



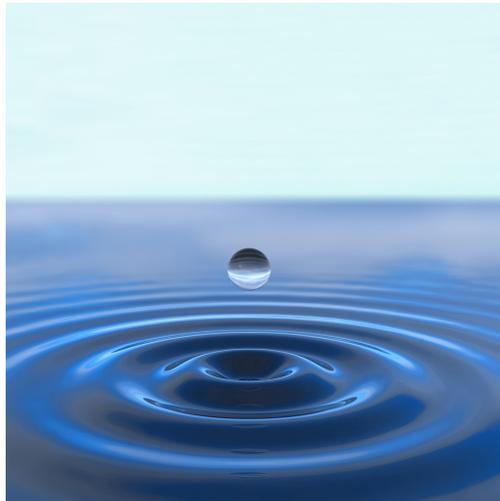
Sunday, October 21, 2012

OFFICE of STEWARDSHIP

## *Blessed to Be a Blessing* Stewardship Reflection Series

**Proper 24B ♦ Mark 10:35-45**

*...with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized...*



I'm from a refugee, immigrant background. My mother's family was chased from China when the Communists came. They lost everything. Yet they are glad, because they eventually immigrated to the United States, building new lives together. A focus on what's important, patience that God's goodness will prevail, and joyful optimism exemplify how my family has responded to God's blessing.

The outward and visible sign of our being blessed by God is our baptism by water and the words that we are marked as Christ's own, baptized in the name of the Trinity. If you reflect on what our baptism means, to receive the Holy Spirit and to belong to Jesus, I am amazed that we're not all dancing with unadulterated joy . . . that we're not all reaching out to draw others into this Dance of Life.

I am reminded of the Mevlevi Sema from Turkey, commonly referred to as Whirling Dervishes, who perform a whirling dance as a remembrance of God's goodness. They whirl, with their right hands raised to receive God's blessings, and their left hands pointed downward, to pass those blessings on to the rest of creation. That prayer posture says those who are blessed are meant to bless others. The Children of Israel learned that lesson when they received manna from the heavens that could not be stored up for another day. God's blessings are not meant to be hoarded, but to be shared as a blessing to others.

Jesus came not to be served but to serve, and his service was unstintingly given. We humans are often stingy, thinking, "How much will I have left?" As church members, even if we were to empty our pockets, giving out of our abundance to serve those who have less, it is unlikely that we would be without a roof over our heads, food to eat, or clothing to wear. What other losses do we fear? Jesus gave himself completely, without measure, unto death upon the cross. Can we profess to follow Jesus and do less than prayerfully moving towards emptying our pockets to serve the neighbors God has given us to love and care for?

God calls us into a generosity of spirit that is much more than just being generous with our material wealth. When we pour ourselves into relationships with the poor, the sick, the widowed, the lonely-- becoming friends and family to those who are not easy friends and have no family-- then we are living into our baptismal call to bless others with all of ourselves, all of who we are, marked as Christ's own. Being a blessing is an important element of being a steward of the Good News of God in Christ.



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### *Reflection Questions*

- How do you intentionally bless others?
- How is your baptism a call of commitment to stewardship practices?
- How do you receive with an open hand God's blessings and pass them on?