



Sermon Illustration 2

Title: Priorities

Key Text: Matthew 6:31-33 [NRSV]

When it comes to giving generously of our time, talent and treasure, we all share a common fear.

What will become of my needs if I focus my attention on the needs of others?

Although we may not want to admit it, what we really wonder is this: *Who will look out for my interests, if I look out for God's interests?*

You may have heard the story of a British merchant who once shared a similar concern. According to the account, Queen Elizabeth had asked him to leave behind his business holdings in order to complete a mission for crown and country. The mission would call him away for several years, so he was understandably concerned.

At first he protested, asking, "Who will run my business? Who will look out for my interests if I'm gone for so long?" However, the queen won his consent by making him a promise. "You look out for my interests and the good of my kingdom, and I will look out for your interests."

True to her word, when the man returned several years later, he found his business thriving and his holdings significantly increased.

In a similar fashion, God calls us to be about God's mission of bringing healing and hope to a hurting world. Far grander than the promise Queen Elizabeth made to the merchant is the promise God makes to each of us:

"Therefore **do not worry**, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**" (Matthew 6:31-33, NRSV)

Simply put, if we will put God's interests first, God has promised to care for our interests. If we will first desire the good of God's kingdom – serving, loving and giving generously of our time, talent and treasure – God will take care of our needs.

Jesus says he knows our needs, even before we ask or worry. He delights in providing for those who are willing to trust him by putting his generous mission of reconciliation first.

Do we trust him enough to give in a way that puts his priorities first, so he can show himself strong on our behalf?

I cannot think of anyone I would rather have looking out for my interests than the one who loved and gave himself for me. Together, we can do more when our priorities align with God's priorities.





- Choose a way your local church is putting God's interests first and encourage your congregation to see it as an opportunity to grow their faith as God cares for them through their faithfulness.
- Connect this illustration with God's global interests by sharing one way your church's local giving multiplies through connectional giving with The United Methodist Church.

1. Our vital **World Service Fund** is the financial lifeline to a long list of Christian mission and ministry throughout the denomination. Our giving helps to build new churches, prepare clergy and lay leaders, continue cooperation with other faith traditions, advocate for peace and justice and much more.

<http://www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/the-world-service-fund>

2. Through **The Advance**, you can designate support for projects related to the General Board of Global Ministries. One hundred percent of every gift goes to the project you select because administrative costs come from other sources such as the World Service Fund.

<http://www.umcmmission.org/give-to-mission/the-advance>

3. **Native American Ministries Sunday** on the third Sunday after Easter reminds United Methodists of the gifts and contributions made by Native Americans to our society. The special offering supports Native American outreach, provides seminary scholarships for Native Americans, and encourages Native Americans to consider becoming pastors and nurtures them in their journey.

<http://www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/native-american-ministries-sunday>

4. Our **United Methodist Student Day** offering on the last Sunday in November supports scholarships and student loans for qualified United Methodist applicants. These scholarships assist students from diverse backgrounds working toward various higher education degrees at any accredited institution within the United States.

<http://www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/united-methodist-student-day>

