

Sermon for Sunday November 26, 2017

Matthew 25: 31- 45

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen

Well here we are – hearing today the third parable in the little series of parables offered to us in Matthew 25. Last week Rev Don suggested that the first of the three parables – the parable of the bridesmaids invites us to keep awake – to be ready for God. The second, the parable of the talents invites us to offer what we have to God - whether it be 5, 2 or 1 talent. Today's reading tells us what we are to do. Offers us up God's to do list if you will.

Most of you know this - but some of you might not be aware that we spend a great deal of time in this church doing our best to attend to God's to do list. Every committee works on this list. Congregational Care attends to those who are shut in and those who are grieving as well as other things. Faith development is about teaching our children to be people of compassion and love. The Services committee makes sure this building is safe and welcoming for those who come here for healing and nurture and the tech part of that group, among other things, make sure we are connected to the world and to each other. Stewardship does its best to balance the many needs of this place. The Affirming Committee attends to making sure all are welcome. Worship committee cares for our worship life - the source of our strength and M&P helps keep the ministry team healthy and supported so we can do the work you call us to do. But today I would like to lift up for us the work of the Outreach committee and the way it particularly focuses on God's list of things to do.

The Outreach Committee of this church is committed – on our behalf to attend to - feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and being with those who are cast aside.

The work the Outreach committee does on our behalf takes up about \$22,000.00 of the operating budget of this church. That means that \$22,000.00 of the money we donate to the operating budget is designated specifically to – God's to do list.

The Outreach committee has broken down the work into three areas, World, Community and Congregation. It gives priority to those organizations that have a small base for funding and where our little bit can make a difference.

One of the organizations the Outreach Committee sends money to on our behalf is Nashi – this is an organization that actively does the work of justice making by caring for vulnerable young women in the Ukraine. NASHI is actively involved in the prevention of the trafficking of women and girls by providing housing, and education. This is a small organization with no paid staff. Our money has a big impact.

The Outreach committee donates to the Canadian Foods Bank, an organization that provides food to the world's most vulnerable and impoverished people – our donation is matched by the federal government. You might remember that we gave a special gift of support to the Canadian Foods grain bank in our 50th anniversary year - when we had a special evening of music by Ron Kleusmire.

Operation Eyesight is another organization that we support. Operation Eyesight cares for those who are blind or nearly blind by providing needed medical procedures in impoverished areas of the world.

Change for Children is an agency that works in areas of extreme poverty with a focus on children and youth. In 2013 several members of this congregation traveled to Nicaragua and were hosted by Change for Children while there. We got to see firsthand the amazing life changing work they are involved in.

In 2017 we sent funds to the Foundation for Sustainability and Peacemaking in Mesoamerica, an agency who works in El Salvador to prevent recruitment of young people into Gang culture – we had a hands on connection to this organization through Cooper Muirhead and our contribution was warmly received.

One of our areas of deepest commitment has been in the area of refugee sponsorship. McClure has been sponsoring Refugees since 1980. We have sponsored families from all over the world often coming from the most recent troubled spots in the world. We have seldom shied away for sponsoring families that require considerable resources both financial and other. We have most recently sponsored a family from Syria and a man from Eritrea. We currently are working on the sponsorship of two more families.

Another item that crosses the boundary of world and community is care for the environment - we make a contribution to the Saskatchewan Environmental Society which is a non-profit, whose mandate is to work towards a world in which all needs can be met in sustainable ways. Sustainability requires healthy ecosystems, livelihoods and communities.

Camp Christopher is a place for our kids and others to build community surrounded by the beauty of nature. Camp is a place where children and youth can explore the stories of Jesus and make lifelong friends. Many of our McClure young people, who have been campers, have moved into leadership roles at camp. We have recently begun to support another camp. In 2016 we began to support Camp Flyerfly, a camp for LGBTQ and questioning youth – it is a camp that provides - a safe environment for young people to build community and leadership skills.

Most of us know about and support, particularly at Christmas, Egadz which is an organization that cares for at risk youth here in our city. Egadz provides a supportive environment where youth can participate in activities, get to know staff and meet friends. Emergency services are also provided during the day if needed. Our Outreach Committee supports the work of Egadz beyond Christmas and makes a financial contribution toward their work on our behalf.

Another program that focuses on Youth that we support is Youth on the Rise. This is a drama program for at risk youth. Addiction counsellors and social workers help facilitate this program - our connection to this amazing program has been nurtured through Charlie Peters – one of our young adults – Charlie works in this program.

The Crocus C0-Op is an organization that works on behalf of people with mental health disabilities. Crocus is a place where people can find companionship, understanding and support. It is a place to learn, work and heal and we contribute to the work of this important organization.

Then there is the Lighthouse. Not only do we contribute financially but we are committed to helping with their program to feed supper to folks who live on the street

and at the lighthouse. Many folks here are McClure volunteer 2-3 hours to serve food and do clean-up. The Lighthouse exists to help people reach their potential by providing emergency shelter, affordable and supportive housing.

We support the Integrated Community Ministries through a financial contribution and through people power. I have served on the board – Mary Jane Waugh has also served on the board and has served as primary staff person after the retirement of their long term ministry person Janet. Lori Verity Anderson serves on the Ministry and Personnel committee and several folks participate in the “Chop and Chat” program where community folks join together to prepare a meal for those who are in need. McClure folk and Holy Spirit Roman Catholic parish folks work together as part of this program. **Carol and Betty Ann** – pictured on our bulletin this morning - met each other through ICM and together they have created the socks for the homeless outreach care program that we participate in at Christmas. ICM is a ministry of River Bend Presbytery that works in the areas of community development, education for social change, pastoral care, political action and advocacy and linking church to community.

Supporting the Northern Saskatchewan Hospital Chaplaincy means we are part of providing pastoral care and companionship to those who find themselves in one of the three hospitals in Saskatoon. The Chaplain visits predominantly those who are in hospital from out of town but she also visits United Church members from the city. Given the provincial governments cuts to spiritual care in hospitals this ministry is even more critical for those in hospital and in crisis.

Each year the Outreach committee sets aside a little bit of money to be used here for education events like we held last Monday around poverty and a bit to support our events with Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Parish. Beyond the money, there are conversations taking place about how to live out the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and how we can show support and be involved in a plethora of other social justice initiatives. And then there are those things that don't fit under a committee but are part of our living as church, food bank barrel, meals on wheels, and providing space free of charge to a variety of groups like AA and Al a non.

As a church family we are doing our best to answer God's call to care. To feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, cloth the naked, and care for the sick. Every time we sit down to a Outreach Committee meeting the list of things needed and the list of work that needs to be done grows.

So often you and I look at the problems of this world and we think “what can I do” – the list of need is long. But together, as a church family together we can make a difference.

As we join around our family table let us come with grateful hearts for call of the gospel to serve and for the gift of this church family. Let us come to the table with our sleeves rolled up - knowing that all people are our family.

Amen

Matthew 25:31-45

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’