**Your Stewardship Toolkit for March 2024!**

*February’s theme:* **Lenten thoughts about wealth**

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*If you want the free Toolkit sent directly to your inbox every month,* *just drop me an email**.
Feel free to forward it to colleagues who might find it useful.*

Consistent communication, education and action can help your congregation develop a healthy culture of stewardship and generosity. This Toolkit can help get you there!

The resources of this Toolkit are most effective when used to support a monthly emphasis about a different aspect of stewardship. Exploring this month’s theme, “Lenten thoughts about wealth,” your congregation might not only share the newsletter article and snippets but also plan Bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series or other activities.

**Stewardship Snippets**

*Copy and paste into your bulletin!
Source: Rob Blezard.*

**Third Sunday in Lent, March 3, 2024***“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.* **– Exodus 20:17**God commands what ***not*** to do but expects us ***to do*** the opposite in grateful response to divine abundance. Instead of coveting what others have, we are to cultivate a spirit of generosity that helps us love and serve our neighbors.

**Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 10, 2024***“For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”* **– Ephesians 2:10**
We have been created to love God and neighbor and to live a life marked by good works and radical generosity. During the season of Lent we are reminded to devote our time and resources to go the second mile for the sake of the good news.

**Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 17, 2024***“Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”* **– John 12:24**Jesus speaks about his coming death and outlines what it means to truly follow him. Like Jesus, we are called to put aside self-interest for the sake of the gospel and serve God and neighbor willingly.

**Palm/Passion Sunday, March 24, 2024***“While [Jesus] was at home in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.”* **– Mark 14:3**Today we enter Holy Week and walk the road with Jesus to the cross. The gospel lesson opens with a story of generosity. The unnamed woman anoints Jesus with a costly perfume. Jesus praises her lavish generosity and pure intent. What have you to bring to Jesus?

**Maundy Thursday, March 28, 2024***“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” – John 13:34*Today we remember Jesus’ selfless service. How may we better love and serve one another? What does it mean that Jesus terms loving one another “a new commandment”?

**Good Friday, March 29, 2024***“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* –Hebrews 10:24-25Today we recall Jesus’ cruel death at the hands of empire. As the Body of Christ, we remember we have enormous capacity to do the hard holy work of love and care for all people.

**Resurrection of the Lord, March 31, 2024***So [the women] went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*  –Mark 16:8
How often has fear silenced you from sharing faith or speaking the truth? Too often Christians are afraid to speak up. God can give us the power to speak up and speak out.

**March 2024 newsletter article** (298 words)

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Lenten thoughts about wealth

*Jesus taught, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”* **-Luke 12:15 (NIV)**

For centuries, Christians have observed the season of Lent by taking on new spiritual practices (such as special prayer or bible reading) or abstaining from things that are enjoyable or extravagant (such as tobacco, chocolate or alcohol).

Lenten disciplines assist us in looking inward, seeing ourselves for who we really are, and with God’s help, identifying things that keep us from drawing closer to God. With these awarenesses, and with God’s help, we can then do something about them.

It’s only fitting that Christians look at their relationship with wealth. Jesus had no problem with wealth, per se, but he repeatedly warns that wealth can distort our values and put a wedge between us and God. Or, worse, that money can supplant God as ruler in our hearts.

For those of us who are comfortable in our incomes and possessions, Lent invites us to look at our relationship with wealth. Here are some ideas for thought and prayer:

* Jesus says, “Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” How is that different from the relentless message our consumer culture gives us? In what, then, would Jesus say our life consists? In what does your life consist?
* For Lent, keep a journal of everything you buy. At the end of Lent, analyze what your purchases say about your values, identity, and relationship with wealth.
* For Lent, buy only things you *need*, and NOT things you merely *want*. What do you learn in the process.
* For Lent, double your regular giving to charity. Or simply give to the point where it is a sacrifice.
* If you dare, try tithing – giving 10 percent of your income to God’s work. What do you learn about yourself?

May this Lent be a time when you draw close to the Lord your God.

*–Rob Blezard*

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