

## *Smoky Mountain Reflections*

*January 2011*

Greetings in Christ and Happy New Year,

January is a great time to speak about stewardship. Here at Saint Paul in Sevierville we will prayerfully review our time, talents and treasures as individuals and as a congregation so that we can, with God's help, make the most God-pleasing use of all His blessings. "Blessed to share the blessing" is not just a slogan; it is a way of life acknowledging how God has blessed us while at the same time enabling and empowering us to serve others for Him. I encourage everyone who reads this to do the same. Take time to consider and evaluate how God has blessed you. Examine your perspective and how it may be skewed by sin, looking for how He has called you to serve others with the gifts He has given you. I also thought you might like to consider some interesting comparisons. This is my adaptation of an e-mail I once received:

### **Isn't It Strange?**

- Isn't it strange how a 20 dollar bill seems like so much when we donate it, but such a small amount when we go shopping?
- Isn't it strange how 2 hours seems so long when we are at church or serving others, but so short when we're watching a good movie?
- Isn't it strange that we sometimes have a hard time finding words when we pray, but have no trouble thinking of what to talk about with a friend?
- Isn't it strange how difficult and boring it seems to read one chapter of God's word, but how easy it is to breeze through the pages of a popular novel?
- Isn't it strange how everyone wants front-row tickets to concerts or games, but many do whatever possible to sit in the last row in church?
- Isn't it strange how we need to know about church events well in advance to include it in our agenda, but we can adjust it for other events at the last minute?
- Isn't it strange how difficult it is to learn a fact about God to share it with others, but how easy it is to learn, understand, expand upon, and repeat gossip?
- Isn't it strange how we believe everything that magazines, newspapers, and scientists say, but we question the words of God and those who speak for Him?
- Isn't it strange how everyone wants a place in Heaven, but many don't want to believe what Christ did to get them there?
- Isn't it strange how we love repeating jokes and other fun facts we have learned, but when we have an opportunity to talk about God, we think twice, or say nothing at all?

I share this with you, tongue in cheek. We all have skewed sinful perspectives when it comes to giving of our time, talents or treasures to anything that does not benefit us directly. However, one of the greatest blessings in life is when we realize that we own nothing—not wealth, not health, not friendship. These are all gifts from God that we have been blessed with the opportunity to manage. If we wisely use the material, physical, and emotional gifts God gives us, then blessings are a common result of that activity. But if we give of ourselves with an ulterior motive of relieving our guilt or in some other way of serving ourselves, our pride, or our vanity, then just as the Pharisee, we will receive our reward in its less valuable temporal form.

Don't give of yourself out of duty. Embrace the opportunities God gives you to acknowledge you are a steward of His gifts by cheerfully and generously giving of yourself, as a small reflection of your appreciation of what He did for you on the cross.

When we think of giving of our time, talents, and treasures we should look to God's word for guidance. Here are some good examples:

***2 Cor 9: 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***

***Eccl 3:1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven***

Use wisely the gifts God gives you, and prayerfully consider how you might make the most of what God has blessed you to be the steward of. It is my fervent prayer that everyone who reads this might be relieved of the worries of ownership and be blessed with the joys of managing that which God has given you to manage.

In Christ, Pastor Portier