

Series: *A Wonder-Full Life*

Brainstorming: Monday, September 21, 2020

2:00 pm at the back of the sanctuary

2020 theme: 20/20 Vision – Seeking God’s Vision for Ourselves, Our Church, Our Community, and Our World

20/20 Vision theme connection: Look/Outlook, Direction - How we view money from different angles

Like George Bailey in *It’s a Wonderful Life*, we sometimes need some help in the midst of the discouragement that can come when we face financial struggles. It’s not uncommon for us to have some discomfort and anxiety when it comes to talking about money. We may have struggled with finances over the years and found ourselves discouraged. We may have an uneasiness even approaching the subject now. We may feel comfortable with our financial situation. Our reactions can be connected to our family history with money - what we saw and what we learned. And certainly in this moment, in this year when so much has changed, when the economy has taken a hit, money has been on our minds.

When it comes to faith and finances, sometimes we want to separate the two, but they are intimately connected. Money is a tool for mission and ministry. Giving of time, energy, and money blesses others and is a reflection of our partnership with God in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

In this series, we’ll use the beloved film *It’s a Wonderful Life* to consider how we view money, how we can be faithful stewards of all of God’s gifts, and how we can build a wonder-full life with God and each other.

Resources:

- “A Wonder-Full Life” worship series - Worship Design Studio
- “Spiritual Economics” - Pastor Mary’s continuing education class
- [Integrating Money and Meaning](#) by Maggie Kulyk and Liz McGeachy
- *It’s A Wonderful Life* - 1946 film (<https://vimeo.com/280022699>)
- <https://www.allworship.com/finding-hope-times-hard-lessons-its-wonderful-life/>
- <https://www.godtube.com/news/8-impactful-quotes-from-its-a-wonderful-life.html>
- <https://ronedmondson.com/2017/12/10-life-lessons-from-its-a-wonderful-life.html>
- <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/five-life-lessons-from-its-a-wonderful-life>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/21/health/its-a-wonderful-life-lesson-wisdom-project/index.html>
- <https://theweek.com/articles/454845/7-enduring-lessons-from-wonderful-life>

Ideas for the series:

- What’s our congregation “money story?” What’s the culture of money in our congregation?
- What’s your personal and/or family “money story?” What’s the culture of money in your family?
- **Use the reading in worship that includes a male voice reading lines from the film (or film clip) before Scripture** (Jim Post, Dave Lorenz, Jeff Stone, others?)
- **STAR WORDS:** GENEROSITY, GIVING
- Visuals: **candle of illumination, silhouettes, pictures from the congregation to show “wonder full life”**
- Social media: Share movie quotes or questions each week. Ask for pictures of a “wonder full life.”

Music ideas:

- Be Thou My Vision (UMH 451) as a thread through the series
- You Are My Vision
- A Wonder Full Life - Marcia McFee’s song for series

Scripture ideas: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” — John 10:10b

Visuals: Angel wings. Candles/lanterns. Treasure. Silhouettes of people

- <https://unsplash.com/collections/4630481/a-wonder-full-life>
- <https://www.pexels.com/collections/a-wonderful-life-x519dn0/>
- <https://www.pinterest.com/worshipstudio/a-wonder-full-life/>

October 4, 2020: “Looking Back”

18th Sunday after Pentecost – LIVESTREAM

Scripture: Matthew 22:15-22 (CEB)

“Then the Pharisees met together to find a way to trap Jesus in his words. They sent their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to him. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘we know that you are genuine and that you teach God’s way as it really is. We know that you are not swayed by people’s opinions, because you don’t show favoritism. So tell us what you think: Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not?’

“Knowing their evil motives, Jesus replied, ‘Why do you test me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used to pay the tax.’ And they brought him a denarion. ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ he asked. ‘Caesar’s,’ they replied. Then he said, ‘Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.’ When they heard this they were astonished, and they departed.”

Synopsis: Our relationship with money has a history - not only as long as our lives, but also as expansive as our family and culture. If we want to creating spiritual practices for how we

deal money, first we look back to see with new eyes how and when our values and fears were initiated. We can practice of compassion for ourselves and others and a faith that reminds us of our true worth.

Felt need: To understand our personal relationship to money and how it relates to our call as stewards of God's gifts

Visuals: Loaf of bread, bottle of wine, and box of salt (movie – blessing the Martini house).

Media:

Related info:

Activity: Holy Communion - adapt Communion prayer

Music:

Children's Time: "Wonder-Full" - overflowing water

Quote from It's a Wonderful Life:

God: "There's a man down on earth that needs our help."

Clarence, the Angel: "Is he sick?"

*God: "No, worse, he's **discouraged.**"*

October 11, 2020: "Looking In"

19th Sunday after Pentecost - LIVESTREAM

Scripture: Matthew 6: 19-24 (CEB)

"Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

"The eye is the lamp of the body. Therefore, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how terrible that darkness will be! No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Synopsis: We live an "incarnational" faith—faith that is lived out in our actions in the world. How do we use God's gifts, including time, energy, and money, to make meaning and support God's mission and vision in the world? When we approach daily living with attention and intention, it is a "wonder-full" life.

Felt need: To align our faith in Christ with our actions, especially in how we use money, and examine our motivation for giving

Visuals: Angel wings. Treasure.

Media:

Related info:

Activity:

Music:

Children's Time: "I Wonder..." - asking "Why?"

Quote from It's a Wonderful Life:

*"You've been given a great gift, George: a chance to see what the world would be like without you. ... Strange, isn't it? **Each man's life touches so many other lives**, and when he isn't around, he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"*

— The angel Clarence Odbody

October 18, 2020: "Looking Out"

20th Sunday after Pentecost - LIVESTREAM

Scripture: I Timothy 6:17-19 (CEB)

"Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical and not to place their hope on their finances, which are uncertain. Instead, they need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment. Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others. When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation *for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly life.*"

Synopsis: Do we reap love and generosity or bitterness and resentment? Do our attitudes and actions, especially around money, align with God's vision? Are we impacting the world with hope - or at least moving in that direction? No matter how incremental or seemingly simple, when we focus on God's vision, we live with a sense of wholeheartedness and wonder that energizes us, others around us, and the world. We "truly live."

Felt need: To examine the impact we have on the world around us through our giving

Visuals: Pictures from the congregation.

Media:

Related info:

Activity: Noisy offering

Music:

Children's Time: "Wow Wonder!" - use STAR WORD

Quote from It's a Wonderful Life:

"Mr. Potter, what makes you such a hard-skulled character? You have no family, no children. You can't begin to spend all the money you've got."

— Peter Bailey to Mr. Potter

"Just remember this, Mr. Potter, that this rabble you're talking about ... they do most of the working and paying and living and dying in this community. Well, is it too much to have them work and pay and live and die in a couple of decent rooms and a bath? Anyway, my

father didn't think so. People were human beings to him, but to you, a warped, frustrated old man, they're cattle. Well, in my book, he died a much richer man than you'll ever be."

— George Bailey Jr. to Mr. Potter

October 25, 2020: "Looking with Gratitude" 21st Sunday after Pentecost - LIVESTREAM

Scripture: Acts 4: 32-35

"The community of believers was one in heart and mind. None of them would say, 'This is mine!' about any of their possessions, but held everything in common. The apostles continued to bear powerful witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and an abundance of grace was at work among them all. There were no needy persons among them. Those who owned properties or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds from the sales, and place them in the care and under the authority of the apostles. Then it was distributed to anyone who was in need."

Synopsis: At the heart of our relationship to money is living and giving with gratitude—whether we give money, time, or energy for the sake of others. As a result of aligning our money practices with God's vision for ourselves and our impact on the world, we find hope and the possibility that gratitude can overcome fear in the act of sharing.

Felt need: To overcome our fears of giving and move toward generosity and gratitude

Visuals: Copy of Tom Sawyer. Angel wings. Bell ringing. Ledger.

Media:

Related info:

Activity: Faith Commitment cards

Music:

Children's Time: "Extra Helping"

Quote from It's a Wonderful Life:

*"A toast ... to my big brother George. **The richest man in town!**"*

— Harry Bailey

*"You see, George, **you really had a wonderful life.**"*

— Clarence Odbody

*"Dear George, **remember no man is a failure who has friends.** Thanks for the wings. Love, Clarence."*