

Sermon Note: Save All You Can

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

This is week three of *Dreaming the Future*, a four-week stewardship series built on *Earn. Save. Give.* by James A. Harnish and *Enough* by Adam Hamilton. As United Methodists, we promise to support the ministries of the church with our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, and how we save is part of keeping that promise. We save for a home, a family, or a rainy day. Who are we saving for, and who does it all belong to? In Matthew 22, Jesus is teaching in Jerusalem when the Pharisees and supporters of Herod try to trap him with a question about taxes.

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPkJH6BT7dM>

In this clip from *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), neighbors crowd the Savings & Loan demanding all their savings, and George has to calm their fears and make the money last until closing time...

Why This Video?

George tells the crowd where their money is: in their neighbors' houses. Asking for all of it at once means foreclosing on those neighbors, so each person's savings depend on the others leaving theirs in place. When George offers the \$2,000 he and Mary had saved for their honeymoon, he asks each person how much they need to get through until the bank reopens, and most ask for a small amount.

Video Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been asked to trust someone when you wanted certainty? What was that like?
2. George tells the crowd their money is in their neighbors' houses. What do you think that meant to these frightened people?
3. A patron says her husband hasn't worked in over a year and she needs cash to live on. Another says he has to pay a doctor. What do you think it's like to say that publicly, in front of others?
4. George says, "I got \$2000!" The money is the couple's honeymoon savings. What do you think it means for George and Mary to use it this way?
5. Several people take \$20 or less. What do you notice about how they decide how much to take?
6. George tells Miss Thompson, "You don't have to sign anything." What is it like to be a recipient of that kind of trust?
7. Have you ever shared something you were saving for another person's need? What was that like afterward?

Matthew 22:15-22 (CEB)

¹⁵Then the Pharisees met together to find a way to trap Jesus in his words. ¹⁶They sent their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to him. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are genuine and that you teach God's way as it really is. We know that you are not swayed by people's opinions,

because you don't show favoritism. ¹⁷So tell us what you think: Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

¹⁸Knowing their evil motives, Jesus replied, "Why do you test me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used to pay the tax." And they brought him a denarion. ²⁰"Whose image and inscription is this?" he asked.

²¹"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." ²²When they heard this they were astonished, and they departed.

Scripture Study Questions

1. In verse 16, the disciples of the Pharisees and the supporters of Herod begin with praise. What do you think the praise is for?
2. In verses 15-16, the Pharisees send their disciples along with the supporters of Herod. What do you think brings these groups together?
3. The question in verse 17 offers two answers, yes or no. What do you think makes it a trap?
4. In verses 19-20, Jesus asks to see the coin and then asks whose image and inscription are on it. What do you think he wants them to see?
5. In verse 21, they answer, "Caesar's." What do you think belongs to Caesar?
6. Jesus says to give to God what belongs to God (v21). What do you think belongs to God, and what could it mean that people are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27)?
7. What could it look like to give to God what belongs to God with our savings and our time?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. In *Earn. Save. Give.*, Rev. Dr. Harnish says saving goes against the grain of our culture. What do you notice about how our culture talks about saving, and how could the church talk about it?
2. Harnish distinguishes hoarding from saving. Do you see a difference? If so, where would you place yourself between the two, and why?
3. Harnish describes the 10-10-80 plan for dividing income. What do you think your own plan looks like, and what might you adjust?
4. What could it mean to treat saving as a spiritual practice, and how could our community in La Jolla UMC help us practice it together?
5. In *Enough*, Rev. Hamilton writes that his favorite activity is inviting friends over, lighting a fire in the fireplace, and playing cards. What is a simple way you like to spend time with people?

Weekly Action

Look at whose image is on a coin or a bill from your wallet, and spend a few minutes in prayer about what you've saved and who it belongs to. Then look at your calendar and pray about how your time is shared between yourself and other people. Write down one small gift of money or time you'd like to set aside, and set it aside. Later, talk with a trusted spiritual partner about what you noticed, and where you feel inspired to give more.

Prayer

Giver of every good gift, you stamp your image on every face we meet, and you entrust us with all we hold. Teach us patience and foresight with what you place in our hands, so that our savings stay useful in your service. Make us content in you, and free us to give our presence and our gifts to your people. Through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

This content was developed by Rev. Bob Rhodes using source materials from Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church, his own original writing, and AI tools in alignment with La Jolla UMC AI Usage Guidelines. AI assisted with drafting and iterative refinement. All final text was reviewed and approved by Rev. Rhodes.