

A lady in Texas went to the sale of foreclosed houses, to help her son buy a house. There she found another woman crying and asked her why. The woman was losing her house to foreclosure and didn't know where she would go. So when the house came up for auction, the first lady bought the house, and gave it to the lady who had lost it. Imagine, the joy in the hearts of those two strangers, because of that gift.

One of the pastors I talked to this week spoke of the good time he had last weekend. His church secretary was trying to make ends meet by burning wood for heat this winter, but didn't have enough. He was cleaning brush with a borrowed trailer last weekend at his house when one of the church people came by and asked if he knew of anyone who could use firewood. The man didn't have a way to haul it, but there was the borrowed trailer there, so they loaded the wood, and took it to the secretary's wood pile and left it. She didn't know where it had come from and excitedly told the pastor on Monday about her good fortune.

That pastor told us how much good it did him to enjoy giving and surprising his friend.

These are examples of what's going to be happening in the new economy of Jesus, if the economy of our country is in recession. As some people have less money to spend, they will be swapping babysitting service, giving rides to neighbors to the store, sharing their surplus of food to someone who doesn't have enough, who will in turn, share time and energy for cleaning a yard to the one who doesn't have enough time or energy, who will in turn send get well cards to one who is sick, who in turn will give an extra tip to their caretaker, who is the one who swapped baby sitting time in the first place. That's how the economy of the Kingdom of God works.

The church helps some whose money is short. But we all will be helping each other more, as money is short. There may be people who cannot give as much money to the church as they had before, but they can give service to the church. They are still building.

In the economy of Jesus, the church teaches us to enjoy what we have, rather than only grieving what we don't have.

Give ideas for giving service to each other rather than money.)

The joy of building a church that gives Jesus, food for a hungry world, that has answers to the deep questions and the tools to solve the problems.

A God who is like the farmer who paid each employee what they needed to live on, whether they worked enough hours for the pay, or not.

1 Peter 4 7 The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. 8 Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

James Chukwu was my roommate at the World Methodist Conference in Brighton, England 7 years ago. He is a contractor in Nigeria whose faith led him to treat his clients honestly, not cut corners and over bill them. His reputation earned him more jobs than other contractors, and so much respect in his community he became their chief.

There are societies in the world where character is not judged by how much one has but by how much one gives away. The most respected people in town are not the ones who have the most, but the ones who give the most away. Is that the way it is in Ripon? Are the people who are most respected the ones who give the biggest share of their wealth?

At the Methodist Conference I met Pavel Prochachka, a Methodist minister who had been supported by the Waupaca Church. He kept three little Methodist churches going during the Soviet occupation of Slovakia. Then when the Soviet Union fell apart, many came to the Methodists looking for spiritual support. Now there are 8 churches, he teaches other pastors in their seminary and is their District Superintendent.

We took an offering for Cuban pastors who had no transportation. We raised enough for 114 bicycles they can use to get to their people.

That's God's economy. That's the way it works in the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom Jesus said is among you and is coming. It's the society, the Kingdom Jesus came to bring. It's the way of life proclaimed here at Immanuel.

Luke 6: 38 Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”

Phil. 4:19 “My God will use his wonderful riches in Christ Jesus to give you everything you need.” That's the way it works in God's economy.

Voices in American society tell you that you are valuable because you make money. You deserve nice things to buy and keep. Who will save you from those false voices? Who will save America from that false word? The Word of God, proclaimed by the church. It's the Word of God that gets proclaimed here at Immanuel.

Do I sound like a candidate trying to win your vote? In a way I am. You vote with your money. And today is money Sunday. You are choosing your priorities in life by the way you spend and give your money. Vote for Immanuel.

When we build Church we are building lives.

Today we commit our money to Immanuel's ministry for next year. We are encouraged to make a plan with our money because we feel better about giving when we make a plan. When we make a promise to God and keep it, we feel a stronger connection to God. We follow a plan, we don't need to feel guilty when we don't have money for all the requests we get outside the plan.

We proclaim the basic gospel of salvation in Christ to lost and hurting people. But we also lead them to a deeper life with the advanced gospel. We live a life of purity, honesty and witness before a lost and hurting community. We model the life of Christ in witness to a lost and hurting world. Building Church is building lives.