

**Union United Methodist Church**

Sermon Outline: **Spiritual Growth Part 5: Faithfulness, Growing in Our Gifts & Graces**

September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Luke 16:1-13, 2 Corinthians 4:1-7**

**1. People of the World versus People of Light**

- Jesus was impressed with the shrewdness of the dishonest manager,  
"The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light." Luke 16:8 NIV
- People of the world (non-Christians and those who live for themselves only) :  
What assets did the dishonest manager use to achieve his objectives:
  - Lies
  - His intelligence
  - Worldly wealth
- What are our objectives as People of the Light? These include:
  - **Eternal life (starting with a rich life in Christ now)**
  - **To be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world"**  
"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?"  
  
"You are the light of the world .... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven"  
Matthew 5: 13,14,16 NIV
  - **To make disciples for Christ**  
"go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" Matthew 28:19 NIV  
*This is the most important task of all disciples of Christ (all Christians) and the Church*

- What assets do we have?
  - Worldly assets
 

**"I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."**

Luke 16:7 NIV
  - True Riches
 

**"So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"**

Luke 16:11 NIV

## 2. True Riches/Wealth

- True wealth far exceeds the material wealth of this world.
  - It includes love, happiness, and all that which gives us a sense of well-being.
  - Beyond that, it includes the spiritual wealth that is embodied in God, including the power of the Holy Spirit, and the grace which enables us to achieve far more than we can ever ask for or imagine.
  - True wealth also includes weapons that enable us to win spiritual battles.

- **Jesus the Christ ("Anointed One") fully embodies true wealth.**

**"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.** He is the head over every power and authority." Colossians 2:9-10 NIV

**"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him,** who is the head of all principality and power." Colossians 2:9-10 NKJV

- **Jesus in his earthly ministry showed us how true spiritual wealth works**
  - **"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."** Acts 10:38 NRSV

- In Luke 4, Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-2 and declared that that prophetic utterance was fulfilled in him - that is His ministry

**"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,**

**because he has anointed me**

to **bring good news to the poor.**

He has sent me to **proclaim release to the captives**

and **recovery of sight to the blind,**

to **let the oppressed go free,**

to **proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."**

Luke 4:18-19 NRSV

- These are practical needs we see in our society today that only the anointing of Christ (the Spirit of the Lord) can destroy.
  - Material and spiritual poverty
  - People held captive and oppressed in many ways
  - **"the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"** 2 Corinthians 4:4 NRSV
  - **"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."** 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NIV
- The Spirit's anointing will do in our day what we see in the life and ministry of Jesus

### 3. Faithfulness, an Important Key to Growth

- Faithful with little

“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?”

- We must be faithful with our God-given gifts and graces

What we do with the gifts and graces given to each of us determines if we see more of God’s power manifested in our lives and in our ministry to others.

**“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.**

If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy **in accordance with your faith;**

if it is serving, then serve;

if it is teaching, then teach;

if it is to encourage, then give encouragement;

if it is giving, then give generously;

if it is to lead, do it diligently;

if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

Romans 8:4-8 NIV

- We must employ spiritual weapons to win spiritual battles

We are instructed in Ephesians 6:

**10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.**

**11 Put on the whole armor of God,** so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil

**14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth** around your waist, and put on **the breastplate of righteousness.** **15 As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.** **16 With all of these, take the shield of faith,** with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. **17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

**18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication.**