

## The Twenty Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Stewardship Sunday)

October 22, 25 & 26, 2008

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

### MY PLAN FOR GIVING 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

What is one thing that has been on many people's minds during the last month? It's not the election. It's the economy. We have watched people get mad and upset as they have seen their investments tumble and their nest eggs crack and dry up. Why all the upset? Why all the concern? Because the god that many people had put so much confidence and trust in is letting people down. The hope and expectations that they had placed in their god have evaporated. What money was supposed to do for them, it hasn't. People are scared and frightened. They are worried about their future.

Today we conclude our three week sermon series on the use of God's gifts to us, the gift of time, of talents and abilities and the gift of money. It is that final gift that we want to talk about. The topic that so many people say is all the church is about – money. This past week I heard a number of people say to me, "The church is a money grubbing organization. All the church ever wants out of me is my money. The church is just looking for me to give them money." When people make these remarks they are giving us a window into their hearts. Such comments tell us what is very important and high on that person's priority list – it is money. Jesus often during his ministry warns us about putting money first in our lives. The Bible again and again warns us about the love of money. Money is not the root of all evil. It is the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil. Paul tells us that many people eager for money have wandered from the faith and have fallen into many temptations and into ruin and destruction. We are living in a society that has placed material things as its god. Now because of the economic downturn caused by greed and lies, that god is not delivering. That god is not providing the hope and future that many had expected. What is the purpose of money and what are we to use it for? Our earnings are a gift from God. The Lord gives to some great amounts of money to others he gives less. Whatever amount of wealth that God does give to each of us he wants us to be wise managers of his resources. In addition to providing for ourselves and our families with the things we need for life, food, clothing and shelter, we are also to use our wealth to help others, to give for the spreading of the good news of forgiveness of sins and eternal life that God freely offers to all in Jesus Christ.

In the reading before us the Apostle Paul is answering a question that seems to have been asked him by the Christians in Corinth about gathering an offering for the Christians in Jerusalem. There had been a famine in Palestine and the Corinthian believers out of love wanted to help their fellow believers. They were gathering a gift for the church in Jerusalem. It appears that they had asked the Apostle Paul how this was to be done. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, Paul answers their question. As we examine God's Word to us let's focus on **MY PLAN FOR GIVING**. The most important ingredient in our giving is the why – **I) Why Do I Give**. Once we see the force and power in our lives that moves us to give then we can look at the mechanics and learn what Paul teaches us on **II) How I Work My Plan**.

### WHY DO I GIVE?

Why do we give? Why were the Corinthian Christians concerned about the believers in the church in Jerusalem? The answer is simple. It's love. Paul was not hammering them and telling them they had to do this. They wanted to. They had experienced the love and forgiveness of their God. The Lord had grabbed them from the road leading to hell and eternal punishment. The Lord had given them purpose and meaning to their lives. He had filled them with hope and with a future that no one could take from them. How did God do that? He did it through his almighty Word. It was that Word that the Apostle Paul had brought to them. In a city that was filled with the worship of false gods and the emphasis on sexual immorality the Apostle Paul had brought the light of the good news of Jesus Christ to that community. As people heard about a God who loved them so much that has sent his only Son to live and die for them, it changed their hearts. It gave them peace.



assurance of salvation. And each of us has the joy and privilege of giving to the Lord a portion of what he has given us.

Now what is that portion? That brings us to the final point that Paul makes. Our giving is to be **proportionate**. Paul writes, "Set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income." No one can tell us how much we are to give. That is something that each of us has to determine on our own based on how God has blessed us and the obligations that the Lord has given to us. In the Old Testament God set the proportion. It was ten percent. In other words for every one hundred dollars a believer had ten dollars was to be given to the Lord. For every thousand dollars, a hundred dollars was for the Lord. In addition to the ten percent or tithe, the Old Testament Christians also brought other offerings and gifts to the Lord. Each of us needs to work on setting a proportion that we give to our Lord. When you practice proportionate giving, then the amount may go up or down based on how the Lord has blessed you. When you just set a dollar amount, there may be times when in a week your earnings are less and you can't meet that amount. So giving a certain percentage or proportion is much easier. The calculators that you received when you came into church can help you as you make your plan.

People of God, we have been richly blessed. We can't help but want to thank our Savior for the pardon and eternal life we have. We can't help but thank our Savior for the help he gives us as we daily strive to live according to his will. We have reasons to give. We have reasons to give cheerfully and generously for the Lord's rich blessings to us. God help each of us to develop and then work our plan of cheerful and generous management of our time, our abilities and our money because the Lord has given us the inheritance of eternal life in heaven.

Amen.