

Talk is Cheap....

[Text -Luke 6:40-42; 46-49]

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To those of you who pay close attention to our Sunday morning bulletin, I acknowledge that giving my sermon the title *Talk is Cheap* may not have been the most inspired choice. Nevertheless, the theme of today's gathering, and the emphasis of this morning's readings, is about putting our *words* - and our Faith - into *action!* Here at Brecksville United Church of Christ, Rally Day is when we traditionally launch our Fall programming. Our Sunday School classes and choirs return to their regular schedules, and we all "Rally" together to show our enthusiasm and lend our support for all the ongoing ministries of this congregation.

One important aspect of both our Christian Education and Music Ministries, is conveying the message of our Faith. Our Sunday School students hear stories from the Bible, that teach them about how Jesus and his followers show God's love to the people around them - especially those people who are hurting or in need. And our choirs offer that same message of Divine love and grace, through the inspiring words and moving music they present. Of course, hearing the Holy Word expressed in Scripture and song, is only an initial part of our Faith journey.

Dispersing religious information isn't the primary goal of our Christian Education Ministry. It's about imparting wisdom, building relationships, and inspiring *action!* As David Ewart writes in our Continuing Testament, "the crucial difference between one who is wise and one who is foolish has nothing to do with *hearing* what Jesus has to say. The difference is in *acting* or *not* acting. It is not enough for us to hear these words of Jesus...We must *act* on them; *practice* them; *live* them in our everyday lives."

For me, two of the highlights of the Sunday School Year are the Christmas Pageant and the Lenten Offering Project. For the Christmas Pageant, all of our students, youth, and teachers work together with Dave Debick [our musical Pied Piper] to present an often amusing - always meaningful - message about Christ's coming among us and impacting our lives. And with their Lenten Project, these students and teachers raise money and awareness for a specific ministry or mission that embodies Christ's compassion and care for people in need. In both of these instances our children - and adults - learn and grow, engage and relate, experience and live-out the Good News of the Divine Love which is revealed in Jesus Christ.

In our New Testament reading, Jesus says "I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and *acts* on them. That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built"

There's a story about a carpenter who, for many years, built homes in a small town. Though quite gifted, he - unfortunately - was never able to afford a home of his own. One day, toward the end of his career, one the wealthiest people in town came to him and asked him to build a house. He said, "I want you to build the finest house you can, and don't worry about the cost." The carpenter agreed to do so; but as he was about to begin the project, a thought struck him: "This rich guy already has half a dozen really nice houses; yet I don't even own one. I'm going to cut some corners, use cheap materials, and do a quick job on the house. I can still make it look really nice, charge him a lot of money, pocket the difference, and finally have enough to build my own house." So that's what he did.

A couple months later, when the rich man came to see the finished house, he was impressed. At first glance, it looked beautiful! He turned to the carpenter and said, "This house looks amazing! And I'm really glad you did such a good job, because I want to give it to a wonderful person in this town; a man who really deserves a house like this." With that, he handed the keys to the carpenter and said, "Finally, you have a home of your own! I hope you truly enjoy it!" The carpenter was both stunned and ashamed. If only he had known, he would have done things differently. If he had realized that what he was building was actually for himself, he certainly wouldn't have done it so cheaply,

Talk is cheap! Jesus says, "Why do you call me Lord, and do not do what I tell you?" Time and again, Jesus tells us and shows us of the importance of our actions, and our interactions. Whether it be providing welcome and hospitality to a stranger, offering forgiveness to someone who has wronged us, or showing kindness to a person in need - what we do, and how we do it, truly matters. It obviously matters to those on the receiving end of those compassionate actions; yet it also holds tremendous significance for our own lives as well.

Doing good for the sake of others, is often the very best thing we can ever do for ourselves! This is a lesson that our Sunday School students learn - not only by what they hear, but by what they see, and what they do. This is something that God's children of all ages can spend a lifetime learning, practicing, and [hopefully] perfecting!