

Sermon on Christian Stewardship
University Chapel Sunday Jan. 15, 2017.
At 7:00 a.m.

Our Topic today is: “Investing in the Gospel.”

Let us pray: O Holy One, grant us the urgent desire to learn your will for our life, and give us the faith to pursue what you have chosen for us.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight O Lord my strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

Brief Review: For you who were present last week you may recall that we looked at the gifts that the magi brought to Jesus. We were reminded that the same Spirit has given different gifts to all of us.

We were informed that the way we manage these gifts is an essential part of the stewardship of our lives and all our affairs in which God is interested and holds us entirely responsible and accountable.

Our conclusion was that we the servant Church are called out from darkness into the wonderful light, and entrusted with a mission to spread the Gospel to all in need of deliverance and salvation.

Today I invite you to reflect with me on what one experienced author on Christian Stewardship has given the title:

“Investing in the Gospel.”

None of us is unfamiliar with the word investment. This refers to the investment of money in banks. But who talks of investment in the gospel?

Well, Christian Stewards of the 21st century must come to terms with the fact that God has entrusted the gospel to humanity. So we must invest not just our money but our entire lives in the proclamation of the Good News of God, and the Gospel God has entrusted to every one of us.

It is said that: “the consuming desire of the Christian Steward is that she or he unhesitatingly abandons his or her own desires to make him or herself available to Jesus Christ. Until that has been done the steward cannot say that he or she is totally loyal and committed.”

In the Methodist Hymn Book there is a section titled **Service and Influence**. The author Charles Wesley wrote the hymn: A charge to keep I have. Verse 2 says::

**To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill:
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master’s will**

The Lectionary lessons for the week point to “Called to Faithful Service.

All believers who are God’s stewards are called to a life of ministry. We will discover that God’s call always requires a response. The Isaiah passage, one of the Servant Songs that points to Jesus, reminds us that God is the one who pursues and calls. The Psalmist exemplifies the call to give witness when God shows up and is found to be faithful. In the opening of his letter to the church in Corinth Paul reminds us of his own calling and then goes on to emphasize that **all are called by God and set apart for ministry..** And in John’s Gospel, we receive an example of testifying to God’s presence in our lives and the important calling of bringing others to Jesus.

Let us examine Psalm 40: verses 1-11 and see what the psalmist has to tell us of God’s call of us to faithful service.

Listen to verses 10-11:

‘I have not hidden your saving help within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation: I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

Do not, O Lord, withhold your mercy from me; let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.’

The psalmist has experienced the joy of God’s

Faithfulness and knows he or she can't keep silent about it. It must be proclaimed.

The psalmist waits patiently. Then God acts on the Psalmist's behalf: God inclines, hears, draws up, and sets feet on rock. What is the psalmist's response? Joy.

Wouldn't we be joyful at being chosen by God?, being the object of God's attention?

One commentator indicates that we like to feign an "aw, shucks" reaction to being singled out for some special task. Some of us comment: "Why me?" Some of this is "false modesty" he says. And some of this compels us to deny the joy in being chosen. We may think it's unseemly to rejoice at our selection, but this reaction damages our relationship with God.

Denying the joy that comes by living from day to day with God is a temptation we face. We tend to focus on the shall nots of our faith and to wallow in self-pity because we fail to live up to high standards (As that which is being displayed in the media for the past week; ie the sexual abuse of the teen ager by the pastor).

On the other hand we tend to look down on those who can't contain their unabashed joy at knowing God.

The world tells us that happiness depends upon riches/prosperity or fame (hence the Trumps and other world leaders get elected by spouting false promises and belittling their opponents and making derogatory remarks of people of a different racial background..)

The psalmist says that joy gushes forth from loving relationships with God and one another. God gives the psalmist a “new song” that bears witness to the working of God in the psalmist’s life. As a result of the psalmist’s witness, “many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.” How do you intend to spread the good news of God’s saving grace?

God’s chosen can be joyous even in the midst of sadness or oppression. Our joy does not depend upon our circumstances, for we live *beyond* our surroundings. God secures our steps and puts “a new song” in our mouth.

Considering the atmosphere of fear and hatred that has overshadowed our world in the early 21st century, and still continues right now in our island and world, perhaps our joyful testimony to the work of God in our lives is what our Jamaican people and the world needs. You see friends, we, God’s stewards; bear witness to an incomparable God whose wondrous deeds and thoughts towards us are manifold.

Furthermore the psalmist eagerly tells “the great congregation” how his relationship with God has changed his life for the better. He tells us that the joyful experience of God’s saving mercy and grace isn’t something we can keep to ourselves. With unrestrained lips, we tell others “the glad news of deliverance” God’s steadfast love, faithfulness, and mercy will keep us safe forever.

The hymn writer writes of God's faithfulness and gets us in every generation to sing it heartily.

“Great is Thy faithfulness O God my Father there is no shadow of turning with Thee,
Thou changest not Thy compassions they fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.

Conclusion:

So God has entrusted the Gospel to us as good and faithful stewards!

- 1 Corinthians 2: 4 tells us:** ‘and my teaching and message were not delivered with skilful words of human wisdom, but with convincing proof of the power of God’s Spirit.’

Therefore my brothers and sisters, “Live and serve as God’s ambassadors (2 Cor. 5: 20, 22; Eph. 6: 20).

Charles S. Duthie writes, “The Church is called by God to proclaim the Gospel, to reconcile men to God, to extend the kingdom, to penetrate human life by the Spirit of Christ. To make our stewardship of the Gospel a missionary activity in response to the great commission of our Lord is to carry out the mission (Matt. 28: 19- 20)”

“Go then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples; baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to

the end of the age.” The gospel is one of the few things in our world that belongs to all. The gospel is not for sale. It is the gospel for all (For all, for all my Saviour died). It is to be shared by all of us who receive it with those who need it.

Let us pray: Day by day, O God, may I tell those around me of my delight in living close to you.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.