

Simple Gifts--October 11

Generosity is what it's all about

But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. – Jesus to his disciples, in Matthew 6:3

Secret giving is the fundamental basis of our church's stewardship campaigns ... so that the only person (other than the financial secretary) who knows the amount of your gifts is God. We put our pledges in envelopes or fold our checks in half, so that the amount is not visible to the casual glance, even if we pass the plate to our closest friend, sitting beside us, or to the usher carrying the plate forward, or to the pastors, as they receive the plates and offer the gifts to God.

Of course, for some, the secrecy can lead to a bad choice: not to give at all. Why is this a bad choice? The most important reason has nothing to do with the church's bank balance. It has to do with what Jesus says to his disciples: secret giving is giving to God and the praise we seek is from God, who rewards quiet generosity. So not to give is actually not to give God the opportunity to reward your generosity. It's that simple.

As a member of the Finance Committee, I occasionally am asked to be one of two people who counts the offering on Sundays after worship. This may seem fairly routine, but it assures you of several things. First, two people are counting, and the results are carefully analyzed by the Finance Committee for accuracy (no names included), so a structure is in place that you can trust. Second, since the counting is done rather quickly, at least I have no memory of exactly who gave what, so the secrecy is maintained, in principle anyway. But I always leave those times being even more grateful for the wonderful generosity of the members and friends of Duke Memorial, from the donations of pennies to the largest checks.

Bless you for your generosity, for your secret giving which gives God the opportunity to reward you for it.

Prayer: O God, you know our secret wish to be generous to you and your work. Help it to be put into action, so that your rewards may be ours, now and evermore. Amen.

By Roger Loyd