

The Inheritance”
II Corinthians 8:1-5

“THE INHERITANCE”

Today marks the beginning of the emphasis week for the Alma Hunt Offering for Virginia Missions. This is an annual event among Virginia Baptists, and the 2008 emphasis week holds special significance given the fact that “Miss Alma” died on June 14th. Let me read these words printed in the 2008 Virginia Missions brochure that has been placed in your bulletin: *“Though a native of Virginia, Miss Alma was a citizen of the world, having traveled to 93 countries during her lifetime... (she) encouraged all Christians to see the needs of the world through the compassionate eyes of Christ... Throughout her life, Miss Alma provided inspiration and issued challenges for generations to come. May we be found faithful to her enduring legacy. And may we be more like her to ‘Live It As We Go’”.*

The goal for the Alma Hunt Offering for Virginia Missions this year is \$1,167,500. Woodland’s goal is \$2,000. We will need to reach deep into our pocketbooks to meet these goals.

On September 24th, the church will meet in business session to adopt a budget for the 2008-2009 year. Our faithful giving, coupled with the more significant factors of God’s grace and providential guidance, work hand in hand to bring life in Christ to this congregation. Our faithful giving, coupled with the more significant factors of God’s grace and providential guidance, work hand in hand to allow Woodland as a congregation to serve as a beacon for Christ to a lost and hurting world.

We will need to reach deep into our pocketbooks to meet the upcoming year’s budget.

Faithful stewardship and sacrificial giving, in the midst of life’s circumstances, are vital. Our friend, Marv Bunson (a fictional character/homeless man/taken in by the also fictional 16th Street Mission), as always, will come before you this morning in full transparency as he struggles with these notions of stewardship and sacrificial giving.

I don’t know that any of us have experienced a windfall lately; given the state of the economy and the price of fuel, probably not. Not so with Marv. His long-lost Uncle Irv has died and left what Marv sees as the gift of a lifetime.

Marv knows nothing about Alma Hunt or the Woodland budget. Remember his church home is the 16th Street Mission somewhere in an inner city in these United States.

Remember that windfall or no windfall, we are this month facing decisions regarding our stewardship and our faithful giving in the name of Jesus Christ.....

(The pastor takes a moment to transform into Marv. It’s pretty easy. A stocking cap, an old topcoat and his signature glasses...and there he is...Marv Bunson.)

Marv pulls out a tattered envelope and opens up the letter it holds. Marv is beside himself. “I had no idea Uncle Irv had done so well financially. It’s so un-Bunson-like. He moved out to Seattle when I was about four, and we never heard from him again. I figured he died decades ago. And then, out of the blue, comes this letter of notification that he included me in his will! And the amount! I’ve always lived by the motto to expect the unexpected; but nothing in my past prepared me for something like this! Now here’s the dilemma. As a person of faith in Christ, what’s a person to do? Where in Scripture do I go for guidance in directing me how to handle this...this...wealth!” (Marv steps to the side as the following passage is read)

Luke 21:1-4. (Turn to your Bible and read)

“THE INHERITANCE: REVISITED”

“Oh my goodness. Of all the passages that would come to mind! Well, Uncle Irv, I don’t know if you were a person of faith, but it looks like none of your generosity will be spent on me. It looks like I’ll be cashing this check and taking it down to the 16th Street Mission. ‘...but she, out of her poverty, put in all that she had to live on.’”

Singing of “The Heart of Worship” by Jim McCord, minister of music.

Luke 19:1-10 (Turn in your Bible and read)

“THE INHERITANCE: REVISITED...ONCE AGAIN”

“Oh my goodness. Of all the passages that would come to mind! Uncle Irv, why would you do such a thing to me. It says in Luke 19 that Zaccheus would give half of his possessions to the poor...but then...he said if he had defrauded anyone of anything...he would give back four times as much. I happen to have a calculator here.

Let me see....

There was the time when...times 4...equals...

Then there was the time when...times 4...equals....

And then there was the time when...times 4...equals...

And I haven’t even gotten by the first grade yet!

“Oh my goodness. Of all the passages that would come to mind! Uncle Irv, this windfall of mine is just slipping through my fingers.”

Congregational Hymn, “Once Again”

Offertory Statement: Romans 12:1-2 (Turn in your Bible and read.)

Collection of Tithes and Gifts

Offertory Music

Doxology

Matthew 25:14-30. (Turn in your Bible and read.)

“THE INHERITANCE: REVISITED...ONCE AGAIN...FOR A SECOND TIME”

“Oh my goodness. Of all the passages that would come to mind! Uncle Irv, this windfall of mine is making for quite the dilemma.... Pardon me, is there anyone present who could be of assistance? It seems I need some investment counseling. Oh, if there were someone present who could help.”

(Marv doesn’t expect a response, and is surprised when one comes.)

“Oh. Hello. Yes ma’am. And you’re name is? Anne, that’s a nice name. And you say you’re the chair of this church’s finance committee? That’s a nice job. And you say you serve professionally as an investment counselor? That’s a nice living. Anne, I have this dilemma. My Uncle Irv has left me quite the sum of money, and I’m a person of faith; a Christian. I remember that bumper sticker that reads: “The Bible says it; I believe it; that settles it.” The only problem with that, Anne, is that the Bible says a lot of things about money. I’ve just reflected on three gospel passages, and they remind me of that Old Yogi Berra saying, “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”

(Anne takes time to share with Marv how, based upon the passage found in Matthew 25, he might choose to invest his inheritance and receive a return on that investment which could serve the cause of Christ. But Marv is still confused. How **long** does he invest? How **much** does he invest? How much does he **keep** for himself? How much does he **give** away? What are the **guarantees** of such investing?)

“Anne, I want to thank you for your kind guidance. To be honest with you, the more I read and the more I think, the more confused I become. I guess no one can tell me what to do; it’s my choice. It’s my choice.”

II Corinthians 8:1-5 (Turn in your Bible and read.)

“THE INHERITANCE: REVISITED...ONCE AGAIN...FOR A THIRD TIME”

“Do I give it all? Do I give back four times what I’ve taken from others over the years? Do I invest and see what the stock market does?”

“According to their ability...”

“Beyond their ability...”

“They gave of their own accord...”

“Begging for the favor of giving...”

“But they first gave themselves to the Lord...by the will of God.”

Video Presentation: “Surrender” (this is a three minute video about giving oneself to the Lord)

Invitation sung by the Woodland choir:

“Come Reign in Me”

