

Unison Opening Words ~ *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*

Lord, may your trumpet sound in the songs we sing, in the prayer we pray, in the lives we live, and in the bread we break. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

Responsive Reading Before Sermon:

One: 'The love of money,' we know, 'is the root of all evil'; but not the thing itself. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. Money may be used ill, but it likewise may be used well. It is true that if humankind were in a state of innocence, or if all people were 'filled with the Holy Ghost', so that, like the infant church at Jerusalem, 'no one counted anything they had as their own', but 'distribution was made to everyone as they had need,' then the use of money would be superseded. We cannot conceive there is anything of the kind among the inhabitants of heaven. But in the present state of humanity, money is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends.

All: In the hands of God's children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, clothing for the naked.

One: It gives to the traveler and the stranger where to lay their head.

All: By it we may supply the place of a husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless;

One: we may be a defense for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain.

All: It may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; yea, a lifter up from the gates of death.

One: It is therefore of the highest concern that all who fear God know how to employ this valuable talent; that they be instructed how it may answer these glorious ends, and in the highest degree. And perhaps all the instructions which are necessary for this may be reduced to three plain rules, by the exact observance whereof we may approve ourselves faithful stewards. First—

All: Gain all you can,

One: without hurting either yourself or your neighbor, in soul or body, by applying hereto with ceaseless diligence, and with all the understanding God has given you. Second—

All: Save all you can,

One: by cutting off every expense which serves only to indulge foolish desire, to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life. Waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children. And then—

All: Give all you can,

One: or in other words, give all you have to God. 'Render unto God,' not a tenth, not a third, not half, but 'all that is God's'... in such a manner that you may give a good account of your stewardship when ye can no longer be stewards...

All: Give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to him who withheld not from you God's Son, God's only Son; so 'laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may attain eternal life.'

- Luke 12:42-48.
- What we do matters. What and how we earn matters. What we do with what we earn matters.
 - This is the first lesson in John Wesley's stewardship.
 - Wesley's exposure and experience with stewardship began at a tender age, and it was not a positive experience.
 - A preacher known for frequenting debtor's prison to share the Good News, Wesley's father was once detained within one (1).
 - Samuel Wesley, also a pastor, was jailed for not being able to pay a debt.
 - His wife, Susanna, was left outside of the debtor's prison, with ten children to raise and feed.
 - Wesley learned – and lived! – personally the words of Jesus we heard moments ago, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded" (Lk 12:48bc).
 - Our interactions with money demand responsibility (2), because the consequences of irresponsibility are soul-crushing.
 - John Wesley's experiences across the stewardship spectrum led him to give detailed instructions to the people called Methodist on what a new life in Christ would look like.
 - In his sermon *The Use of Money* Wesley preached,

(3) Gain all you can.

Gain all we can gain without buying gold too dear, without paying more for it than it is worth.

We ought not to gain money at the expense of life; nor at the expense of our health.

Gain all we can without hurting our mind.

To gain money we must not lose our souls.

Gain all we can without hurting our neighbor in substance.

Neither may we gain by hurting our neighbor in his or her body.

This is dear-bought gain.

And so is whatever is procured by hurting our neighbor in his or her soul.

These cautions and restrictions being observed, it is the bounden duty of all who are engaged in worldly business to observe that first and great rule of Christian wisdom with respect to money:

'Gain all you can.'

Gain all you can by honest industry. Gain all you can, by common sense,

- If this seems hard, if you feel overwhelmed...perhaps even inadequate...you are not alone.
- I am on this stewardship (7) learning curve with you.
 - I do not speak as someone that has it all figured out.
 - I speak as someone committed to figuring it out as evidence of my maturing relationship in faith and in response to my experience of God's all-embracing grace.
- Our God who created the heavens and the earth created and names us as stewards of this gift.
 - When we turned away – when our love fails – God's love remains steadfast.
 - God's love came and comes to us enfleshed in Jesus, to be a servant and to be our Savior.
 - Through stewardship, God shows us that every choice, every decision, every purchase, every action, (8) every gain that we make matters.

Why South Shore Is Important To Me Videos

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3 – Gain All You Can

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8 – Every Gain That We Make Matters