



ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

505 E. Carpenter Street
Midland, MI 48640
(989) 835-5861
sjlmidland.org



Pastor Daniel Kempin

Pastor Josh Parsons

February 17, 2025

Dear Coworkers in the Kingdom,


Jesus' many descriptions of the Kingdom in the parables are a constant reminder that the Kingdom is not what we would expect, and it does not work the way we would assume. The King is the servant, the first are last, the guilty are pardoned, and the meek inherit the earth. Perhaps nowhere does the difficulty of the Kingdom strike our practical thinking more than the way Jesus speaks of money.

In the world where we live, people who have more money are considered richer. But in the reverse economy of God, that is not so. In the Kingdom, how much you give is not determined by how much you give.

Do you find that statement confusing? Let's unpack it with the scripture.

There are two ways to measure giving. This applies to all of the ways we can give, but let's keep it simple and just use the example of money. The first and most obvious way to measure giving is to keep track of the dollars given. If you give to St. John's, for instance, you get a statement at the end of the year that says exactly how much you gave. If you could have access to the giving record, (which you can't—they are confidential), you would probably see that no two people gave the same amount. Some gave "more," and some "less." Dollars make it easy to keep track. They provide a precise number.

However this number has literally no bearing on the economy of the Kingdom. The value of what is given—the actual size of the gift and the contribution to God's work—is not determined by the dollar amount, but by the manner in which it is given. Consider Jesus' comments about the widow's offering in Mark 12:41-44. Jesus praised her for giving all she had, which was proportionally more than what the rich had given. But notice the detail that Jesus does not say she gave more "proportionally." He says that she gave more **actually**. He said she "put more in the treasury than all the others."



If you think about it, what Jesus said is literally true. (Of course!) Whatever any rich people gave that day has been long since spent, but the widow's offering is still providing value to us today. God took her gift given in faith and love and HE used it for the Kingdom in powerful ways that she could not possibly foresee.

We also see this explained in detail in 1 Corinthians 13. “If I give all that I possess to the poor... but have not love, I gain nothing.” If that widow had made the same offering—same in amount and proportion—without love, then her offering would not only have remained small, it would in fact be nothing. No amount given, however grand the number, will register in the accounts of the Kingdom unless it is given as the scripture teaches us to give.

Whew! That’s a tough one to get my head around. But it underscores why we approach stewardship the way we do at St. John’s. The goal of our efforts is not to raise a dollar amount. God is MORE than capable of meeting our needs, wherever we set our budget. (If you need a testimony about that, look at the funding of our HVAC project!) Rather the goal is to encourage you to grow in faith, to learn the economy of the Kingdom, and to give whatever you give in the manner that the scripture teaches—joyfully, generously, and with as much faith as possible that you are indeed rich, because your Heavenly Father is wealthy, generous, and loves you very much.

Enclosed please find a pledge card for your intended support of St. John’s in the coming year. Just to review, please remember that supporting St. John’s is not a requirement, nor is it required to submit a pledge card. Any pledges submitted are strictly confidential and only used for the purpose of planning the upcoming budget. If you do choose to submit a pledge card, please take time to pray, and strive to give whatever you may give joyfully and in faith.

If you are not able to be in worship this Sunday, you can drop off a pledge card any time in the next few weeks, or you can submit it electronically through the website. Extra cards and envelopes are available at the church.

As you reflect on your own stewardship in the coming year, please reflect on **Colossians 1:9-10** and **Romans 13:8**.

Your partner in ministry,

-Pastor Kempin

Enclosure: Pledge Card with envelope

