

***“Help One Another to Show Love and to Do Good”***

John Beehler reported, “There was a man who called the church and asked if he could speak to the Head Hog at the trough. The secretary said, ‘Who?’ Then she gathered herself and said ‘Sir, if you mean our pastor you will have to treat him with a little more respect than that and ask for the ‘Reverend’ or ‘The Pastor.’ But certainly you cannot refer to him as the Head Hog at the Trough.’ The man said, ‘I understand. I was calling because I have \$10,000 I was thinking about donating to the building fund.’” **“She said, ‘Hold on for just a moment - I think the big pig just walked in the door.’”** (“Tainted Money” by John Beehler)

Yes, local churches depend on receiving money to pay their ministries’ expenses. I might even answer to the name “big pig”, if the money would enable our congregation ***“to help one another to show love and to do good.”***

However, it is inappropriate for communities of faith to depend on miracle donations for their ministry. Our Reading from Hebrews reminds us about how God has shown us we have been given undeserved forgiveness – grace and the New Life and Faith Relationship through Jesus Christ. It is because of God’s Agape Self-Giving and Sacrificial Love manifested in God’s Son that God’s Spirit declared in **verse 17, “I will not remember their sins and evil deeds any longer.”**

Because of what God has done through Jesus Christ, the author of Hebrews challenged in **verse 23, “Let us hold on firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep His promise.”** Unfortunately, there is still the temptation to believe you and I have to do something to make sure our Divine Parent actually pays attention to us. For example, there is a humorous story about “A businessman who needed millions of dollars to clinch an important deal”. He “went to the temple to pray for the money. By chance he sat next to a man who was praying for \$100 to pay an urgent debt.

The businessman took out his wallet and pressed \$100 into the other man’s hand. Overjoyed, the man got up and left the temple. The businessman then closed his eyes and prayed: ‘And now, Lord, that I have your undivided attention . . .’” (Traditional. Told by Billy Strayhorn)

Our Scripture shared our true calling in **verse 24, “Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good.”** How do we do that? **Perhaps verse 25 provides us insight, “Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer.”** Yes, coming together frequently in Worship is crucial to our being able ***“to help one another to show love and to do good.”***

Rev. Dr. Michael Foss provides insight about how Worship plays such an important role in our helping each other show or live more “agape” love and do good. Foss wrote, “When Mark came to worship, he did so because he felt like he had to. A Ph.D. psychologist, he explains his presence at worship with these words: ‘I went to church with my wife, Sue, because as a professional counselor, I never heard one of my female clients tell me that her going to church alone was a good thing. So, I came to be present with her. Actually,’ he said after a pause, ‘I came so that she could never say I wasn’t there.’ But his attitude was, in his words, ‘literal and concrete.’”

Continuing, Foss quoted Mark, “When the pastor talked of Jesus’ rising from the dead, I’d ask my wife, ‘Now, just how did that happen? Was there an escalator up or what?’ Well, she knew I was just trying to get to her. And after her many honest attempts at answering my questions, she finally told me she was through with them. And that’s when I began to listen for myself – it was either that or not come, which wasn’t an option.”

Foss concluded, “... Mark’s story doesn’t stop where I left off earlier. In fact, worship became an essential part of his life. He said, ‘I’ve seen that faith works for me and for others. It really helps in daily life. Now I know that this stuff is real.’” **Mark concluded, “This is so helpful in real life and real time. I don’t know about others, but I need it every week.”** (“Gift and Power for Faith”, Hebrews 10:19-25, November 19, 2000 by Rev. Dr. Michael Foss)

Coming together frequently for Worship, study, service, and fellowship empowers us to manifest and model God’s Self-Giving “Agape” Love to one another, and thus, you and I are enabled **“to help one another to show love and to do good.”** For example, a traditional story shares, “The Junior Sunday School Teacher asked her eight eager children if they would give \$1,000,000 to the missionaries. ‘YES!’ they all screamed!! ‘Would you give \$1,000?’ Again they shouted, ‘YES!’ ‘How about \$100?’ ‘Oh, YES we would!’ they all agreed!! ‘Would you give just a dollar to the missionaries?’ she asked. The boys exclaimed ‘YES!’ just as before except for Johnny.” **“‘Johnny,’ the teacher said as she noticed the boy clutching his pocket, ‘why didn’t you say ‘YES’ this time?’ ‘Well,’ he stammered, ‘I HAVE a dollar.’”**

Our Annual Consecrating Stewards Program is designed to help us grow in our Faith Relationship with God, as well as, in our living out the New Life in Jesus Christ. **Our using this program enables “one another to show love and to do good” – showing we “hold on firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep His promise” and, thus, we are able to live Fearless Generosity!** Enabled and empowered through this Consecrating Stewards Program, we grow significantly in our use of our lives and resources, including money, for God’s Purposes – because of God’s Love and Trustworthiness. Through the Faith – Promise Process, which our Guest Steward, Rev. Peter Nichols, will lead us through during Worship next Sunday, we seek to foster **Fearless Generosity, “agape” love, and doing good.** We do that by making Faith – Promise Commitments of which the specific amounts and the specific identity of the individuals or households promising to give those amounts in 2016 are known only to themselves and to our Divine Parent. Further, our program has been taking place in the **spirit of Worship**, during the three Sundays leading up to the Consecration and Thanksgiving Sunday Worship Celebration, in addition to that important Sunday. **This process and program focuses on the need for each of us to grow in and deepen our Faith Relationships with God by having a greater commitment to being more fearless and fruitful in our support of our Divine Parent’s Purposes through Round Grove United Church, United Church of Christ.** We do that instead of emphasizing the church’s need for money. Through this program, we make sure we are helping “one another to show love and to do good,” instead of begging one another to support the church’s Budget. Indeed, the Board of Trustees will not even develop a proposed Budget, until all Faith – Promise Commitments are turned in. SE) **Through this program we are “concerned for one another” helping “one another to show love and to do good.”** Amen.