

Elders and Deacons, as you are ordained and installed in this year of our Lord 2013; Pennside Presbyterian Church is in your hands. Today, God gives us to you, and says, *Luke 19:13 (NRSV) ‘Do business with these until I come back.’* Spoiler alert: He will return. We don’t know when, but when he does return, there will be an audit, so we’d best get down to business.

As we do, watchfulness and stewardship are the marks of a disciple. They’ve certainly been the focus at Pennside since the crash of 2008.

I confess I’ve wondered about that at times. I’ve wondered if we’d lost sight of our vision, “we are sent to serve,” and shifted our focus simply to the bottom line; beyond that, I wondered if we’d lost sight of our calling to be disciples of Jesus Christ and were becoming simply another charitable organization; were we doing good without becoming good, without becoming Christ-like?

Jesus’ parable of the pounds (as it is called) suggests that my concerns were the fruit of faulty thinking. I was posing the question in terms of “either/or;” either service or stewardship, when in fact it is both/and; both service and stewardship.

The Greek word translated as “do business” contains the root of our word “pragmatic,” which is a synonym for practical. Jesus is teaching us that a life of discipleship is concerned with down to earth matters. The kingdom of God is just as much about practical concerns as it is about spiritual things; they are two sides of the same coin.

Our hosting of Family Promise this week is a perfect illustration of this synthesis. We are serving families as they seek to escape homelessness and make a better life for themselves. This is real-time, down to earth, here and now salvation. We aren’t saving them. We are empowering them to save themselves and offering them the opportunity to discover God’s new creation in their lives which is a place they can call “home.” As we journey with them, we also discover God’s new creation in our lives. We experience salvation with them as we do this high, holy work together.

To offer this service and experience this salvation, we need a building – with heat, and lights, and a working kitchen. We need some basic, down-to-earth things: Cereal, milk, and coffee – lots of coffee! And a coffee maker with water and electricity with which we can brew that blessed elixir!

We’re doing the Lord’s business this week. We’re doing the Lord’s business every week; every time we communicate via phone, email, text message, Facebook, our website, and the good old U.S. Mail. We’re doing the Lord’s business in the hope that we’ll turn our 10

pounds into another 10 pounds (but enough about lemon bars); we'd love to present our Lord with some spectacular success; and maybe we will, but if we simply keep plugging away and get down to business day in and day out that's OK too.

The wicked servant in the parable isn't wicked because he failed; he's wicked because he didn't try. He allowed his fear of the risk to blind him to the potential of what he might achieve with even a minimum of effort. His lack of perspiration reflected a lack of inspiration.

Elders and Deacons, Pennside Presbyterian Church is in your hands. Watchfulness is a mark of a disciple. Be on the lookout for Pennside's possibilities. What is next for us? Where is God inviting us to go? Watch out for us, and watch over us. Hold us accountable. It is so easy to go a little way and convince ourselves that we've gone far enough. Complacency's lure is so enticing! Challenge us to break a sweat and get down to business! Watch over us and watch over one another, so that when our Lord returns and we offer him an accounting of our leadership, he will say to us, *Luke 19:17 (NRSV) 'Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.'*

Elders and Deacons, stewardship is also a mark of a disciple. The talents and training you have developed “doing business” Monday through Friday are what we need on Sunday. There is no distinction between the secular and the sacred. God is all and in all, and our Lord is commanding us to get down to business. Pay attention to the practical matters that don't seem like much until they become too much. Be pragmatic, so that our vision, “we are sent to serve,” has a firm and stable foundation on which we can stand and from which we can take the risks that result in great reward! *Luke 19:17 (NRSV) 'Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.'*

Elders and Deacons, Pennside Presbyterian Church is in your hands. Today, God gives us to you. One day, Jesus will return and there will be an accounting. The great audit awaits. Until that day, today, tomorrow, and on all the today's to come, let's get down to business. We have work to do. “We are sent to serve.” Watchfulness and stewardship are the marks of a disciple that equip us to serve our Lord well.

Elders and Deacons, thank you in advance for your service! May God bless you to be a blessing in the days to come!

Ephesians 3:20–21 (NRSV) ²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.