

A senior citizen in Florida bought a brand new Mercedes convertible. He took off down the road, flooring it to 80 mph and enjoying the wind blowing through what little hair he had left on his head.

"This is great," he thought as he roars down I-75. He pushed the pedal to the metal even more. Then he looked in his rear view mirror and saw a highway patrol trooper behind him, blue lights flashing and siren blaring. "I can get away from him with no problem", thought the man and he tromped it some more and flew down the road at over 100 mph, then 110, 120 mph.

All of a sudden he thought "What am I doing? I'm too old for this kind of thing." He pulled over to the side of the road and waited for the trooper to catch up with him. The trooper pulled in behind the Mercedes and walked up to the man. "Sir," he said, looking at his watch. "My shift ends in 30 min. and today is Friday. If you can give me a reason why you were speeding that I've never heard before, I'll let you go".

The man looked at the trooper thoughtfully and said, "Years ago my wife ran off with a Florida State Trooper, and I thought you were bringing her back." The trooper replied, "Sir, have a nice day."

What a great story. We can laugh at it. We can even admire the senior citizen's ability to think as fast as he could drive. But in an ironic way, it reminds us of the challenges of living that many of us face. We end up doing the very things we know are not helpful.

We drive too fast in our cars too. We can get so caught up in living that we neglect the important relationships of our lives. We can get so caught up in wanting to get ahead ourselves that we forget to remember God and the work of God through the offering of our gifts and our lives.

In short, we can live lives the way our world tells us to, by focusing on ourselves and on our getting ahead. Unfortunately that frequently leaves us feeling as if something is missing in our lives. If you are here today and you are feeling as if something is missing in your life and you are wondering why. Let me ask you, what have you been giving priority to in your life?

Our faith reminds us that when we give priority to anything other than God and our relationship with God, we are missing the point of life. Thankfully, our scripture for today reminds us that we don't have to live that way. We can live for God. **We can put our faith into action.**

In our scripture from the book of Acts, we see a picture of a church, where each person is committed to living their faith, and putting their faith into action. This is seen in what they do with their possessions and gifts. The people from this church in Acts choose to see what they have been given as a gift of God. They are blessed, so they can be a blessing to others. They are willing to take those possessions and give them to God, so that God through the ministry of the church is able to make a difference for the world.

Through the gifts that are given, needs are met and no one is left wanting.

Finally this scripture and the gifts that are given are so significant, that one of the early church leaders, Barnabus, is recognized because of his faithfulness for living for God. This scripture highlights the idea that people aren't living for themselves, they are living for God. *You get the idea that this is how God intends for us to live.*

As I read this passage and looked at the example of the early church, I was challenged to ask myself, "Is how I live close to this example of the early church? Or do I live more like the world tells

me, to take care of myself, to watch out for my own? Do I live to get ahead? What about you? What does your living show? What does your living reflect? Does it reflect the values of the world? Does it reflect the values of this early church?

Ultimately this scripture reminds us that even though we live in a world of brokenness, we have been touched by God's grace. This scripture invites us to live for more than ourselves and to let our living show God's grace through us.

Pastor Ralph Simpson asks, "What is your most memorable Thanksgiving? For me, it was on the eve of the day. The church had the names of 10 families scheduled to receive food baskets. A local merchant donated hams and groceries were purchased from the food bank. As we packed the boxes in the fellowship hall, these families were excited over the food they were taking home. It would be the best meal many had enjoyed in months. As they were picking up their boxes, another family arrived. Father, mother, and three children piled out of an old pickup truck and came inside the hall. This was a new family, not on our list. They had just heard there was food being distributed by the church.

"I explained that we did not have enough for an extra family. And as I tried to assure them that I would do what I could, an amazing thing happened. With no prompting, a woman put down the box she was carrying and quickly found an empty box to place beside it. She began removing items from her box to share. Soon others followed her lead, and these people who already were struggling and had so little created an 11th box for another family that was also struggling."

This family in need was fed, because other families in need were willing to share. God's concerns are really for people. God's concerns are for this world. God's concerns are for people who are hurting in some way. For all who feel as if life is not quite right.

And this focus we have had on Stewardship over the past month is really an invitation for us to re-examine who we are and what is important to us. It is an invitation that gives us another try to get it right and live God's way.

As you prepare to turn in your pledges for 2007, I hope you will turn them in prayerfully, hopefully. I hope you have had a chance to ask yourself and to visit with your life-partner's and say, does this pledge represent our love for God? Does it show that God is a priority for our life?

May this commitment weekend become a celebration of giving our lives as well as our gifts to God. May God live in us and through us.

Amen.