



October 28, 2018

Taking a Stand with Our Money
Pastor Jason Bryan-Wegner

Matthew 6:19-33 NRSV

[Jesus is speaking]¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

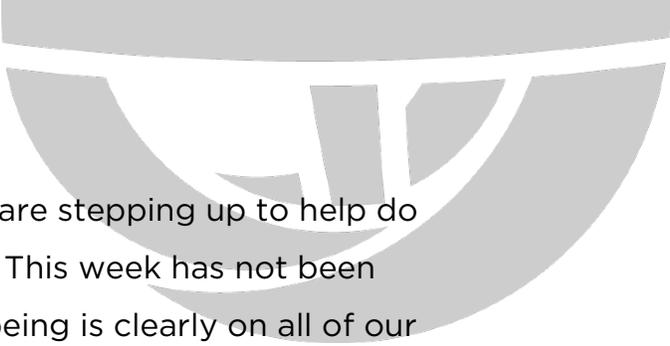
²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; ²³but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed, your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, grace, mercy and peace to you from God our strength and our provider. Amen.

Let me begin by saying thank you. Thank you for your sincerest hopes and prayers for Pastor Vern’s healing, for his family, and for your staff and pastors here at Zumbro. We all have felt lifted, encouraged, and strengthened by those prayers. Thank you for sending notes of

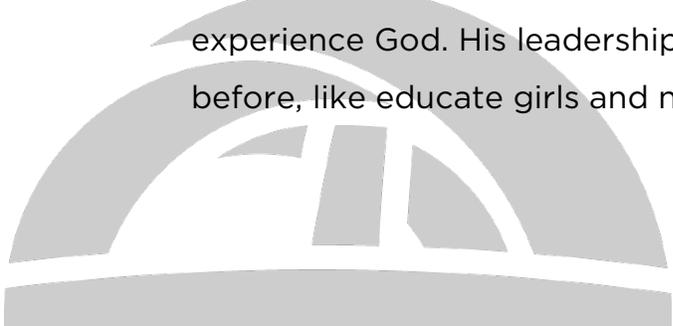


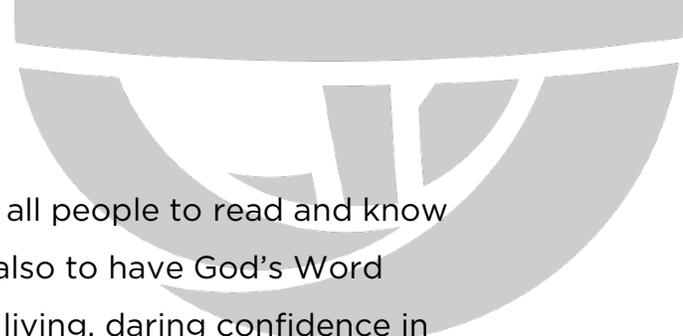
encouragement. Thank you for all the ways you are stepping up to help do the ministry that makes Zumbro a special place. This week has not been easy for our Zumbro family. Pastor Vern's well-being is clearly on all of our hearts and minds. But, we know Pastor Vern has taught us well how to care for one another and the world that God so loves. And our mission to do that hasn't changed. So, as we pray let us pray not only with folded hands and heavy hearts, but also with purposeful hands and hearts open to those whom God calls us to serve.

A couple of weeks ago, Pastor Vern wrapped up his sermon with this challenge to us. He asked, "Can we be a church that offers support and encouragement not only to each other, but also to those who are not yet here, and maybe even to those who will never be here? Can we be a church that shares the love of Jesus far and wide, and actively strives to be a blessing to those who need it most? Can we be a church that more often says *'yes, we will'* rather than *'no, we won't'*?"

Pastor Vern is doing all he can to heal right now. And I am thankful for that. What we can do is be the church he challenges us to be, even when things are not as they should be. Pastors often say that the best ministry happens in the interruptions. My hope for us is to make the most of this interruption. It's what Christians have done well for a long time.

Today we mark the 501st anniversary of one of the greatest interruptions the church has ever experienced - the day a disgruntled monk named Martin Luther published 95 ways he saw that the church was not being the church Christ called it to be. Luther called Christians to a deeper commitment to follow Jesus. His efforts opened new ways for people to experience God. His leadership led to the church doing things it hadn't done before, like educate girls and name the callings of people outside of





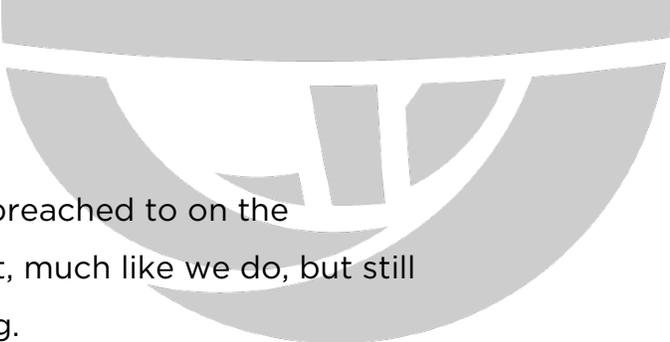
churches, convents, and monasteries. He urged all people to read and know the Scriptures - and not only know them - but also to have God's Word direct their way of life. "Faith" Luther said, "is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a [person] could stake [their] life on it a thousand times."

Luther's call to a living, daring faith involves some soul searching to be sure. We might want to ask ourselves what gives us confidence to see God's grace? It's also helpful to be honest about what holds us back from this life-changing faith. One of the things that Jesus warns about frequently in the gospels is our relationship to money and our stuff. Now, I don't know what prompted Jesus to offer this lesson on money and materials to his disciples. Maybe Jesus heard them worrying that there wouldn't be enough food for them at the next village. Maybe they had walked through the market earlier that day with a long wish list of supplies they wanted but couldn't afford. Maybe there was some equivalent of the MegaMillions lottery that got them talking, like many of us this past week, and they were sharing their dreams about hanging up their old fishing nets and sailing off to Athens to live a life of luxury. Who knows?!

Or perhaps Jesus offered this teaching because he sees how often fear and worry holds us back from that living, daring confidence that God's grace is enough. Jesus knows the consequences of fear and constant worry. When these things get the better of us, life diminishes. Our ability to look at the world with hope shrinks. We lose sight of all the blessings we have right in front of us.



Jesus saw this fear and worry every time the religious leaders and the politicians heard his message of grace and hope. He saw how their fear kept them from wanting that grace and hope to extend as far as Jesus said it



would. He could see it on the faces of those he preached to on the mountain. He could tell they wanted to believe it, much like we do, but still weren't sure they could trust what he was saying.

In response, Jesus doesn't offer threats or punishment for lack of faith. Instead, Jesus simply tells it like he sees it - inviting us to trust that we belong to a God of love, who again and again makes good on God's promise to provide what the world needs. How does God do this? He works through people like you and me to take a stand, to put a living, daring faith into practice not only for our own sake, but, as Pastor Vern says, "for those who are not here."

We catch glimpses of such faith when we hear about those who are rebuilding their lives after the hurricanes in the South. Their will to rebuild not only their homes, but their communities is nothing short of inspiring. God shows up in Red Cross volunteers and neighbors who invest in others' future with no expectation of reward. We catch glimpses of the living, daring faith one must have to literally walk away from home and family in El Salvador or Guatemala, because of violence and political repression. And God keeps showing up in hospitable town's people along the roads of Mexico. They join the migrants' struggle and see them as fellow brothers and sisters. They make sure that children and adults have water to drink, food to eat, a safe place to sleep, and a fresh pair of sandals for the next leg of their journey.

It was shocking to hear of yet another mass murder at a house of worship yesterday at Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. Yet, even in the shadows of evil and hatred, we catch glimpses of a living daring faith when people come together across religious, ethnic, and racial lines to take a stand



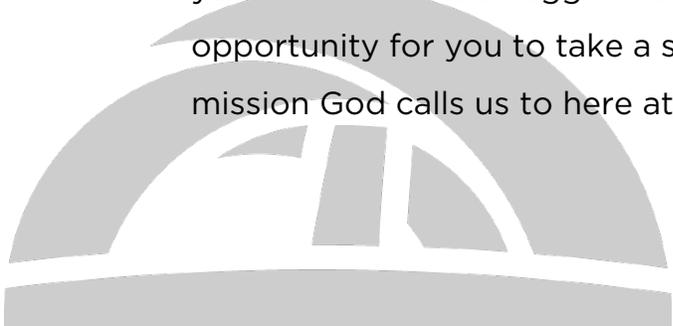


against such evil. And God shows up with a message that we are never alone.

As a congregation, we are planning for 2019 with confidence in what God is doing among us. And we are inviting each of us to take a stand for our congregation and our community with our time and money. We hope to increase our capacity to be the church God calls us to be. We set goals for 2019 and along with them, we told you up front how much those goals will likely cost. Overall, our goal is to increase our giving by \$2000 per week so that we can do what we believe God is calling us to do.

This next year:

- We will explore and live into our identity as a downtown church. We will be in conversation with potential new ministry partners and neighbors to see how we can make a significant difference in this part of Rochester.
- We will develop new opportunities for more families to grow in faith at home, at church and in the world.
- We will provide meaningful learning experiences for 500 adults to continue their journey of faith.
- And we have some modest dreams for how we can make our building more welcoming, even as we develop a plan for a more significant building project down the road. This may involve painting some rooms, replacing some worn furniture, and improving some aspects of accessibility around our building.



Last week, we sent each member household an individualized letter inviting you to contribute a suggested amount. Our hope is to provide an opportunity for you to take a stand with your money and be part of the mission God calls us to here at Zumbro. Every gift matters. Every gift



affirms our confidence in God's grace, and helps us to be an active part of how God is at work through our church.

Let me end today where I began. Thank you, dear people of Zumbro for your commitment to our mission, and for the great confidence you place in our awesome God, and for taking a stand with your money through your generosity here and around the community. Let's move forward as a church that says *yes, we will* with purposeful hands, hearts, and generosity, open to those whom God calls us to serve. Amen.

