

“Gifted and Faithful” – Pr Jim Sprengle

Commitment Sunday – October 18, 2026

- I. **1 Peter 4:10** – ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace
- II. **Have you ever said yes** to something and it became one of the most important decisions of your life?
 - a. Of course, many of you will say it was saying yes to a marriage proposal, or to having children, or maybe to a move across the country.
 - b. Others might say that the “yes” seemed like no big deal at first but then became a huge part of their lives.
 - i. Maybe you’ve heard of Herb Turetzky... who decided to go to a basketball game in 1967 while he was attending college.
 - ii. It happened to be the very first game of the New Jersey Americans... who are now the NBA’s Brooklyn Nets.
 - iii. The coach and GM for the team noticed Turetzky in the stands because they went to school together, and said, “Hey Herb! Can you help us out and keep score for the game tonight?”
 - iv. Turetzky said, “I’d love to. I’m here, so why not?” After which he sat down in a wooden folding chair at half court and wrote down the lineups... which led to 2206 games from 1967 to 2021 over 54 years.
 - v. In a Sports Illustrated article, an NBA referee called him the “Michael Jordan of scorekeepers,” and a “courtside constant.”
 - vi. And so, one simple “yes” led to a meaningful lifelong service.¹
 - c. I tell that story because I know some of you said yes to an opportunity to serve the Lord that might have turned into a lifetime of service.
 - i. Whenever we have been given the time, talent, or treasure through God’s gracious gifts, we are to use them for God’s glory and our neighbor’s well-being.
 1. Now, I don’t know if Herb Turetzky used his vocation to serve God, but I can tell you that many people within the church have been asked to serve in a small capacity and it became much more than that.
 - ii. Perhaps you were asked to be a Sunday school teacher or helper, and you said yes to a small responsibility that led to many years of serving and sharing Jesus with children.
 - iii. Maybe you knew a little about computers and said yes to helping out for a board like Communications (I won’t mention any names, Mae) that went from a 3-year term in the 80s or 90s until 2024... she’s like the Herb Turetzky of Communication Boards... the Michael Jordan of communicating.
 - iv. The stories probably hold true for the Elders, Property Management, Treasurers, Church Presidents and other officers, committees, and

worship helpers... as one small yes turned into meaningful service – and maybe for a lifetime.

- d. Now, it doesn't mean that you must serve for a lifetime in any given place... but the point is that God sometimes brings us into a meaningful place of service that we never dreamed could be so fruitful to the Lord's work and fulfilling to us personally.

III. **The Bible tells us in 1 Peter** that we will endure suffering as we use our gifts.

- a. It isn't to scare us off – but it should sober us up when it comes to understanding how God calls us into service even when it means suffering.
- b. Yet, the focus today is more about serving because God has provided all we need in order to say “yes” to Him and His Church.
 - i. The former self... or the person who didn't know God and rejected Him... is now in the place of living for God, or as Peter writes earlier in chapter 4, “...no longer for human passions but for the will of God.” (vs 2)
 - ii. The followers of Christ were once lost and following passions and their own desires rather than sacrificing for Jesus...
 - iii. Instead, we are to be sober-minded and self-controlled (vs 7), not wasting time, talent, or treasure because the days are numbered before our Lord and Savior returns...
 - iv. And then we are encouraged to keep on forgiving and loving others... using our gifts to serve one another.
- c. In this time of upheaval and the start of the Christian Church, Peter sees the trouble of sinful people who don't want to share what they have received from God, but want to use it for selfish desires...
 - i. The old saying is, “it's a dog-eat-dog world” and when we are constantly gathering up more and protecting what we have, the focus grows slimmer and slimmer until we are totally selfish.
 - ii. I've said this before, but Luther used a Latin term, *incurvatus in se*, or to be turned in on oneself.
 - iii. As individuals in the Church, as well as Ascension the church in this place, we must always guard against the tendency to fall back into sin and turning in on ourselves rather than looking outward toward God and our neighbor in love.
- d. And so, the Lord places on our hearts a certain amount of conviction... the Law that points to our sinful behaviors... our selfishness... our fear of not having enough (enough time, enough emotional capital, enough money, enough talent...), and our lack of trust in God to provide all we need.
 - i. Sometimes we get that Holy Spirit twinge... as we are asked to do something... and we want to say no because our schedule is busy, our money is low, or our ability seems lacking... but the Holy Spirit and God's Word guide us to make the sacrifice needed.

- ii. Other times, we simply say no... not because we understand how our gifts can be used better elsewhere... not because we know that our investment in other areas needs more... not because we understand our limitations... we often say no because we have other priorities.
- e. In each day we have 1440 minutes... take out the time for eating, sleeping, doing chores, working, and any host of other things, and there is almost always one to two hours of free time.... And for many people, if I asked you to hold up your phone and show me your screen time, it will be 4-6 hours.
- f. In each Christian life, as Peter points out, we have gifts and talents that God has provided for the building up of the body of Christ and glorifying God... and for those of us who know our gifts, we often fail to use them because it means we have to step out of our comfort zone.
- g. Finally, it's easy to harp on treasure and giving – but do you know what the average giving is for Christians in the U.S.? Two percent... yes, the average gift is about 2% percent...
 - i. Again, can you imagine if every member gave even five percent – and if every member gave one hour a day in time besides just coming to church on Sundays... and if every member used their spiritual gifts in the way God gifted us... churches all over this country would make great strides in witnessing to Christ, loving our neighbor, and glorifying the Lord God.

IV. **God is unbelievably generous toward us**, and we are faithful with His gifts.

- a. Last week I went through the many ways God provides for our basic needs, but especially our spiritual needs – as He came to us in our hopelessness and helplessness – and brought us to faith.
- b. He washed us clean in the power of our Baptisms and called us His own children... and then He continued to provide us with the Word, the Lord's Supper, the forgiveness of sins throughout our lives.
- c. He put parents, pastors, teachers, coaches, and many other people in our lives so we could hear the Good News of salvation through Jesus and be encouraged during our weakest moments.
- d. He stood by us in the highs and lows of health, relationships, brokenness, and sin... always opening His arms like the Father does, welcoming us into His arms of forgiveness and life.
- e. Jesus was the ultimate answer to our selfishness, our sin, our lack of confidence, and anything else that might keep us from serving, because He said it before going to the cross to pay for our sins, "...Love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." (John 13:34)

V. **Ascension Lutheran Church** and her members have so much to offer.

- a. We have been gifted individually, and we have been gifted as a church.
- b. Ascension has given years and years of education, mission, outreach, and providing the pure Word of God and Sacraments to people... all because people who were gifted with all good things were willing to be faithful.

- c. I encourage you to remember the work of our congregation as the Lord's work, and how you might take part in this great endeavor and process.
- d. God has already said His greatest "yes" to us in Jesus Christ.... Now, with all that He has given us, what a joy it is to say "yes" to Him!"

¹ Source: Ben Pickman, "The Courtside Constant," *Sports Illustrated*, (February 2021)