

Pentecost 7B, Proper 14. July 8, 2018. Dungeness Valley Lutheran Church, Sequim, WA. Ezekiel 2:1-5, 2 Corinthians 8:7-15, Mark 6:1-13. (Note: an envelope marked “MOVING” had been placed on each seat.)

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

7 Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

8 I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. 9 For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. 10 And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something—11 now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. 12 For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. 13 I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between 14 your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. 15 As it is written,
'The one who had much did not have too much,
and the one who had little did not have too little.'

Dear sisters and brothers, you may wonder what all those “moving” envelopes on the chairs are about. It’s the Finance Committee asking for donations to help move Pastor Britton and his family from Colorado to Sequim. It is also a reminder that you are MOVING forward in faith, into a new chapter in the life of this congregation.

But first a word about DVLC finances. You may have noticed I haven’t preached about money directly this year. But I have often encouraged you in your generosity. In your hospitality. And for the outpouring of financial support to community and international need.

I asked that the reading from 2 Corinthians be read today even though we heard it last week. It is from a letter Paul wrote to a church which was reasonably well off; he was asking them to fulfill the pledge they had made the year before to send a charitable gift to the struggling church in Jerusalem.

The first verse describes you: “you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness...” and read on, “you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Indeed you know Jesus as the center of our faith and life and as the one who shows us in human ways what God is like. You know him as the healer, the teacher, the forgiver, the one who welcomed and blessed children and fed crowds – and you have modeled your ministry and lives after him: healing, teaching, forgiving, welcoming, blessing and feeding crowds. So there is really no great need for me to preach about money, except to put some of our appeals into perspective. Our basic church income estimate is about \$7 to 8 thousand in the red. This is not unusual for a church in the middle of summer, nor even for this church. But it shows us that we need to be mindful of the everyday need to pay staff, keep the lights on, purchase coffee! So when we ask for a donation to help move the Brittons here, this is asking for something above and beyond your regular Sunday offering.

Paul, in writing to the church in Corinth, talks about a “fair balance” in verse 14. That no one has too much and no one has too little. The church is not asking that you take money from your food budget or your rent or mortgage. But the church IS asking that you maintain or raise your regular giving to keep things moving forward AND, if you are able, to ADD something for the moving expenses which are estimated to be somewhere between 5 and 10 thousand.

Later in the year, you will be offered the opportunity to help raise the capital to build what we are currently calling Dungeness Valley Homes. Again, this is a worthy, worthy opportunity, but we do not want to build those homes if we cannot continue to pay our regular church bills. Gifts to the Homes need to be over and above your regular giving.

I love verse 10, “it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something—11 now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means.” A little over a year ago, you DID begin to do something for the homeless families of this town. By voting to move forward, you expressed your “desire to do something.” When the time comes, you will with God’s help, “finish doing it.”

One step at a time: regular offerings, a special “MOVING” offering today or next Sunday, and in the future thinking of how you can support the building of Dungeness Valley Homes. If you personally fund the whole project, you would get to name it.... 😊

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That was my stewardship sermon for the year. Not too painful! Most importantly, a good stewardship sermon will, like every other sermon, focus on Christ Jesus and how in following him, in gratitude to him, in love for him, we also show love for one another and for our neighbors.

In both the Ezekiel reading and today’s Gospel, people much like yourselves are recruited to go out and proclaim repentance and renewal of life, to anoint and heal the sick, to point people to the God of justice, mercy, accountability, forgiveness, and unrelenting love. A rebellious house would discourage Ezekiel. Some would refuse to listen to the disciples. But, regardless, they are asked to go forth. They are promised God’s guidance and the Holy Spirit.

Is this not our situation today? Asked to go forth. We are called each week to “Go in peace, love and serve the Lord” and that is the LAST word we hear in formal worship.

We don’t select which neighbors we will love and serve in God’s name. I have been grateful and, yes, proud, to serve this congregation because you have been inclusive and accepting of everyone. You embrace people of low income, high income, and in-between income. We don’t publish the offerings people give; in fact, we protect the privacy of those numbers very carefully.

You welcome people who live on the street. You welcome babies and beloved folks in their 90s. You don’t care if someone comes with a walker, a wheelchair, or on foot; if they sit or stand or kneel; if they wear cool new clothes or NW standards. You embrace people from all along the “expression of sexuality” spectrum. I have been happy to boast of your inclusivity on many occasions. I have also been happy to boast of your amazing generosity.

As with every group of people on God’s great earth, there remains work to be done. Forgiveness remains to be offered; repentance needs to move our hearts; and daily, nuts-and-bolts work is needed to keep

things moving forward. I have confidence that with God's help you will rise to every challenge.

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Sometimes you may struggle to sense God's grace. You wonder if you are making a difference in the world. Sometimes it is simply a challenge to keep on keeping on during long and difficult days, or long and boring days, or on fast-moving, hectic days. I have seen you in those struggles. Your hands are indeed doing God's work. Your prayers are powerful. Your efforts inspire many. The good you do motivates others to do good.

Please remember, in whatever situation you find yourself, remember that God invites you to a life of holy acts, everyday acts of kindness that may seem so ordinary that you easily overlook them. Yet, know that these acts are extraordinary as they make a difference in the lives of people you touch. God sees them. God blesses them. And God blesses YOU to continue to be a blessing to the world, your neighbor, your family, all whom you encounter.

May the peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.