

OCC Home Devotional

For Family or Group Discussion, or Individual Reflection
Rev. Rob Fredrickson • Sunday, May 21, 2017

“Three Cheers for Volunteers!”

In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

— Acts 20:35 (NRSV)

If you're intrigued by Bible controversies, you'll be fascinated by Acts 20:35. It records an oral statement by Paul, in which he quotes Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The controversy, for lack of a better word, arises because nowhere in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John do we find Jesus uttering those words.

Some hasten to cry "Foul!" on Paul, saying that he either carelessly misquoted Jesus or blatantly fabricated a statement and falsely attributed it to Jesus. But, obviously, Jesus said a lot more than what's written in the four canonical gospels. So, it's entirely possible that Jesus did make this assertion, but that it just didn't make it into the gospel accounts for whatever reason.

To me, the statement itself is far more significant than the controversy. We've probably heard it before, or at least heard some variant or paraphrase of it. We're all familiar with the idea that giving is supposed to be somehow better than receiving—nobler, more virtuous, more favored in the eyes of God.

But probably all of us have also experienced the reality that, in giving, we often get even more in return. We write a check in support of a cause that is near and dear, and we feel what some have described as a "glow" or "warmth" inside. We do a favor for a friend, or perform a "random act of kindness," and the satisfaction we derive seems far greater than the effort we put forth. We volunteer our time in service to others, and the sense of fulfillment outshines the modest sacrifice we made.

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Perhaps, for many of us, it is through giving that we are blessed. It is through giving that we receive. It's not "Whoa is me, I'm giving and volunteering selflessly all the time." Rather, it's more like, "I gain a lot by giving! I'm deeply blessed volunteering!"

Today is a good day to celebrate volunteers here at OCC. During our services today, we'll specifically recognize those who have volunteered in our children's and youth ministries this school year. But, of course, we know that folks also volunteer at Hope House and Family Sharing and Next Door. We know that people also usher and host coffee hour and serve as liturgists. We know that people serve on OCC's various board and committees. We know that people go on mission trips and serve as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and knit prayer shawls, and sing in the choir, and perform with the OCC Players, and...well...the list could go on and on.

We are an active congregation that emphasizes volunteerism—not only because the needs are many and great and varied, but also because we know that each form of volunteerism is an opportunity to be blessed. As we give of our time and talents, we receive so much more in return.

Next Sunday, we shift to our one-service (9:30) summer schedule. Generally, our summer mode begins on Memorial Day weekend and runs through Labor Day weekend. But let me encourage you to keep your own volunteer spirit alive and well, even during the summer months. Our monthly commitments to Hope House and Family Sharing will continue. We'll need volunteers for "Read with Me" at Next Door on the mornings of July 25 and August 15. We'll be looking for ushers, liturgists, and coffee hour hosts for each summer Sunday. We'll even have brother Sa Do here with us in just three weeks' time, all the way from Myanmar, and we're seeking a host home for his two- or three-day stay.

Each of these opportunities, and many more—at church and around the community—is a chance to not only give but to get; not only to be a blessing, but to be blessed. This spiritual dynamic remains true, even during the summer months! ☺

So "three cheers" to all the wonderful volunteers from the 2016-2017 program year, and here's to a summer of volunteerism—of getting through giving, of receiving through serving, of being blessed through being a blessing to others. Amen!