

“Building to Serve: Phase II”

II Corinthians 8:1-9

Mark 8:31-38

Three years ago we conducted a very intensive and very successful capital funds campaign that we called, *Building to Serve*. We asked everyone in the church to make a financial commitment to support our efforts to build a Family Life Center and a new Fellowship Hall. \$1,496,112 was pledged and of this amount, \$1,373,800 has been paid. The initial three year pledge period is now at an end. We have \$50,295 in continuing pledges toward the Building Fund for this current year.

Our new facilities have been built, and the use they are getting and the expansion of programs and ministries they are affording have met and even exceeded our hopes and expectations. We all should be most grateful to and appreciative of the work of the *Building to Serve* Campaign led by Ed Sherling and Charlie Canon, the Finance Committee led by Ross Cotter, and the Building Committee led by Charlie Canon. We built at the right time, before prices rose to current levels and when borrowed funds were available at the lowest rates. As of this time we have an indebtedness of \$1.28 million.

We are in a good situation, but we cannot rest on our laurels and think that all is accomplished. Commitment to paying off the debt on our new buildings has to be a top priority now and for the next few years. If we do not continue to support the Building Fund as we have in the past three years, our operating budget will be strapped, and we will not be able to do all that we need to do in outreach and ministry.

Therefore, today I want to share with you some of what I preached about three years ago, and I want to challenge you to commit or recommit to supporting our efforts of *Building to Serve*. Quite a few of you were not here three years ago, and I want to challenge and encourage you to help with the undergirding of our building project. To those of you who have been here for more than three years, I want to challenge and encourage you to continue to support *Building to Serve* until the debt is fully retired.

One sermon I preached three years ago was called, “Risky Business.” Think of the risks that Jesus took on our behalf when he traveled to Jerusalem at Passover time nearly 2000 years ago. By making this journey, by cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem, and by calling for radical commitment to the kingdom of God, Jesus risked the Cross for our sake. At any point along the way, he could have said, “No, I don’t think so; I’m outta here.” Aren’t we glad that Jesus took that risk for our sake.

Jesus told a parable about the master who entrusted three of his servants with talents, while the master went on a journey. One servant got five, one got two, and one got one. The one talent servant hid his talent in the ground, because he was not willing to risk it in trade, not even to risk investing it. When the master returned and an accounting was held, that one talent was taken from him and given to the five talent man who risked his five

talents and made five more. What will you risk to help the kingdom of God be more real in our church and in our community?

Another sermon in the original *Building to Serve* campaign was called, "Crossing Over." It was based on the account in the Book of Joshua of the Israelites crossing over the Jordan River into the Promised Land after they had wandered in the wilderness of the desert for forty years after their exodus from Egypt. We had to crossover, too. We had to move from merely planning to build new buildings to the phase of actual construction. We did it! We have been rewarded, and our buildings are now complete.

Here is a favorite illustration from that sermon.

A successful businessman remembered his youth growing up on a farm. It was his chore to go to the barn in the dark to secure the farm animals before the family bedtime. He dreaded what lurked in the shadows on the way to the distant barn. His father gave him some unforgettable advice.

The lantern he carried from the farm house back door would cast its light to the yard gate and no farther. When he came to the gate, the lantern cast its light to the corral fence and no farther. When he came to the corral, the lantern cast its light to the windmill and no farther. When he came to the windmill, the lantern cast its light to the barn door. The wise father reminded the

frightened lad that he had only to go as far as the light took him, with the assurance that the light would then take him farther at the next point of need.

The light has led us this far. Yet the journey is not complete; the process is not fully over. God's light is shining out a bit farther, and we need to step out again in faith and in commitment to our ministry of letting the light of Jesus Christ shine brightly from our church unto our community and the wider world.

The final sermon I preached in the campaign three years ago talked of the grace of giving. Remembering the Macedonians, whom Paul praised in his letter to the Corinthian Christians, I said that it is a blessing to be able to give to a cause that is bigger than oneself. Giving to God's work is a spiritual discipline; it is a means of grace, whereby our hearts become more in tune with the heart of God. Giving to God is not meant to be legalistic; it is not to be burdensome; it is not to be only obligatory. Look again at those Macedonians, who gave out of their poverty, who literally begged to be allowed to give, in order to have the blessing of sharing with others who were in need.

Giving isn't just about dollars and cents. It is not about building debts or salaries or electric bills. It is about providing for ministry to people. We have heard several heart warming stories

of what it has meant to people to be involved in our recently completed Upward program. Let me share one more with you.

We had our Fall Festival for children at about the same time that we had the evaluation nights for Upward Basketball. I had a conversation at the Fall Festival with a mother who attends another church. She thanked us very strongly and sincerely for putting on the program so that her son could participate. She said that he would never be able to play in a city league or on a school team, because his ability wasn't good enough. But in Upward, he would be treated as just as important to the team as the most skilled player. He could participate and he could do his best and he could learn more about Jesus Christ and the love of God for all of us.

I watched this child play several games. He seemed to be enjoying himself. I don't know if he ever scored a goal, but he played. I watched his parents watching him, and I could see their pride and their love for their son, regardless of his skill level at basketball. And at the Awards Ceremony, this child told me how much he enjoyed being a part of Upward and that he hoped he could do it again. I can't put a price tag on what the experience of this one family is worth, but I am glad that I had some part in our building program, that I paid my commitment to *Building to Serve*, and that I volunteered in the Upward program.

I still believe that our campaign to underwrite our building program was properly named. We did build to serve, and we are in service, but we cannot stop now. Today we have an opportunity to make a commitment to the future of our church, the future of our outreach and our ministry in this community. You have all received a commitment card in your bulletins this morning. I'm going to give you a few moments to fill that card in, and then you can come and lay it on the altar rail during our closing hymn. We have been so richly blessed in the past, but I believe that our future is even brighter still. We can take the risk, we can cross over, and we can know the grace of giving. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen .