



How Do You Preach about Money?

What does it mean to preach about money? Often it only means one thing: to get people to give more money to the church. Sermons about money are often limited to a few weeks per year - or only one – around the time when the church is raising funds for the budget.

Instead of limiting our discussion of money to stewardship week, it may be more productive to 1) preach sermons about money more often and 2) focus more on ourselves and our own thinking than on influencing others.

First, preach on money regularly. People are struggling mightily with money matters, and this is a pastoral opportunity. They need help and hope. They need to hear from us about money at a time when we are not asking for money. And most preachers need to get more comfortable talking about it, from the pulpit and elsewhere. If you’re not asking for money, and you speak with a compassionate not a judgmental heart, people are likely to be grateful for the support, encouragement and guidance.

Second, focus more on yourself than on changing others. Rather than trying to push others into giving, instead share what you truly think about a faithful and thoughtful relationship with money. This requires you doing some up-front thinking about your own views and principles (not to mention your actions) related to money. This is hard but important work. And then you have to have the courage to deliver the sermon.

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Eric Carroll, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Owensboro, Kentucky wrote recently that preachers “have the unique opportunity to take time regularly to think for themselves, to get clear in their thinking and to get clear on self, to carry the thinking all the way through, to declare to self what they believe, and to define it to the congregation.” (“iPreach: Proclamation as the Defining of Self,” presented at the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, March 7, 2011) If we can do this thinking and preaching in relation to money, we’ll have a powerful impact.

Here are six tips to consider as you develop your own plan for preaching about money:

1. **Define** your own views in your stewardship sermons. See them as opportunities for the congregation to hear what you think, rather than to convince them to do something.
2. **Acknowledge** to the congregation your own challenges in this area. Stand side-by-side with them rather than over them pointing a finger at them.
3. **Tell** something about your own efforts to relate spirituality and money. You don't have to reveal your deepest secrets about your financial life, but you can share something of yourself as a way to help others grow.
4. **Preach** a sermon at a time which is not stewardship/pledge time where you articulate your values about money to the congregation.
5. **Preach** an occasional sermon on the wider issue of society and money. Share your learning as well as your questions with the congregation.
6. **Tell** stories about the church's money past, especially its founding. Be honest about past financial challenges, but remember to include stories about the strengths and successes, too.

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