

Sermon by Rev. Dr. Michael J. Hoyt  
Glenshaw Presbyterian Church  
27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
October 7, 2007

## **The Guardians**

2 Timothy 1:1-14; Lamentations 3:19-26

*Guard the good treasure entrusted to you,  
with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.*

Today's sermon is about our role as guardians of the good treasure entrusted to us.

The good treasure is the promise of life in Christ Jesus,  
the message of the gospel,  
but also the means by which that message is passed on  
from generation to generation.

Now, from time to time,  
I hear people complain about other churches,  
saying that all they talk about is giving money.  
Then they may point out that there are other churches,  
that never talk about money,  
yet seem to be raking in the cash.  
They are usually newer churches in affluent, faster growing suburbs,

Now, without making specific judgments about these churches,  
most of them mega churches in contemporary buildings,  
with a more contemporary style of worship,  
I do have to admit to having a healthy skepticism about any church  
that carefully avoids ever talking about money.  
I worry that some kind of Prosperity Gospel is being preached  
that says more about Christians being blessed  
than it says about Christians being called and challenged.

Given the fact that the Jesus of the Gospels  
has more to say about money than almost any other topic;  
and given that  
to remove from the Apostle Paul any talk about money  
would be to remove a significant chunk of his teaching  
and his exhortation;  
And given that  
to ignore the cry of the Old Testament Prophets regarding

the use of money and power,  
would be to eviscerate their message.  
And given that  
to pretend the Wisdom literature of scripture  
is void of any advice on our relationship to wealth.  
And given that,  
our Christian tradition that calls us constantly away from idolatry,  
and money has an enormous pull on our spiritual loyalties;  
Given the weight of the canon of scripture,  
and our place in the wealthiest nation in the world,  
to avoid preaching about money  
would be not only just silly,  
but profoundly unfaithful.

As long as I'm preaching the gospel,  
and as long as I'm preaching biblical sermons,  
I will be compelled preach about money.  
To speak about our use of money is nothing more and nothing less  
than to speak about our most deeply held values.

The good thing for me, my blessing,  
is that as the preacher at Glenshaw Presbyterian Church,  
I have a wealth of good examples  
about what faithful giving looks like.

\* \* \* \* \*

Paul calls it *the good treasure*,  
or another accurate translation would be  
*the good deposit*.  
A deposit is a small portion given with the promise that the rest is coming.

We, like Timothy,  
are the recipients, the inheritors, of this good deposit.  
As we live with faith in Christ today, and together as the body of Christ,  
we are given a glimpse, a hint, an inkling  
of the fullness of life that will be ours in God's Eternal Kingdom.  
On those occasions in life when we are able to glimpse this goodness,  
in the birth or baptism of a child,  
in the reconciliation of friends or family  
after a time of estrangement,  
at the celebration of a wedding anniversary,  
after many years of faithfulness and enduring love;,  
at times of sickness or anxiety, when the community of faith

strengthens, encourages or consoles one another,  
then we are filled with a deep sense  
of gratitude.

Then like Paul we give thanks for the good treasure entrusted to us.

What Paul realizes, and he want Timothy to realize,  
is that their faith, Paul's and Timothy's both,  
did not arise in a vacuum,  
but is the result of God's ongoing work  
from generation to generation  
through their ancestors, both distant and recent.

Paul recalls for Timothy the faith and faithfulness of  
his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice,  
even as Paul recalls the faith of his own ancestors.

Paul and Timothy stands as the next links  
in a chain of grace, a legacy of faithfulness.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sense of this text is the same as my sense of gratitude  
which I tried to express in my last article in the Spirit of the Glen.

Walking around GPC, I often think  
If these walls could talk, the stories they would tell!  
Nowhere could this old phrase be truer than here,  
in and around the walls of Glenshaw Presbyterian Church.  
Like Paul's letter,  
I believe they would be words of thanksgiving,  
told brick by brick  
about the lives of men, women, youth and children  
who have been touched and transformed here,  
comforted and challenged here,  
graced and gifted here,  
rescued and restored here.

To be a member or a friend of Glenshaw Presbyterian Church  
is to be an inherit or of this ongoing work of God.

A legacy has been passed down to us,  
we are the guardians of a treasure,  
the good deposit given in Christ  
which holds a great promise for our future.  
As the recipients of such an amazing gift we, like Paul and Timothy,  
have great cause for gratitude.

\* \* \* \* \*

We can give thanks for our Past:

We owe our existence as a congregation

to God's gracious work through generations of believers  
who have walked before us on this holy ground.

From the vision of the Presbyterian leaders

who first started a Sunday School in the Shaw Sickle Factory  
down in the valley by the river,

which in 1885 was chartered as new church,  
to the steadfast commitment of the members in 1925  
who mortgaged their homes to build a new brick church  
'up the hill' where the community was growing,

to the families who gave substantial bequests  
to the now considerable endowment of the church,  
and the individuals and families who gave year in and year out  
to the ongoing ministry of the congregation.

Generous gifts both large and small have worked together over the years  
to pass onto us a legacy of faith and ministry  
that we know as Glenshaw Presbyterian Church.

\* \* \* \* \*

And we can be thankful that this legacy continues to grow today,  
both in a financial sense and in a spiritual sense.

Financially, GPC members support an annual budget  
of around \$500,000.

This is a sizeable budget for a congregation of just over 450 members,  
with an average weekly worship attendance of just over 200.

....It's worth mentioning though,

that the number of regular worshipers is over 300,  
we just rarely have you all here on the same Sunday,  
making for a lower weekly average....

In addition to the continuing faithful giving of our current membership,  
we benefit each year from endowment income  
of between \$50,000 and \$70,000.

This is not all of the endowment income,

just the portion of it we use each year  
while the rest is reinvested to grow the endowment.

The reason we do not have to use more than this  
from the endowment income each year,

the reason we can reinvest some of it for the future,  
is because Christ is working through YOUR generosity.

The more you give to the church each year,  
the more we are able to invest  
for future generations of Presbyterian believers at GPC  
in the years to come  
just as our spiritual ancestors have invested in us!

Spiritually, the legacy of past faithfulness is growing among us  
as we devote ourselves to the worship of God,  
to the study of God's Word and the sharing of the sacraments,  
to prayers and fellowship,  
and to our mission in the name of Jesus Christ.

The ongoing ministry of our church,  
to the extent that it exists today,  
is because of the continuing generosity of today's believers,  
built upon the foundation laid by earlier generations,  
all resting solidly upon the cornerstone  
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

\* \* \* \* \*

So we can also give thanks for our future,  
believing that God's grace in Christ  
is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

As the guardians of this good deposit,  
we know that Glenshaw Presbyterian Church  
has a hope and a future.

We look forward with eagerness to the ways God's love  
will be made known in and through this community  
in years to come.

The efforts we make today to be faithful to our calling as disciples  
will not only bear fruit for us,  
but will become the seed which will raise up  
future harvests as well.

The faithful sowers of years gone by  
could only imagine and hope for the harvest  
that would be raised up by their labor;

And so we can only imagine how God will use our labor,  
our planting, our building  
to bless our children's children.

\* \* \* \* \*

So as we begin to plan for the ministry year of 2008,  
the 123rd year of mission and ministry for GPC,  
I invite you to receive and to give—  
receive the grace of God  
through the faithful legacy of this church,  
and give thanks by giving generously  
to continue the sharing of this grace with each other  
and the world.

You are heirs and benefactors in an ongoing chain of gratitude  
that links us together, generation after generation,  
in the everlasting grace of God.

And you are guardians of this good treasure  
which is the promise of life for the world in Jesus Christ.

And as God's appointed guardians,  
*we know the one in whom we have put our trust,  
and we are sure that he is able to guard until that day  
what we have entrusted to him.*

Let us all join the Apostle in giving thanks to God.