

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE - AUGUST 7, 2011

Reflections

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

"PUT YOURSELF SECOND"

BY REV. JEAN WADE

We live in times of such economic uncertainty, with many people out of work, homes being foreclosed, and churches and other charitable organizations struggling to meet budgets. On TV and in articles we read that the way to economic security is to always pay yourself first - to put money into savings before paying bills.

While on the surface this seems wise, it leaves me with a sad and empty feeling. No wonder the church and those less fortunate are feeling the pains of reduced giving and are struggling for their very existence. To me, this communicates a setting of priorities that puts self first (bill-paying, house payments, credit cards), food second, and the church and charitable giving third. Is this what we are called to do?

What would happen if that priority list were changed to make the church first? In Matthew 6, we are told,

33 ... seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

This passage reminds me of an old story that tells of a woman who had found a precious stone. She put the stone in her bag and went on her way. The next day, a hungry traveler came by her on the road and asked if she had anything to eat. As she rummaged in her bag, the man spied the precious stone she had. "Instead of food, would you give me that stone?"

Without hesitation, the woman smiled and handed over the stone. The traveler left feeling elated. He had something better than food. He had something that he could sell and end all of his earthly troubles. He hurried off to town to enjoy his newfound riches.

A couple of days passed and again the woman was traveling the same road, and she ran into the same man. He approached her and handed her the precious stone.

"I had intended to sell this stone and become rich," he told her,

"but after I thought about it, I realized that you can give me something even more precious."

"What is that?" asked the woman.

"I want whatever it is you have that made you able to give me that stone," he said.

She obviously had different priorities than the man; she gave first and helped those in need. Do you have that precious gift? Do you give to those in need first and trust God that things will work out?



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