

St. Luke, Evangelist
October 17-18, 2009
John 10:10

“God’s Concern for the Whole Person: Body, Mind, and Spirit”
Stewardship Sermon Series – Part 3

Sometimes people have the impression that the Christian faith is concerned only about eternity, but not the here and now; about the soul, but not the body; about doctrine, but not that full and abundant life that Jesus said he came to bring. Do we have to wait until we enter heaven to experience that full and abundant life which Jesus promises? The answer is no! Now to be sure, the Christian faith is rightly concerned about eternity, the soul, and doctrine, but it doesn’t stop there. This isn’t an either/or thing; it’s both/and. This side of heaven our loving and gracious God is very much concerned about the crowning glory of his creation – people. God is passionately concerned not just about eternity, but the here and now as we journey from this life to eternal life. God’s concern is not just for the soul, but for the body and mind as well – for the whole person. We live in a culture that has become very skilled at dividing life up into neat little compartments. “This is my life at home, work, school, with friends, etc.” But in dividing up life we often fail to see how everything fits together, and so we miss the big picture – God’s big picture for us. What about that full and abundant life that Jesus came to bring? For many of us – probably most of us – we know we’re not experiencing this, and we long to. We look at our compartmentalized life that is often filled with so much stress, and we say to ourselves, “There’s got to be more to life than this.” And there is! The good news is that we have a God who is concerned – passionately concerned – about each one of us – body, mind, and spirit. And that becomes the theme for the message this day as we focus on Part 3 in our stewardship series: “God’s Concern for the Whole Person: Body, Mind, and Spirit.” May the Lord’s rich blessing rest upon the preaching, the hearing, and the living of his Word, for Jesus’ sake.

On the church’s calendar, October 18 is a day set aside to remember and give thanks to God for that “beloved physician” and evangelist, St. Luke. Because of Dr. Luke’s medical background, over the centuries this day has come to be associated with the ministry of healing – of body, mind, and spirit. We’re not the healers; that is God’s work. But God does call us to be instruments of his healing mercy in our lives. At the close of the worship service, there will be a time of healing with prayer, laying on of hands, and anointing with oil asking for the Lord’s healing presence and power in the lives of those who feel distress and disease in body, mind or spirit. Anyone who has a need is welcome and invited to gather here at the front of the sanctuary for this special time. All of this has real meaning for stewardship in our lives. We are called to manage wisely and faithfully all of God’s gifts entrusted to our care. Certainly God’s gift of our health and well-being is paramount because as St. Paul remind us, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), and he writes: **“You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body”** (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Okay, it’s time for true confessions here. I haven’t been such a good manager of my body, mind, or spirit. Right now I weigh more than I ever have in my life. Whatever exercise I get has been hit-and-miss, and my sweet tooth easily gets the upper hand. I can easily make all kinds of excuses about this: “I’m so busy...” “The kids have this or that activity...” “I’m too tired...” This past week, June and I attended what is called a GracePlace Retreat (www.graceplaceretreat.org), sponsored through the Pastoral Leadership Institute. This couldn’t have come at a better time for both of us, and it emphasized exactly what I’m telling you about: God’s loving and passionate concern for the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. The retreat was led by a physician and a pastor who is also a psychologist, both of whom skillfully wove together

resources from their respective fields and lifted up the four pillars of wholeness: intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being. What an incredible blessing this was! There are some real life changes that I need to make and with God's help will make in order to claim and live that full and abundant life that Jesus came to bring.

God created us to be in an ordered, purposeful, and right relationship with him, others, and ourselves. It doesn't take long to figure out that our lives and the world around us is not as God created it to be. It is disordered, confusing, and out of kilter, reflected in relationships with God, others, and ourselves that are not life-giving, and that are more centered on "me" than "we." This is why Jesus came into the world, to bring his *shalom* – a restored and right relationship that is peace-filled and life-giving. Through his death upon the cross, the strangle-hold of disorder, confusion, and fear has been broken. Through his sacrifice, we have been set free from the power of sin. This is the beginning of the full and abundant life which Jesus came to bring. We have been baptized into all that Jesus has done for us through his death and resurrection. He promises that he himself is with us always, even to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20), and that nothing in all of creation can separate us from his love (Romans 8:39). If God so loved the world and each person in the world by giving his only begotten Son, we have everything we need to press forward in life with confidence. One of the things I learned at last week's retreat is the etymology of that word "confidence." It comes from two Latin root words: *co* – "with," and *fides* – "faith." We press forward in life *with faith* that God who fashioned and created each one of us in all our uniqueness, who sent his only Son to die for our sins upon the cross, who gave the Holy Spirit to call us and keep us in faith is passionately concerned about all of us – body, mind, and spirit, and desires that we experience that full and abundant life he so wants us to have.

Now you may be thinking, "You're saying that because you just got back from being away for a whole week." I can only tell you that like so many other people – so many other Christians – I have lived for too long without that full and abundant life that is Jesus' will for his people. I've been there, done that, and it does not work. I want more. I want to claim and live in my body, my mind, and my spirit that full and abundant life that Jesus came to bring. And I invite you to join me. Amen.