



WE DON'T OWN IT
LIVING A MODERN DAY PARABLE



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
129 MILLER AVENUE
PORTSMOUTH, NH 03801
603.436.6038
fumcportsmouth.com

REV. DR. DEBRA J. HANSON

Welcome

Hymn “What Gift Can We Bring” (UMH #87, vv. 1,3,4)

Scripture Matthew 25:14-30, “Use It or Lose it”

Message “We Don’t Own It”

Theme: All that we have is God’s; we are the managers.

I read a story of a woman who had finished her shopping and returned to her car to find four men inside it. She dropped her shopping bags, drew a handgun from her purse, and with a forceful voice said, "I have a gun, and I know how to use it! Get out of the car!" Those men did not wait for a second invitation. They got out and ran like crazy!

The woman, understandably shaken, quickly loaded her shopping bags and got into the car. She just wanted to get out of there as fast as she could. But no matter how she tried, she could not get her key into the ignition.

Then it hit her: This isn't my car! She looked, and indeed her car was parked four or five spaces away. She got out, looked around to see if the men were near, loaded the bags into her own car, and drove to the police station to turn herself in.

The desk sergeant, after hearing her story, nearly fell out of his chair laughing. He pointed to the other end of the counter, where four men were reporting a carjacking by a woman with glasses and curly white hair, less than five feet tall, and carrying a large handgun. No charges were filed (*Greg Laurie, A Time to Worship, Decision, Nov. 2001.*)

She thought it was her car, but it really belonged to someone else. [There is a lesson for us in this, too.] The truth is: God owns everything. God owns that lady's car and the one she mistakenly got into. And God owns everything we call "ours." God owns it all. (from the sermon "It's All His Anyway" by Lloyd Stille, Lifeway.com)

God owns everything; we don't own anything; however, God has given us gifts to use and trusts us to take care of them, use them, and share them so that we make a difference in our world. We have a choice to either increase or diminish what we have been given. And guess what! God wants us to grow and build on the gifts we have.

In Genesis 1:28, God blessed Adam and Eve, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (NRSV) God gave humankind dominion over everything - NOT **domination** - but dominion, that means being caretakers, stewards, managers.

A steward is someone who assumes the responsibility and receives the authority from God to manage money, time, and other resources. Being a good steward of what God has given us includes caring for ourselves in our spiritual lives, with our relationships, and taking care of ourselves health-wise. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus gives us the greatest and second commandments of living as God's children: we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and our neighbor as ourselves. We are given the gift of life, of relationship with God, with others, and with ourselves. Stewardship puts God first and extends to others (even ourselves).

So, we are responsible for ourselves, for our possessions, our time, and our abilities. How do we manage them? Where are we called to use

them to glorify God? We have choices about how we will invest our time, talents, and treasure. How do we use them to build God's kingdom here on earth?

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 reminds us that the gifts we have aren't ours, but we are asked to manage them. It doesn't matter how large or small the amount, but how we manage what we have been given. Maybe God has given us the gift of music or teaching, praying or caring for others, writing or building, or any number of gifts. Maybe we have made lots of money or maybe we barely get along. We give what we can from what we have.

There was a story I heard about Mother Theresa who had taken some rice to poor families who had nothing. At one home, she gave the family a small bag of rice, and they immediately opened it, divided it in half and took it to the family next door. They explained that their neighbors had nothing, and they wanted to share to help them, too.

When I was serving as the director of music years ago, I was in charge of a children's choir, and the accompanist was very good. She donated her time to play for the children. Although she didn't have a lot of money, she said that this was part of her stewardship. She could give of her gift of music, and she gave abundantly with dedication, love, and joy.

God is the owner; we are the managers. We don't own it. In a materialistic world like ours, it is easy to forget that God owns everything. God has created us and given us gifts to use so that we can make the world a better place and bring the presence of God to others through the ways in which we invest our gifts.

When the owner in the parable of the talents gave out the gifts, he expected the servants to invest what they had been given and bring the original amount with interest. One received 10 talents, one received 5, and a third servant received 1 talent. We have the opportunity to invest our gifts. If you were given a bag with money in it, how would you invest it?

This week, we begin a challenge to spend the summer investing our time, talents, and treasures to support the mission and ministry of First UMC. More information will be mailed this week with a surprise in one of these bags. We have a target date to re-open our building on September 12, and we will celebrate the gifts we have multiplied and receive pledges as to how we will continue to grow our time, talents, and treasurers.

God owns all we have; we are the managers. Let's see how we can live out this parable in a modern-day setting! Whether we have a bag or not, we can all figure out a way to multiply the gifts God has given us by using them to make a difference. How that looks for each one of us will be different because God has given each of us different gifts and talents.

So, we have a choice: we can use our gifts and grow them - or we can bury them! (Hold up shovel.)

May we be blessed as we make our choices! God asks us to grow them! Let's be creative and find ways to make a difference as we use our time, talents, and treasure. Amen.

Prayer

For the gifts you have given us, generous God, we are truly grateful. Yet, there are times when we fail to share them in order to further your kingdom here on earth. Sometimes, we feel that our gifts are too

small or we fail to invest the time to use them. Help us to remember that you give us these gifts, not to hoard them or hold them back, but to share them so that your love spreads even wider and farther than we could ever imagine. Open our minds, our eyes, and our hearts to recognize our gifts and follow your guidance in using them generously and wisely as we to glorify you. Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn “What Would You Sell?” (FR Garland, tune: St. Michael, “Stand Up and Bless the Lord”)

Sending Forth





WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER

Juliann
Joan Allen
Naomi
Erin Frane
Madeline
Charles Gilman
Josh Jones
Jenn

Harry Junkins
Marilyn & Gil
Donna Smith
Sophia
Bobbie Noble
Dan Strange
Danny Westbrook

Christine & her parents
Those in nursing and assisted living care
Our Church family



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We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801
Office Phone 603-436-6038
Email - office@fumcportsmouth.net
Website - fumcportsmouth.com

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

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