



“Support What You Believe In”

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Scripture (CEB):

Luke 6:35-38

³⁵ Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend expecting nothing in return. If you do, you will have a great reward. You will be acting the way children of the Most High act, for God is kind to ungrateful and wicked people. ³⁶ Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate.

³⁷ “Don’t judge, and you won’t be judged. Don’t condemn, and you won’t be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good portion—packed down, firmly shaken, and overflowing—will fall into your lap. The portion you give will determine the portion you receive in return.”

Sermon:

I have talked to dozens of people in the last few weeks, who are worried, or anxious, or concerned for the state of the world and our nation.

Besides being anxious, most of them are also hard at it; they write letters or emails, they call their Congresspersons, try to recycle, they pick up trash, work to save us from catastrophic climate change, the eradication of species, and chemicals in our food and drink. Good people all. They call out sexism, racism and homophobia on their facebook and twitter feeds, at work, among friends. They look at kitty and puppy youtube videos to lift

their spirits, and sometimes share pictures of fun things they are doing, or yummy meals they are sharing with friends.

They are doing everything they can to not give in or give up. They are Christian, Muslim and Jewish. Some of them have no religious affiliation at all.

But they are good people, trying to do good and give good to the world.

This is wonderful and remarkable, but the news doesn't lift them up, so I am reminding you of them, with thanksgiving. They are many, and they are supporting what they believe in with their very lives and I am proud to know them, and share facebook with them, and be friends to some of them, and honored to read their thoughts, share their values, and stand side by side with them in the daily, weekly, yearly work of helping the world and loving its creatures.

Sometimes I support them with hugs, and coffee shop conversations, or dinner and a glass of wine! Sometimes they are far away and I support them with letters, or skype. Sometimes the people I believe in get my money. The Southern Poverty Law Center. And our local Center for Justice. The Nature Conservancy. The local chapter of the NAACP. The Human Rights Campaign. The Spokane Alliance. The Democratic party and some of its local candidates. The monastery where my parents are buried. The local chapter of the National Organization of Women. The Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ and Camp N Sid Sen. Spokane Faith and Values. The American Civil Liberties Union. And this church.

Yes, I know you pay my salary, but I give some of it back because I believe in the work we are doing here and just like these other groups I have mentioned, I will support what I believe in with my money as well as my passion, my intelligence and my devotion.

I have to practice what Jesus teaches or I simply won't get better at it. This gospel passage asks us to be compassionate and merciful and generous, as God our Creator is compassionate and merciful and generous.

I have to *practice* loving and forgiving, and *giving* without expecting repayment, because Jesus says it is the right thing to do. Because, if God, who created me with the Divine spark within me, can be so generous and gracious and compassionate...who am I not to be generous and gracious and compassionate?

So I give to what I believe in.

And I believe in you, in this Christian experiment of community that is made up of all sorts of people and stories, all sorts of needs and hopes and joys. I believe in what we are trying to be, here on the corner of 4th and Washington: truthful, courageous, hospitable and generous followers of Christ.

I believe in the countless acts of kindness and welcome, of service to our community and to one another in need and hurt, whether it is through the activities of our SON committee or WestCAT, or our youth service projects or other events. I believe in your generosity because I see it. You give time and energy and ideas, you cook, you sing, you drive, you rally and agitate; you pop in at the hospital, the house, the apartment. You pray for others at home, in public and in your church. And I support you as generously as I can because I believe in you. And I thank you.

As most of you already know, we have been able to stay on this street corner and in this building for almost 136 years, and recently the money from the sale of the property we owned on this street has allowed us to pay our bills each year and stay here.

That money will run out someday. Our generosity may be able to help us stay at this corner and in this historic and beautiful space. But it may not. We don't know for sure. But I am giving to what I believe in here, supporting it as best I can. And I believe in this community of faith.

Whether we stay or go, I believe in this community that is bigger than blood family, that is more generous and open and caring than many parts of our culture because it is trying to live as Jesus modeled, not as capitalism or greed or fear model the world.

So yes, I give regularly to this family of faith. And I hope you will, too. I know we don't all have money to spare, but if you do, I hope you will spare some of it for this community.

And all of us together make this place hum, so I know our diverse skills and talents are needed, and wanted as well! From people who can do drywall and plumbing, to folks who bake, decorate, know technology, convene meetings, write poetry, sing and strategize. What great gifts you are, and how lovely that you give so much and so freely of yourselves! Thank you.

It is that simple. We need each other, and our diverse gifts. We love generously in all the ways we can.

And I know, not just by faith, but through experience, that as I give I receive; packed down, firmly shaken and overflowing into my lap.

Against all the sadness and sorrow of the world, all the darkness that exists and hurt and pain that must be endured, there is the love and generosity of all of you, and the love and generosity of God sustaining us. I can only say thank you; Thank You.

Alleluia!

Asante sana. Merci. Danke schon. Gracias.