of the court, its pillars and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court; 18 the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court, and their cords; 19 the finely worked vestments for ministering in the holy place, the holy vestments for the priest Aaron, and the vestments of his sons, for their service as priests. 20 Then all the congregation of the Israelites withdrew from the presence of Moses. 21 And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the Lord's offering to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the sacred vestments. 22 So they came, both men and women; all who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and pendants, all sorts of gold objects, everyone bringing an offering of gold to the Lord. 23 And everyone who possessed blue or purple or crimson yarn or fine linen or goats' hair or tanned rams' skins or fine leather, brought them. 24 Everyone who could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it as the Lord's offering; and everyone who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work, brought it. 25 All the skillful women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson yarns and fine linen; 26 all the women whose hearts moved them to use their skill spun the goats' hair. 27 And the leaders brought onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and the breastpiece, 28 and spices and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense. 29 All the Israelite men and women whose hearts made them willing to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord. 30 Then Moses said to the Israelites: See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; 31 he has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, 32 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, 33 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft. 34 And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. 35 He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work done by an artisan or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of artisan or skilled designer.

Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful one to whom the Lord has given skill and understanding to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded. 2 Moses then called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful one to whom the Lord had given skill, everyone whose heart was stirred to come to do the work; 3 and they received from Moses all the freewill offerings that the Israelites had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him

freewill offerings every morning, 4 so that all the artisans who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task being performed, 5 and said to Moses, "The people are bringing much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do." 6 So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing; 7 for what they had already brought was more than enough to do all the work.

Gospel of Mark 12: 38-44

As [Jesus] taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

[Jesus] sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums.

A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.

Then he called his disciples and said to them,

"Truly I tell you,

this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.

For all of them have contributed out of their abundance;

but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

In one of our bible stories for today, the people of Israel have moved from a place of slavery to a place of freedom. When they left bondage, the Egyptians gave them an abundance of material goods: spices, oils, jewelry, silver, gold, clothing and more. We pick up the story of Israel after they have been given the 10 commandments or ten instructions on how to live together as free people. Besides these instructions, God makes quite a fuss about their worship space. The fact that the worship space is a tent—Tabernacle means tent—is both practical and theological. Obviously, as they moved from Egypt to the Promised Land, they needed something portable, thus the tent; additionally, God tells us in II Samuel 7 that God has no need of a permanent house to live in; rather a tent will do quite nicely.

Still, this was not like a boy-scout pup tent. Rather, the worship space and worship garments were studded with jewels and set with gold and silver and fine linens. Not only would it take a lot of earthy resources to make the tabernacle, it also took a great deal of human resources.

Like the people of Tontogany, the people of Israel were given talents by God
in metal art,
in cutting jewels,
in wood crafting,
in designing,
in sewing and embroidery, etc. etc. etc.

In other words, like us, they were given people who could live out the creative nature of God within the community. I love this part of the story:

“Moses then called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful one to whom the LORD had given skill, everyone whose heart was stirred to come to do the work, and they received from Moses all the freewill offerings that the Israelites had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning, so that all the artisans who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task being performed and said to Moses, “The people are bringing much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do.” (Ex. 36:2-5)

Stop the offering!!!

More than enough.

In our Bible **stories** for today there is more than enough. In the story from Exodus there is more than enough cloth

and more than enough jewels

and more than enough silver

and more than enough labor.

In the Gospel story there is more than enough faith.

Both of these stories lay counter to what our world teaches us every day; and not only our world, but even the church gets caught up in the fallacy that God has not given us enough to meet the needs of all the people in the world.

There is not enough land!

There is not enough water!

There is not enough food!

We are stretched to our limit!

Actually, what we have swirling around us is not enough truth. Perhaps the most obvious example of the common message of not enough is when we believe that world hunger is an overwhelming and unsolvable problem; that our resources simply will not stretch far enough to feed everyone. After all, that would take 30 billion dollars a year worldwide. How could we possibly afford that kind of money?! Year after year after year~! Well, then there is the truth that while it would take 30 billion dollars to feed the world for one year, the US is now spending that or 521 billion a year on defense. Well this really isn't a sermon about world hunger, or about the priorities of the Pentagon. It is however about God's economy of "enough."

It is my privilege to declare to you that God is generous in providing and delights in giving humanity more than enough of what we need every day. Truly God has supplied God's people with more than enough.

In fact, God is so confident that there is plenty to go around, that God only asks for 10 percent of the total.

Want to give more than 10%, go ahead, though there may come a time when says, "Enough already! You have given enough!"

I ran across an interesting stat this week; if every Christian would keep 90% of their income for themselves and give only 10% to God, there would be an additional \$165 billion dollars to distribute yearly. Here is how one person dreamed of spending that money:

- \$25 billion could relieve global hunger, starvation and deaths from preventable diseases in five years.
- \$12 billion could eliminate illiteracy in five years.
- \$15 billion could solve the world's water and sanitation issues, specifically at places in the world where 1 billion people live on less than \$1 per day.
- \$1 billion could fully fund all overseas mission work.

- \$107 billion would still be left over for additional ministry expansion. (RelevantMagazine.com)

This is outrageously hopeful! The arms of Jesus could literally stretch from Tontogany Creek, to Tanzania to Tokyo to Tucson and back to Tontogany.

Besides this very practical, economic message, there are at least 4 other Fundamental reasons for giving:

First, we are made in the image of a giving and generous God. If we are to live into the very best and core of who we are, then giving generously brings us closer to our essence.

Secondly, to give generously is to claim our position as stewards, instead of slaves. It occurs to me that the only offering that is mentioned during the Egyptian enslavement, is the offering of the Passover lamb. And in this offering God allows, even insists that the people and their neighbors eat all of it that they can possibly eat, and then only after everyone has had enough, it the rest burned up in sacrifice. When the people are liberated from slavery and are learning to live as free persons in community with one another and with God, they are then asked to give and their instant response is to give so generously that the recipients of the gifts said "Enough!" We have more than enough. Tell them to stop giving.

To be a steward is a place of honor. It means that God trusts you and believes in you enough to offer you responsibility with God's resources. It also implies an open line of communication with God. As a steward you have ready access to the heart of the Owner. Not sure what you are supposed to be doing as a steward? Make an appointment with the Owner. Through the Word of God and the Spirit of God you will be given guidance.

Thirdly, for Tontogany to live generously is an extension of our identity as people of prayer. Henri Nouwen says we ought to pray with open hands; open hands demonstrate our willingness to give our requests to God, entrusting God to take them from our hands and return to us enough of what is needed for each person and situation. The stance of open hands is kind of fascinating to me. If you see someone at a distance with open hands, you may not know if they are giving something or receiving something. If we practice living with open hands, we are constantly ready to both--receive and give.

Fourthly, when we give generously we are standing against the cultural norm of fear of not enough and standing with the truth that God is constantly offering the world exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or imagine. We model for our children and our world that we can be set free from castles of dread and live freely in broad spaces of joy.

Finally, let me end this message with a story of generosity.

The time of the Great Depression.

The place southeastern Idaho.

The main characters: Brother Miller and 3 little boys.

Brother Miller sold produce at a roadside stand.

He had 3 little customers who had no money.

One was named Barry and Barry liked fresh peas.

“Hello Barry, how are you today?”

“H’lo, Mr. Miller. Fine, thank ya. Jus’ admirin’ the peas... sure look good.”

“They are good, Barry. How’s your Ma?”

“Fine. Gittin’ stronger alla’ time.”

“Good. Anything I can help you with?”

“No, Sir. Jus’ admirin’ them peas.”

“Would you like to take some home?”

“No, Sir. Got nuthin’ to pay for ‘em with.”

“Well, what have you to trade me for some of those peas?”

“All I got’s my prize marble here.”

“Is that right? Let me see it.”

“Here ’tis. She’s a dandy.”

“I can see that. HmMMM, only thing is this one is blue and I sort of go for red. Do you have a red one like this at home?”

“Not ‘zackley... but, almost.”

“Tell you what. Take this sack of peas home with you and next trip this way let me look at that red marble.”

“Sure will. Thanks, Mr. Miller.”

When Barry returned with the red marble, Mr. Miller said, “Well, that is a fine marble, but it is not quite what I’m looking for. Do you have a green one at home?” Yeh, I think so. Well, here, you take this bag of apples home with you and bring me back that green marble.

By now you can guess that when Barry arrived with the green marble, Mr. Miller really wanted a yellow one and so a bag of potatoes was sent home in promise of Barry returning with the yellow marble.

Multiple this bargaining process times two other boys and fast forward about 30 years or so. News of Mr. Miller's death reached the 3 boys. They must have stayed in contact with one another over the years, for they all showed up at the funeral home at the same time; one in a military uniform and two in business suits.

They approached Mr. Miller to pay their respects. When they turned to leave, it was said that Mr. Miller finally held in his hand three, magnificently shiny, red marbles.

Now may our Generous God

plant into your world abundant seeds of fruit, understanding and peace

May our Giving God

hand your neighborhoods prosperity, laughter and joy

And may our Gracious God

fill up your heart with devotion, honor, and hope

Until you can shout with angels, "enough!"

"We have more than enough!"

I am grateful to the following resources for informing this message:

Nouwen, Henri. Praying with Open Hands. Notre Dame: Ava Maria Press, 1972.

<http://www.inspirationalarchive.com/3763/marble-trader/#ixzz3DmgBFPVf>

<http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/church/what-would-happen-if-church-tithed>

See next page for a children's lesson on stewardship:

GOD is generous as you can see
Now it is time for us to be.



We can start by sharing a few of our toys;
We can play kindly with girls and boys.



We can give away some of our time;
While we help, we can laugh and make a rhyme.



We can share song and story at church or school;
We can do our best to make generosity the rule.



We can give our pennies and dimes and nickels
When we do, surely GOD is quite tickled.



In the Bible, GOD asked the people to give;
Sometimes it is needed to help others live.

Giving is such a fun thing to do;
It makes folks smile; maybe you will too!



Cheerful Givers

In the Bible GOD asked the people to bring a “tithe”.
A tithe is giving one thing out of every ten things you have.
At that time the people were mostly farmers and shepherds.



If the shepherds had ten sheep, how many would they bring?



If the farmers had ten bags of grain, how many would they bring?



The sheep and the grain would help feed their priests, who are like our pastors, and also feed the immigrants, and the orphans, and the widows (Deuteronomy 26:12).

Today some have gardens and we share food with others.



If you have ten ears of corn, how many would you bring?



If you have ten eggs, how many would you bring?



Many people today are called by GOD to work in places like schools and factories and stores and hospitals and police stations and court houses and government buildings and businesses. Instead of growing food, they get paid money for their work.

If I get paid ten dollars, how many dollars would I bring?



Do you sometimes get paid for your work?

If you get paid ten pennies, how many pennies would you bring?



Do you ever get an allowance?

If you get paid ten nickels, how many nickels would you bring?



Hummm... I wonder what I should bring if I get paid 10 dimes?



Each week in worship we invite people to bring their tithes and offerings to GOD. The elders of the church meet and pray and ask GOD to help them decide how the offerings are to be used.

Would you like to begin tithing? Here is one way to do it:

Ask your parents or grandparents, aunts or uncles if you can do some work for them. If they give you a dime for your labors, ask them for 10 pennies instead (it is the same amount of money!) You may place one penny in the jar marked "GOD" and then you may place the other pennies in the other jars. Perhaps your parents can help you decide how much to place in the other jars.

If you receive a whole dollar,
ask for 100 pennies or 20 nickels or 10 dimes.

(Yes, all of those are the same amount of money!)

If you have 100 pennies, you may place 10 pennies in GOD's jar.

If you have 20 nickels, you may place 2 nickels in GOD's jar.

If you have 10 dimes, you may place 1 dime in GOD's jar.

The rest of your money may be placed in your other jars.

You are welcome to bring your tithes to Sunday School.

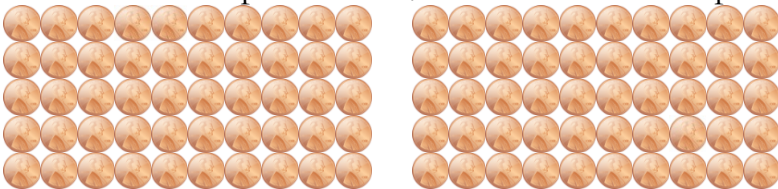
Your tithes will be used to help poor people.

Perhaps your offerings will be used to buy some chickens so that a family can have eggs and share some eggs with their neighbors!



100 pennies is the same as One Dollar

10 pennies is 1/10 or a tithe of 100 pennies



20 nickels is the same as One Dollar

2 nickels is 1/10 or a tithe of 20 nickels



10 dimes is the same as One Dollar

1 dime is 1/10 or a tithe of 10 dimes

