

According to Mark . . . October 2017

Fall is in full swing and it's a time of harvesting. The harvest is the season where we are at long last given the fruits of our labors and begin to realize that all the hard work of the garden does indeed bear sweet sustenance. And the fruits are many and varied, with all manner of tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, beans, squash, onions, pumpkins, carrots, cucumbers, radishes, lettuce and kale, not to mention the bounty of the many kinds of apples that abound in New England.

It is a time of plenty. We celebrate this in the many fall festivals, getting together and enjoying what nature has given. In small-town New England, we have a rhythm that rarely fails year after year, and we spend time gearing up for what can be the long winter season.

In years past, we would be canning and putting root vegetables in a cool dark place, both activities with the intent that we have stored up to eat later during the long winter months. It is good to plan and have enough for ourselves all year round.

If you've been to TCC lately on Sundays, you've heard me say that God's work in the world is often counter-intuitive, and what makes sense for our earthly lives is not what God calls us to do. So while we are harvesting and canning and carefully storing up, are we doing the same to our faith? Is our faith to be stored and meted out in careful portions or shared abundantly and trusting God to provide more? God gives us three things: time, relationships, and a body in which to live the first two. Are we giving all we can of our hearts, minds, spirits, and souls as we live each day?

Our stewardship theme this year is "Journey to Generosity". And I imagine that in years past we would be asking for some percentage of giving money in order to make the budget, etc, etc. But I'd like us to take a better look at the many and varied fruits that we have in our congregation, and how we might share that bounty more abundantly, and talk about our wealth of gifts to give a little more expansively.

Stewardship is all about sharing our time, talent, and treasure. For many years we have been very good at writing checks when called and when needed; we have the treasure part down. But what about our time and talents? Do we see the harvest of our own gifts to give to the church, to serve in the many and varied capacities in the Church School, with the Youth Group, leading or participating in learning groups on Bible and Living, and just showing up to support one another each Sunday at prayer time, or sharing a friend's journey by bringing them to church suppers for fellowship? We are a pledging, not a tithing tradition, but I'd like to re-introduce something we" I'd like each of us, and all of us, to do one new thing this church year. Serve in a new capacity. Learn a new way of expressing faith. But come and see, experience, feel, and not just watch the harvest, but participate in its blessings and give some of your fruits and labor in the process.

In short, we need YOU: each and every one. We need each person at TCC to commit to doing one new thing. And let me be clear, this should not be drudgery, something that we are guilted into. We each need to challenge ourselves to give to others rather than plopping down on the sofa in front of Netflix on

Saturday, or the Patriots on Sunday. Come and see what is new at our fellowship. We have a brand new church vibe that is focused on a mission-The Bridge Initiative-that requires that no one stand alone. Come to coffee hour, meet old and new friends. Bring someone who is hurting and introduce them to our fellowship. More than feeding stomachs at our Saturday dinners, we are feeding souls at our community suppers. Our ecumenical outreach is making a difference in starting to heal our town's divisions. So let's be proud of the progress we've made, and start telling others about how it makes us feel, this harvest of goodness and grace.

We each have an abundance of wealth and an abundance of faith. Why do we hold these back? It's only an answer each of us must answer to their own God. But answer it we must. And in continuing the Journey to Generosity, I invite you to make that first step by coming back if you've been away for a while. If you're already here, thank you. But please think about how God's grace can affect your life in a new and fundamentally profound way by sharing what is yours-what God has given you-time, relationships, and your health-and keep giving. The harvest is in, and God's calling is clear.

Come home. Be a bridge to others. Let's begin Try-thing as the first step on our Journey to Generosity.

Blessings,

Pastor Mark