

The attitude we have can make all of the difference in the world.

There is a great story of a little boy named Jonathan, a gifted child of three years old, who went out to eat with his parents. The waitress comes over and says, "Jonathan, what would you like?"

He says, "I'll have a grilled cheese sandwich."

She says, "Jonathan, I'm sorry, we don't serve grilled cheese sandwiches here."

He says, "you have a grill, don't you?"

"Yes."

"You have cheese don't you?"

"Yes."

"You have bread, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll have a grilled cheese sandwich."

He is three years old.

The waitress says, "Jonathan, I'll go see if the chef will fix you a grilled cheese sandwich." When she comes back, she says, "Okay, Jonathan, the chef agreed to fix you a grilled cheese sandwich. I forgot to ask you though, what do you want to drink?"

He says, "I'll have a milkshake."

She says, "Jonathan, your parents have probably already told you that we don't serve milkshakes. Now, it is true we have milk. And it is true we have ice cream. But we don't have syrup."

He says, "You have a car, don't you?"

I love that story. Here is a little boy with an attitude. He knew what he wanted and he went after it. While you and I can laugh at the precociousness of that little boy, many of us act like him in much less subtle ways. We have been taught by our world to have a "Me first" attitude, where we are much more concerned about taking

care of ourselves first. Then, if there is anything left over, I might share it with others.

But I am convinced that this attitude is not helpful for us personally. I am convinced that this attitude gets in the way of living our life of faith. I am convinced that this attitude is harmful for the church. I am convinced that this attitude is harmful to our nation and to our world.

Why do I believe this? It is because this attitude can lead us to not see how we are connected to others.

In our scripture for today we see Jesus in the midst of a conversation with a religious leader who wanted to get Jesus into trouble. He asks Jesus about what is really important. Jesus responds by asking him, "what do you think?"

The leader said, "Well, you should love God with everything that makes us you, and put that into practice by how you love your neighbor."

Jesus said, "Wow that is a great answer. Do that and you will have a life worth living."

But the leader wasn't happy. He pressed Jesus even more, "But how do I put it into action?"

And Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. He told the story of how a Jewish man had been beaten and left for dead on the side of the road. Two other religious leaders, people we would expect to stop, people we would expect to help, saw the need and walked on by.

But then an enemy of the Jewish people, a Samaritan, came by, he saw the need. He took the chance. He actually helped the man in need. He was generous with his life, his time and his gifts, all to make a difference for this man.

Jesus asked the leader, "Which of these was a neighbor to the man in need?"

The leader said, "The one who treated him kindly. The one who helped out."

Jesus said, "Then go and do the same."

Jesus is encouraging this Jewish religious leader to look beyond the old rules of who is in and who is out, and simply live to care and share. Jesus is asking us to look at our attitudes of life and giving and re-examine them in light of what is happening in the world around us.

When it comes to talking about money, we don't always do this. We are good about grabbing and holding on to what we make or what we earn.

I remember when I first started off in ministry. I was visiting with a good friend and the former Senior Pastor I worked with. A man by the name of Don Fenner. I looked at Don one day and said, "I can't wait until I make as much money as you."

His salary was about three times as much as mine.

He looked at me and he said, "Well Scott, until you are able to look at what you receive as a gift from God, you will never make enough money, not even if you ever get to this salary level.

His words hit me pretty hard. I have thought about them ever since. What I have learned is that God has richly blessed me. If I choose to see God's blessings. If I can live with a grateful heart, then I have much to celebrate. Then I can give back to God a tithe and it can help me lean on God and trust God more and more.

But if I look at what I receive with a tight fist and say, "It is never enough." Then in reality, it never will be enough. Then the sad news is I will miss seeing the delights and the blessings that God showers upon me.

What about you? What kind of attitude do you bring to the gifts you receive? Is it one that is primarily concerned about you and

getting yours? Or is it one in which you are willing to live with generosity; are you willing to share the gifts God has given to you?

For the next several weeks, we are going to talk about stewardship and our giving back to God through the ministry of this church. This is important for us to do as a church. Ministry happens here, in the name of Jesus Christ, because of your support.

God has blessed our church in remarkable ways. We have more people here and involved than we ever have had before. The challenge we are presently facing, is that we are having a hard time providing the ministry to the people God has sent to us. We are having a hard time providing the proper care to our building, because of all the use it is getting. We are putting plans in place to do a better job of being in ministry to the people of our church, of enlarging the ministry of small groups, and of caring for our property. All of that takes money.

I want to invite you to join me in giving back to God through the ministry of our church, a tithe or ten percent of your income.

This is important to us as a church, because of the ministry together, we can do for God. But it is also important for us to do this for ourselves. Through this commitment to increase our giving to a tithe, or ten percent of our income, we tap into the need God placed within each one of us to live with generosity.

That is why I ask you today, what is your attitude toward living and giving? Is it to get whatever you can, and if you give back to God, well okay? Or are you going to allow your giving back to God, be a statement of your willingness to live a life of hope and generosity?

May God help each one of us, examine our attitudes. May God help each one of us be willing to share the gifts and blessings we have received from God.

Amen