

Simple Gifts--September 28

Admission

I heard a wailing child as I stepped out of my office into a blue-skied morning. I found Scotty and his mother huddled outside the door to the pre-school Sunday School classrooms. Scotty, a child who loved Sunday School, was adamantly refusing to enter.

His mom explained: she and Scotty had walked to church; she had purse at home and did not have the usual two quarters for Scotty's School offering. Scotty became hysterical.



left her
Sunday

"Why don't you ask him what's wrong? He calls you 'that lady in charge.'"

I stooped to eye level to ask Scotty why he would not go to Sunday School. The hiccupping reply came slowly, "Because you have to pay to get in."

Each week, the teachers of the four-year old class greeted every child at the door, marked their attendance, and invited them to place their offering in a basket. (This was a recommended practice because young children often lose or misplace loose change they are carrying around.) For Scotty, this benign ritual sent a different message.

I often wonder what messages we receive in childhood and beyond that affect our decisions about giving to the church. Are we reluctantly paying dues or admission? Do we feel compelled to help the church meet its financial obligations? Do we use our contributions to express approval/disapproval of the church and its leadership?

II Corinthians 9:7-8 provides this guidance:

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each one should give what s/he has decided in his/her heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

PS: The "lady in charge" escorted Scotty to class and explained that he did not have to pay admission. We changed the greeting ritual in the pre-school classes. Scotty is now 34 years old and a faithful, contributing member of First United Methodist Church in Artesia, New Mexico.

By Marge Clark