

## **Stewardship 3: Legacy. SJC 16th June 2024**

**1 Sam. 15:34-16:13, 16-20 / 2 Cor. 8:1-11 / Mk. 4:26-34**

### ***Introduction***

One of the most challenging exercises I have ever been asked to do was to write my own epitaph. You have to think, how do I want to be remembered? What do I hope people will say about me when I'm gone? What do I want my legacy to be? Then you write that down. It could be the obituary you'd like in the paper, or the eulogy you hope someone might give at your funeral, or even the few words you would wish for on a grave marker. Whichever way, we're challenged to think about our legacy, to write down what we want it to be, and then to start living in a way which can bring it about.

So, what do you want your legacy to be?

I know that amongst the things I want to be true of myself as a husband, father, and friend, I want my legacy to be as someone who has helped to build God's Church, someone who has introduced people to Jesus, someone who has helped faith in Christ to come alive for many people. That's why I am here in Toronto. And that's why I will be glad to give generously to our stewardship campaign.

What do you want your legacy to be?

### ***Vision***

Last week I set before you the vision that I am asking you to support. If you weren't here, then you can watch that homily online or we will be posting the texts on our website very shortly. But to recap, I spoke of a Cathedral fit for the city of Toronto, a hub for the arts, a place where all cultures are affirmed and celebrated, a worshipping community in which people discover and develop faith in Christ through the beauty of our liturgy and our music. I spoke of a Cathedral that is genuinely good news for our city, a place for all ages, a home for all those who would seek Christ, a community in which lives are changed.

And I explained how the things I am asking you to give towards help that vision to come true. We will extend our outreach, build our ministry resources, enhance our music, and enable the ministry of this place. You can read all about these things in the brochure which is available at the back of the Cathedral.

Today I want to encourage you to invest in these things so that you will leave a legacy in this Cathedral and the city we exist to serve. And I want to do it primarily from the verses we heard from Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth.

### ***Scriptures***

Paul begins:

“We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.”

Abundant joy and extreme poverty. A famine had afflicted Jerusalem and Paul wanted to raise money to support the Christians there. The Christians in Macedonia didn't have much – “extreme poverty”. But they had the joy of their faith in Christ and the gratitude that they had received that faith from apostles who had been sent out from Jerusalem. This was their opportunity to give back, and so they did, in what Paul calls “A wealth of generosity.”

There is nothing here about grudging gifts, about people being pressured to give. No. This is a response from abundant joy at the grace of God, a generous and willing response. Paul continues, “They voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means.”

What does “according to their means” actually mean?

It means the rich gave a lot – not that there were many rich – and the poor gave a little, but they all gave what they could. And they were more than glad to do it: “begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry.”

You get the impression of the Macedonian church leaders saying to some of their people, “Look, I know you don’t have anything, nobody is expecting you to give” but those people insisting that they be allowed to give at least something.

I don’t think I have ever seen this in the West. But I have seen it in Kenya, where subsistence farmers literally dance up the aisle at offering time bringing either a few coins or some maize or even a live chicken. Joyful generosity from extreme poverty is always a challenge to me.

Of course, this ties up with the story of Jesus and the poor widow who puts her coin into the collection box, and Jesus says, “She gave more than all the rich people did.” And it ties in with what Jesus says in our Gospel reading today. The Kingdom of God is like the smallest seed which grows and becomes something great and wonderful and nurturing.

### ***Application***

So, what I want to say this morning is this. Whether you are rich or poor or somewhere in between, you can leave a legacy in this Cathedral and our vision. Every gift and every giver matters. We need some large gifts. And we need lots of smaller gifts too. It all counts, not least because as I said last week, when you give you say, “I’m in. I’m part of the team that is working and praying and giving for this.”

So that’s my challenge this morning. Not giving more than you can, but giving according to your means. And trusting that from tiny seeds can grow great shrubs.

So let me make this practical.

If you don’t give at all, could you start by giving a weekly amount equivalent to one hour’s worth of your work?

If you presently give a few dollars each week, why not aim for 5% of your income?

If you presently give into the plate when you are here on a Sunday, could you shift to pre-authorized giving, so we receive your gift whether you are here or not?

If you give 5%, could you aim for 10%?

If your investments have done well, or your income is unpredictable, what about a one-off gift?

And whatever you give, could you give it without restrictions, so we don't find ourselves with more than we need for one project and less than we need for another?

All of this is leaving a legacy. And of course, I am using the word 'legacy' metaphorically, but could I ask you to consider leaving a literal legacy in your will? Jacqui and I have written into our will that whatever church we belong to when we die will get some of our estate. Could you do the same?

### ***Conclusion***

And whatever we do, could we try to do it joyfully, gratefully for all we have received from God, prayerfully and thoughtfully? Not from what we have not but from what we have. Let's all of us - together - leave a legacy of a Cathedral fit for this great city of Toronto for the glory of God.