



Pastor's Column

Reverend Mark Nakagawa

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Dear Centenarians:

Throughout my years in the ministry, there have been certain phrases or assumptions that people have expressed about how the church should handle its finances.

One such phrase I have heard over and over pertains to the use of money: "The church needs to operate more like a business," is the most popular variation of this theme.

With that background in mind, it has been somewhat refreshing to hear recent comments that now are headed in the opposite direction: "People and businesses need to handle their finances like the Church," and "we need to get back to the basics of stewardship" are two such comments I have heard and read in the popular media.

The truth is, Jesus constantly spoke about the importance of using one's time, money and other assets in a responsible and productive manner. Over two-thirds of his parables employ the language of economics, an indication of the important link between one's material salvation and spiritual salvation.

Indeed, Jesus spoke much, much more on how one should handle one's financial affairs than on any other earthly aspect of one's life, including one's sexual affairs (which the popular media loves to focus on!)

John Wesley, who started the Methodist movement in 18th century industrial-era England, stressed the prudent use of one's finances as an important component of one's religious faith. In his famous sermon titled "The Use of Money," Wesley implored the faithful to "gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can."

For Wesley, the whole purpose behind one's acquisition and saving money was so that one could give to the less fortunate and "least among these." This wasn't simply a matter of charity, but of Christian duty.

The financial and economic times we live in have certainly caused people to rethink their values and priorities, especially as regards the importance of money and wealth. Followers of Jesus and John Wesley, however, have always placed our primary trust in God rather than mammon.

As the church of Jesus Christ, we continue to invest our gifts of time, money and treasure in God's mission that is led forth through the invaluable grace of Jesus Christ. In this sense, we will always be richly blessed in ways that go far beyond finances.

Grace and Peace,

Reverend Mark M. Nakagawa