

Jan 29, 2024

Dear Co-workers in the kingdom,

On a very long and seldom used trail across Nevada's Amargosa Desert was an old pump that offered the hope of drinking water to travellers. In a baking powder can wired to the handle a note was found that read the following:

"This pump is all right as of June 1932. I put a new sucker washer into it and it ought to last five years. But the washer dries up and the pump has to be primed. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork end up. There's enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour about one fourth and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour the rest medium fast and pump like crazy. You'll git water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. When you git watered up, fill the bottle and put it back for the next feller. -Desert Pete. P.S. Don't go drinking the water first. Prime the pump with it and you'll git all you can hold."

Of course those of you my age or older are probably familiar with the concept of "priming the pump." In order to draw water from an old hand pump, you first have to put water in it. Once the pump is primed, you can pump water until your arm gets tired, but it begins with that act of faith--to use the language of "Desert Pete." If you are afraid to give the water first to the pump, you might find yourself running short.

In the same way our stewardship of God's gifts requires faith. We often face circumstances that tempt us to worry that we may not have enough, and the natural reaction of such worry is to withdraw from serving and to curtail giving. Yet our confidence as Christians has never been placed in what we have at the moment, but rather in the One who promises to give us every good thing. He is the one who tells us not to be afraid, and to give to Him from the firstfruits of our blessings.

There are many opportunities for us together to serve those in need, to give comfort and counsel to those who are hurting, and to carry the good news of salvation into the community where the Lord has placed us. There are many needs in our congregation and in the community, and we are to give and serve in faith that the Lord will bless us. That is not to say that you should burden yourself unduly. If your family income has been reduced, then your giving should be in proportion to what you expect to receive, and time commitments to the church or other causes should be in proportion to a healthy balance with our other God pleasing obligations.

Nevertheless, our giving should be to the Lord FIRST. Our offerings and our willing service, whatever we can give joyfully and proportionately, should be offered first to God, who has promised that we will be blessed in return.

Please don't think that I am suggesting our Heavenly Father is a "magic pump" that we prime with our good works in order to manipulate into blessing us. On the contrary, it is more like the story told of a missionary in Africa who, in the course of ministry, taught the people in a particular village about bringing a "tithe" of their income to support the Lord's work. Some time later, one of the villagers brought a beautiful fish that he had caught in the river. "Here, missionary," said the smiling man, "here is my tithe." The missionary, not wanting to take advantage of the man and noticing that it was the only fish he carried, said, "If this is your tithe, where are the other nine fish?"

"I am going to catch them now," was the reply of the smiling man.

Such is the confidence we have in Christ. Our gifts, whether they be large or humble, whether they be in goods or in service, are given in faith that we will by no means lack what we need. Our ministry is to be carried out with faith that God will provide everything necessary to do His will. Our lives are to be undertaken with faith that while the things of this world will not last, we have a kingdom that is forever.

Until next time, please read and consider Matthew 6:19-34.

Your servant in Christ,

-Pastor Kempin