

* GOSPEL HYMN

Spiritual, inclusive version

You've got the whole world in Your hands, You've got the whole world in Your hands... You've got the tiny little baby in your hands ...

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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Share all the good you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can,
at all the times you can, with all the people you can, as long as ever you can. --John Wesley

Share-or Deal with the Monkey Trap

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH October 14, 2012
Rev. Larry Moffet

In places where ring-tailed monkeys live, people have learned how to trap them without hurting them. Reportedly one of the hardest of all creatures to catch, monkeys are often captured by a very simple trap. Just put a banana, or something tasty inside a canister or a basket with a small mouth, and chain it to a tree. Ring-tails stick their hand in the can, grab the banana, and can't get free. They will hang on to their "prize" even though all they need to do to be free is to let go.

Don't hang on to your possessions and think you are in charge of your life, The Gospel Scripture for today makes that clear. What you think you control just might be controlling you.

²¹ "...You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor

There is another lesson: share. If you have a friend close by, be willing to

²¹ "... sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

Here, I'll shake the jar and you grab the banana. We'll share.

There is a lot of Grace in this story. ²¹Jesus, looking at him, loved him

This young well-off person might have been a humble follower who told this story on himself. We know the disciples told Gospel writers about their misperceptions. That is an amazing thing about the Gospels, they are not written by today's spin doctors. They are honest stories about things Jesus did, said, and how hard it was for those who were with him to come on board. I can see this same man, now in middle age, telling Mark,

I struggled with this idea of giving things away, and I always remembered how he looked at me with such love.

Sometimes people think this rich young man was trying to earn his way. He said, ¹⁸ what must I do to inherit eternal life?" To me the word "inherit" is saying "I want to be part of your family." The answer: Let loose and SHARE.

There are many reasons to share, one of them is because others need what you have to offer. Another reason is that you need to have a relationship with others. You can, if you give and follow.

²¹Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

If you give to those who need it you develop a relationship with them.

I bet that's what happened at Matt Talbott yesterday. I have seen it before. I know that happens when you bring food to Monday night Tutoring. Those 40-50 middle school age boys whose families are refugees from various places in Africa see what you do and remember you.

To be fair, this is hard. Our whole culture gets us focused on what we have, or what we don't have. That's consumerism. We are all far richer than we think. You should have seen the

faces of my class on Monday night. I told them they are part of the 1%. They are all students returning to college after struggling in the real world, I said, “Do you know, you who are about ready to graduate, you are joining the 1% of the world’s population that has a college degree?”

I am amazed no matter how I try to keep my life simple, I have to care for so many things, and it is true that at times they control me. I hear the story of the rich young ruler, as a wake-up call. Our Epistle Scripture puts it this way:

The word of God pierces so deeply that it divides even soul and spirit, bone and marrow,
and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

¹³Nothing is concealed from God; all lies bare and exposed before the eyes of the One to whom we have to render an account.

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus call us to SHARE. I said this passage is grace-filled. Jesus 1). looks at the rich young man with love, and

2). he leaves the door open. Add to that the word of Grace from the Epistle:

¹⁵For we don’t have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who was tempted in every way that we are,
yet never sinned.

¹⁶So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and favor, and find help in time of need.

Does this story of the rich young ruler say the only way to follow the life of faith is to sell all our possessions and give the money away? Maybe.

A seminary professor of mine literally gave away everything—including books. George Baldwin went to live with the base communities in Nicaragua and other places in Central America. Truth is he was a little on the arrogant side before he made this decision. Back from Central America there was such peace in his face. He was free. No monkey trap had a hold of him.

I missed my nephew’s third birthday. Too much was happening here.

The day after his birthday, his Mom and Grandmother took him with them on a shopping trip. His mom is going back to work after the birth of his new little brother. She needed to update the wardrobe a bit. They checked out three places, and Grandma said to Jayvyn, “Let’s go over here to the blouses where your mother is.” He’d been a good sport.

That was the limit for Jayvyn. He may not understand how consumerism makes us think there is one more deal that if we just look harder we can grab. Jayvyn *did* understand that he was ready to be free of the clothes-shopping expedition. With total seriousness he looked his grandmother in the face (he calls her Meemo), and said “Memo, no more clothes!” That’s my motto now. Except of course if they come from Fabulous Finds.

Tonight at 6 p.m. I’ll deal a little with the part of the Gospel about the camel getting through the eye of needle. We’ll have great food, adding to Lynn’s feast, shrimp and cupcakes from last night’s reception for Jaimie Pruden.

Let me ask you one question: How are you getting free of the monkey trap? I hear Jesus saying--no I hear Coleen saying--use that peanut butter that was in that jar, Larry. Make some sandwiches for those tutoring boys...

The word of Grace here is powerful. Jesus does not ask to take one huge step. He is asking for a series of steps in the direction of Love (Nouwen). Lowen Kruse, Lois Whitefoot’s brother, said it best: “Some people say I’m tight. I have learned this: give until you think it hurts and then give a little bit more. That is when it starts to feel good.”

Much that happens here at First Church that is relationship building. So much happens here makes a difference in lives of people here and around the world.

Look at the pictures Brent Nickol asked you to view. Listen to stories about good that is happening. This passage comes to life every day. When you SHARE you have a relationship with others that enables your relationship with God to be richer.

The Gospel story reminds us that we won't set ourselves free. It's impossible. God can, and does. When we SHARE, we cooperate with God, we become a part of the way God lives in creation, in all people, and in our own lives.

You probably have stories about what happens when you have chosen to let loose of things that keep you captured. SHARE those stories with me and others. SHARE the joy: "You know I have a story about how that works in my life..."

Matt stone

Several men are in the locker room of a golf club. A mobile phone rings and a man engages the hands free speaker-function and begins to talk. Everyone else in the room stops to listen.

"Hello Honey, it's me. Are you at the club?" the voice says.

"Yes dear" says the man. "I'm shopping just now and found this beautiful leather coat. It's only £1,000. Is it ok if I buy it?"

"Sure, go ahead if you like it that much."

"I also stopped by the Mercedes garage and saw the new 2010 models. I saw one I really liked."

"How much?"

"£60,000"?

"OK, but for that price I want it with all the options."

"Great! Oh, and one more thing . the house I wanted last year is back on the market. They're asking £950,000"?

"Well, then go ahead and give them an offer of 900,000. They will probably take it. If not, we can go the extra £50,000 ... It really is a pretty good price."

"OK. I'll see you later! I love you so much!!" says the woman

"Bye! I love you, too" says the man, hanging up.

The other men in the locker room are staring at him in astonishment, mouths wide open... He smiles and asks: "Anyone know who this phone belongs to?"

EPISTLE SCRIPTURE HEBREWS 4:12-16

Inclusive Language Translation

God's word is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.

It pierces so deeply that it divides even soul and spirit, bone and marrow,

and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

¹³Nothing is concealed from God;

all lies bare and exposed before the eyes of the One to whom we have to render an account.

¹⁴Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens—

Jesus, the Firstborn of God—

let us hold fast to our profession of faith.

¹⁵For we don't have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,

but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned.

¹⁶So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and favor, and find help in time of need.

THE GOSPEL MARK 10:17-27

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As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’”

²⁰He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.”

²¹Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

²²When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

²³Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!

²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?”

²⁷Jesus looked at them and said,

“For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”