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Why is it so Hard to Preach About Money

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B25 WHY IS IT SO HARD TO TALK ABOUT MONEY? PREACHING AND STEWARDSHIP

Craig A. Satterlee

1. Today, stewardship is a church word that makes it easier for preachers to dance around money, time, and skills, but does not really connect with many parishioners.
 - a. Stewardship was invented by the church and is more pragmatic than theological. Introduced as a discipline in response to competition from other causes.
 - b. Define Stewardship in one word and then use that word.
2. Preach the Gospel. Don't preach Stewardship.
 - a. Distinguish between preaching the gospel and fundraising from the pulpit.
 - i. Giving to special projects.
 - ii. Giving to mission.
 - iii. Giving to meet budget
 - b. God, not money, is the subject of the sermon
 - c. Proclaim God's promise in giving—what God is up to. Preach about the possibilities and implications of the Gospel for money. Name the “good news” in giving. We give in response to the gospel.
 - d. Ask people to give—yes, you must! But invitation and exhortation follows proclamation. And the gospel calls for invitation not coercion.
2. Jesus has lots to say about money.
 - a. Let Jesus do the talking.
 - i. Matthew
 1. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Mt 6:21)
 2. “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” (Mt 6:24)

ii. Luke

1. The Kingdom of God belongs to the poor, but the rich share in it by virtue of their treatment of the poor and needy.
 2. God is for the poor. Beginning with the Magnificat, Jesus proclaims good news to the poor in word and deed. The ultimate hope of the poor is the hope of the coming eschatological reversal.
 3. The hope for the poor in the present is the fellowship of a new community, where justice, equality and compassion are living realities. The community of believers is to be the place in the world where the good news of God's love to the poor, embodied most fully in Jesus, is transformed into practical reality.
 4. Wealth and possessions pose a radical danger to Christian discipleship. The Lukan response to possessions is not the call to total abandonment, but the use of one's possessions as a means of discipleship—placing our possessions at the service of those in need in a radical way. Zacchaues standard is “one half to the poor.”
- b. Stand with your people under God's Word, rather than with God's Word against your people.
- c. Let the lectionary be your friend.
- i. For many of us, the preaching task sometime during October and November is to preach the Bible, the New Testament, or at least the appointed/selected readings from a “stewardship perspective.”
 - ii. Don't limit preaching about money to stewardship time. Preach money when money comes up in the lectionary. Sometimes, the best stewardship preaching occurs when you are not asking people to increase their pledge.
3. Ask, What makes preaching about money difficult?
- a. Messes with the Power of Mammon
 - b. Fusses with Our Own Fiscal Demons
 - i. Personal stake—preachers' salaries are involved.
 - ii. What norms and values surround conversation about money in the culture, families, individual lives, and your life?
 - c. Challenges Congregational Norms. We use Scripture to “baptize” our norms

- i. “But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Mt 6:3-4)
 - ii. “He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”” (Lu 21:1-4)
 - d. Stirs Up Possibilities
4. Appeal to people’s best selves.
 - a. Most people want to give; what keeps them from giving?
 - b. “During the first few years of ministry, pastors have a unique opportunity to speak authentically to the struggle to be a faithful steward.”
 5. Untangle biblical reasons for and ways of giving.
 - a. Which biblical perspective will we preach stewardship from? Give voice to all that the Bible has to say.
 - b. Use a consistent exegetical method.
 6. Biblical reasons for giving
 - a. An act of worship
 - b. Participation in God’s Reign
 - c. An act of resistance
 - d. A Way to Bear Witness
 - e. To Grow in Grace
 - f. To Receive (?)
 7. Biblical Ways of Giving
 - a. Gratefully
 - b. Freely

- c. Cheerfully
 - d. Generously
 - e. Obediently
 - f. Intentionally
8. How Much?
- a. Everything
 - b. First fruits
 - c. Proportionate giving
 - d. Tithe
 - e. Growing in Giving
9. Partner preaching
- a. Testimony
 - b. Offertory - What can we do to make the offertory bigger and preach on the liturgical act?
 - c. Other congregational activities

For Further Reading

Craig A. Satterlee, *Preaching and Stewardship: Proclaiming God's Invitation to Grow*, The Alban Institute, Herndon, VA, 2011.

Mark Alan Powell, *Giving to God: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2006.

Charles R. Lane, *Ask, Thank, Tell: Improving Stewardship Ministry in Your Congregation*, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 2006,