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*What I Have I Give You*  
A stewardship sermon for All Saints' Sunday  
November 3, 2019

Today we celebrate All Saints Sunday, when we take time to remember the followers of Christ who have gone before us. We use the word “saint” the way the New Testament does, as a name for a person who believes.

Today's Bible story features a very famous saint, the Apostle Peter. The fisherman who left everything to follow Jesus, the first person to confess Jesus as the Messiah, the same one who later denied Jesus three times on the night of his arrest. Today's story occurs not long after the Pentecost event, when the disciples received the gift the Holy Spirit and the church was born, and it was growing like crazy.

With a growing church to lead, Peter is a very busy guy. Yet when he encounters a man who cannot walk, asking for money, he stops. Of course, if he'd had any cash with him, he could have just given the man a coin or two and hurried on past him into the temple, like everybody else would have done. But he didn't, and WHY he didn't is another story—about how the early believers shared with each other and didn't claim private ownership of anything. But in today's story, the point is, Peter doesn't have any money on him, and he can't give what he doesn't have.

Yet he stops. He looks. He connects. He gives what he does have. And he takes the man by the hand and lifts him up.

And if we continue reading, we see that this healing and how people reacted to it becomes a pivotal story in the spreading of the Gospel and the growth of the early church. Today people are still proclaiming the Gospel, because of saints like Peter.

We might hear the story and think, Ok, well that's PETER. Of course PETER could do stuff like that. But EACH of us has the power to stop, look, and connect, to give what we do have, and to help lift people up. EACH of us has an impact far beyond our own lives.

I have shared parts of this next story before, but I'm going to share it today through the lens of All Saints' Day. My great-grandmother, Eustena, was born in 1900 and came to Alberta, Canada from the old country with her parents. Her father died and she and her mother were left all alone. They lived in a dugout and they were so poor that when she was 12 or 13, Eustena went to live with a local family as a domestic helper. Well, this family was very kind to her and took her to church and shared the Gospel with her, and she embraced it. She married my great-grandfather and gave birth to my grandfather John before her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. She gave birth to 16 children, eight of whom survived to adulthood.

By the time my grandfather John married my grandmother Dorothy, everybody in the community knew Eustena as a woman who was full of the love of God. When they got married, my grandmother said to my grandfather, "Keep that woman and her religion away from me." Which if you ever met my grandmother you could absolutely picture her saying that.

BUT—Eustena was so kind and loving that Dorothy was drawn in, in spite of herself, and before long they became best friends and they would study the Bible together. My grandmother became a very devout woman herself, because of her mother-in-law. Eustena's funeral was held the day before my mother was born, so I never knew her, but I wonder what my faith would be like today if not for her legacy.

I often wonder about that family that took her in, took her to church and told her about Jesus. There is no way they could have fully known how many lives they would ultimately touch as they stopped, looked and listened, gave what they had, and lifted up this young immigrant girl

who worked in their home. They couldn't have foreseen that Eustena's descendants would include my uncle Ron, who has been doing mission work with his family in Japan for the last 45 years. I'm sure it never crossed their minds that somebody would mention them in a sermon in Topeka, Kansas a hundred years later..

Now, I've shared many times that I did not grow up Presbyterian. I didn't have any Presbyterian friends or relatives. I did not know what a Presbyterian was until I went to seminary. When I finally joined the Presbyterian church, I thought I was a real outlier, you know, the mainline sheep of the family. It wasn't until I had been ordained for several years that we learned that the family who had welcomed my teenage great-grandmother all those years ago was a family of Presbyterians, and the church they had taken her to was a Presbyterian church. That church isn't there anymore, and Presbyterians have been absorbed into the United Church of Canada, but that does not lessen the impact they had on my family.

The point being not the specific denomination, but the way spiritual DNA can work its way through a family, without us even knowing it. And the way that somebody can do something kind, and a hundred years later, the impact of that kindness it is still rippling across multiple continents and dribbling down into Topeka, KS.

Speaking of things that happened a hundred years ago, in a minute Song Yi will tell us about a celebration next weekend, marking 100 years of the Korean American Society. The Korean American community in Kansas City gives our church much credit for their presence in the United States today, because over a hundred years ago we supported the mission work of William Baird and his wife, Annie Adams Baird. Part of next week's celebration will include a scholarship that our Korean American friends want to give to US in gratitude for the seeds that

the saints of this church planted a century ago. I wonder if anybody saw that coming, a hundred years ago . . .

All Saints' is the perfect time to remember that the lives we live today are making a difference. That stopping, looking, connecting, giving what we have, and lifting people matters today, and may well matter even more a hundred years from now.

And let's also remember that giving what we have is not always about the tasks we do, but the quality of our presence. When our ability to do get things done isn't what it used to be, we can lift someone up by the careful way we listen, the words of encouragement we speak, the wisdom to refrain from giving unasked for advice, the hopeful attitude we bring, and the prayers we offer. . .

A famous passage from Hebrews call to us this day, saying:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Remembering with joy the saints in our own lives whose presence led us here today, let us stand and sing praise: