

GOALS

Mark 12: Widow's Mite

There's a phrase that I developed early on in my ministry that I have shared with couples in premarital counseling ever since. I remember distinctly how it came to be.

You see, as a second-year pastor, it was my goal to be "superpastor." You know, like the beginning lines of the similar TV Show, my head was ringing with something like this:

"Smarter than the average lay person, more insightful than a televangelist, able to lead good meetings with a single prayer. The young man from Philadelphia is now the Man of the Cloth: Superpastor. To best be in a position to use his superpowers in the never-ending battle for truth, justice, and the Way of the Cross, Superpastor has assumed the disguise of Phil Hillenbrand, mild-mannered, humble pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Westport, Connecticut."

You see, I came out of Seminary and I wanted to change the world. And I thought the way to do it was to be tireless, bold, and willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the church.

So...I was ready. And I lived my life that way for a while. When the shrubbery committee wanted to meet at 3 AM on a Monday, I was there. When Grandma Schmidt had a hangnail and wanted some counseling on Friday night at 7:30 pm, I was there. When the Youth Group decided to have a lock-in on the same night when my parents were coming to visit, I was there. I dropped anything for whatever anyone thought was important -- an emergency.

Then one day, in my first year of being married, my second year in the parish, after I scooted out for one more of Grandma Schmidt's hangnails after I had committed myself to spending the evening with Amy, she said to me, "Hey, is there any way I could get an appointment with you?" Ooooh dagger to the heart. But she was right. I was being so committed to my calling as a Pastor that I was forgetting about my calling as a husband.

And here's the phrase I learned that day as Amy and I had a conversation about my being Superpastor. Are you ready? Cause this is the take-home phrase that I want you to remember throughout the week. So pay attention to this.

"What we value, we schedule." Say it with me: **"What we value, we schedule."**

You want to show your kids that they are important to you, don't shower them with gifts or praise them at the dinner table. Good as those things are. Put them in your calendar. Plan to be at their sports event. Plan a game night at home, a trip to the zoo. Quality time is great, but there is no substitute for quantity time. And I guarantee, if you don't add it to the plans, there will be some other urgency that cries out for attention. Car repair. A lawn to be mowed. House remodeling. What we value, we schedule.

You want to show your friends that you value your relationship with them, don't just send them a Christmas card or chat at the latest church service or bring a meal when they have a crisis. Nice as all that may be. Put them in your calendar. Have them over for a Packer Party. Play Trivial Pursuit. Eat your newest recipe. I have a local friend here who has been a friend since my second year of college. We've chatted again and again about how we should get together. But we never actually put it on the calendar. And you know what? We haven't done it for over two years now. What we value, we schedule.

You want to make it evident to God that you love Him, that you value what He did for you, that you appreciate all that He's invested in you. There are many ways to do that. But top of the list: Put Him in your calendar. Come to worship regularly. Pray frequently. Read the Bible daily. Give him the first fifteen minutes of your day, or the last fifteen. Cause I guarantee, if you don't mentally set that time aside, that there will always be some other demand that whisks it away. **“What we value, we schedule.”**

This is a bit of what Jesus sees in that woman in our text. (You know, the widow with her two mites). He sees a heart that so values God, that is so thankful to have Him in her life, that is so appreciative for His grace, that she is ready to think of Him not just as Lord of her ten percent as some were giving based on Old Testament law, --not just as Lord of her 20% as some extraordinary people were bringing out of generosity. She saw Him as Lord of everything. And not just her money, as was common with those who dropped their coins in the Temple treasury. No, she saw Him as Lord of her whole self. So, moved by God's Spirit, she didn't want to just live for herself, she wanted to live for Him. 100% of her day and 100% of herself.

Is Jesus here saying that each and every one of us should bring 100% of our resources and drop them into the offering plate? No. That's not the point. How would you pay the bills, how would you pay your taxes, how would you help your neighbor? What He's commending is that woman's perspective that she was God's, 100% of her – every last thing she did, every last

talent she had, and every last coin in her pocket. And, her beautiful perspective despite her poverty, that she was going to use what she had to glorify Him.

And so, in the spirit of **“What we value, we schedule.”** #1: she set aside time to come to God’s “house.” #2. She came, not reluctantly, but with a thankful heart and a trusting spirit. #3. She came with the sincere desire and intent to add her small, but generous gift, to all the others that were there to accomplish God’s work.

What we value, we schedule. She had goals and ideals about how she wanted to serve the Lord, and she came to the Temple that day to put them in action.

Goals. They’re a valuable and important thing. See this soccer goal. See this ball. Imagine being a team who gets on the field to play the game and doesn’t have the goal of scoring more points than their opponent. They just run around with the ball aimlessly. They let the other team score at will. There’s nothing driving them – nothing impelling them to transform their landscape so that they make a difference with their play. They’re just out there. They’re not playing a game; they’re playing with the ball. And it’s not that important to them. They don’t really care whether they get the ball in the net or not.

God had a plan when it came to us. When He saw Adam and Eve sin and knew the devastation that it would bring upon the earth and upon His people, He so ached for you and me that He cast a vision of what He was going to do to save us from practically Day One after the Fall. Right away, in absolute love for you and me, He took out His pen and He inked a plan of rescue. He said, “I will give my all – my everything, I will lay it all down to the point of suffering and death so that I can reclaim this people as my own.

You see, “What He valued, He scheduled.” It was His pledge, His commitment, His guarantee. And, in order to reclaim the whole earth, He began with the one Man and the one Woman, Adam and Eve, offering them a lifeline to hold onto until the time when He would bring this promise into fact – offering them His pledge and commitment that His Messiah would literally take on human flesh to save us.

For thousands of years, the Israelites held onto that pledge. They counted on the fact that God would be faithful to His word. Their sacrifices, their feasts and festivals, their rites and rituals, even their very Sabbath day all pointed forward to Him.

And then, at the right time, it happened. As Galatians 4 says, “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”

Think about it. Despite Israel’s constant failure to trust the God who loved them. Despite, in fact, their hateful action of rejecting Him, scorning Him, crucifying Him. And despite also our constant failure, as His people, to be faithful to Him, to love Him as He deserves, to value all He’s done. Despite all that: He still came and He still accomplished what He set out to do way back in Genesis: to pay the price for all our sins. To set us free from sin and death. To open the gates of Heaven so that we might live forever.

Because, you see, He valued us. And consequently, you see, He scheduled us. And nothing could sway Him. Because, that’s who He is. Pure love. Pure grace. Pure generosity. 100%

Take a look at the front cover of the stewardship workbook, and I want you to notice what you see there. There is one strong hand coming out of the heavens and one weaker hand being drawn up. Do you see it? Well, that’s how this generous, loving, and powerful God chooses to work in you and me. He sees us so weak and so tired and so unable to even love Him back, and He says, “Let me help you.” He sees us floundering and struggling and hurting and failing and He says, “Let me pull you up and fill you with hope and joy.” He sees us selfish and broken and lonely and angry and He says, “Here I am. You’re not alone.”

And He dispatches that gentle Holy Spirit to transform us and guide us and make us brand new. He sends us the Comforter to open our heart and our hands and our minds so that we, moved by His unbelievable love, by His generous grace, by His unlimited mercy, become more and more like that two-coined woman from our text.

And soon we find ourselves happy to say, “Yes, what I value, I schedule.” And choosing, by God’s grace, to change our landscape by the choices we make in every area of our life.

Today, we at Beautiful Savior would like to encourage you to set some goals for yourselves, and to do so, we have created two pieces. (Describe the two pieces and their purpose.) END