

In last week's sermon, Emily talked about one of the biggest lies we tell ourselves: If only I had more, then I'd have enough. If I had more money, more resources, more security, more time, then I'd finally be set. I could relax, eat, drink, and be merry!

But as Emily reminded us, we human beings have a hard time knowing when "enough" is truly enough. With every raise, with every new house, with every upgrade, the goalpost just keeps moving. We like to imagine that "more" is the solution to whatever we lack. And that mindset doesn't just apply to material things or worldly status.

Even in our spiritual lives, we can fall into this same trap. The disciples convey this "more is better" mindset in today's gospel reading when they exclaim: "Increase our faith!"

If having "more" were really the solution, then surely a country that worships the god of consumerism would be the most content nation on earth. But we know that is not true—especially in more recent years. This should tell us: the problem isn't in how much we have or lack. The problem lies in where we put our trust.

When the disciples ask Jesus for "more faith," it sounds good, but the ask reflects that same consumer mindset that believes, "If I only had more, then I could do what God is asking me to do." But Jesus rejects that line of thinking. He makes the point by holding up the tiniest of all seeds—a mustard seed. With just this much faith, he says, nothing is impossible.

In essence, Jesus is saying: "It's not about the quantity of faith. It's about the direction of your faith. It's not about how much you have—it's about where your faith is planted." This theological concept is especially important as we begin our annual giving campaign, *Upon This Rock*.

I have found that a great way to discern where your faith is planted is by looking at your calendar and your checkbook. Someone once put it this way: "Show me your checkbook and your calendar, and I'll show you your god."

When I look at my own screen time report—delivered every Sunday at 9 a.m.—or at my budget app that I look at way too often, I see all the places where my faith is planted in comfort, convenience, or distraction instead of Christ. Maybe you see that too.

If this realization causes you to cringe like it does me, do not be ashamed. I believe that feeling is the Holy Spirit tapping us on the shoulder, inviting us to return our trust to God. Naming the gap between what we say and what we do is an invitation to repent—to reorient ourselves toward the God of compassion, to realign our lives with the life of Christ.

Today, as we baptize Tandy Stevens, we remember that this reorientation is at the very heart of our baptismal covenant. In those promises, we commit again and again to turn

away from trust in the self and toward trust in God—to plant our trust in Jesus Christ and to live out that trust with what we say and what we do—in word and deed.

In baptism, God plants that tiny mustard seed of faith—a seed that is nurtured with Christ’s Word and Sacrament, a seed that can grow into a faith that promises to sustain us through the many storms of this life—large and small.

One of the ways the Church helps us live into our baptismal call is through stewardship, which is a form of discipleship. The fundamental question of stewardship asks: “How do we tend to the resources of time, talent, and treasure entrusted to us by God?”

As it relates to treasure, the world teaches us: Spend, save, give. Take care of yourself first, prepare for the future, and then, if anything’s left, give it away. That order tells us that our faith is primarily planted in ourselves.

But the Church invites us to consider a different order: Give, save, spend. Start with generosity. Entrust your first fruits to God. Prepare for the future. Then spend on yourself. The order matters—because it reflects not only our priorities but where our trust is planted. Additionally, if giving always comes last, we are likely to have nothing left over.

And hear me when I say this: You aren’t expected to start giving 10% tomorrow. For most of us, that would feel impossible. But you can start small. Start with 1%. That one percent represents a mustard seed of faith—a practical way of shifting your trust in self to trust in God. And as you practice this way of giving, that seed grows a faith that puts its trust in God.

The Alabama Stewardship Plan helps us think of this theological concept concretely and practically. This plan, developed in the late 1970s, emphasizes: first fruits—give to God before anything else; proportional—give in proportion to what you’ve received; sacrificial—give in a way that actually changes something in your life, because that’s when it becomes an act of trust.

When we give this way, we’re not just funding a budget. We’re saying with our lives: “My faith is planted in God.”

Jesus drives this home with the parable of the servants in the field. At first, it sounds like discipleship is supposed to be harsh and thankless. But Jesus is really just trying to reframe discipleship. If you think discipleship will take you to the top of the company ladder, think again.

Faith isn’t about getting more likes or shares. True faith is about service that flows from trust—service rooted not in the need to be seen but in the desire to serve the One who truly sees us for who we are—beloved children of God.

Stewardship season isn't just about raising money. Ultimately, stewardship is about experiencing transformation—the transformation that takes place when Christ is at the center of our lives. This season is meant to help you reprioritize your life around God so that your generosity and service flow not out of what is left over, but out of God's abundance.

Of course, this doesn't come easily. We will stumble. We will cling to security. We will hold on more tightly. We will continue to tell ourselves, "If only I had more, then I'd be okay."

But here's the good news: our Lord is gracious. As the collect for today says, "God is more ready to give than we are to ask, more ready to forgive than we are to receive." In other words, we don't need to wait until we have enough faith before we can follow God's ways.

God's grace meets us where we are and says: "Just give me an ounce of your faith—of your time, talent, and resources—and I'll equip you with a faith strong enough to live into the promises made in baptism. Trust me."

So, here's the invitation for this season of stewardship: Look at your calendar. Look at your budget. Ask yourself: Where is my faith planted? Who is my god?

If the answer unsettles you, don't be ashamed. Instead, notice the Spirit tapping you on the shoulder—calling you back to God and inviting you to replant your trust in Christ. God knows we have a hard time giving all of our life to him. God knows we even struggle to give a small part. But here's the promise: God can do more with our little than all the riches of this world. Amen.