Do you believe what the Bible says, that “I can do all things in him who strengthens me.”? *Philippians 4: 13* Do you believe we are the CAN DO Church or do you believe we are the CAN’T DO Church?

The Stewardship Committee is a fun group of people who periodically go a little wild in committee meetings. Just recently we briefly posited the idea of me preaching until everyone pledged. You know, just like NPR. I’d keep droning on and on until people would start holding up pledge cards for the ushers to come and retrieve them. “If we just have ten more pledges, I’ll stop preaching!” Here I am, Lord; send this pledge! Of course, wiser heads prevailed. There is the old adage from my friend and mentor, Rev. Don Patchel, who always said, “The brain can only absorb what the seat can endure.”

Our scripture for today is a favorite from Philippians 4—“I can do all things in him who strengthens me.” *(Philippians 4: 13)* Please note, it is what we CAN DO, not what we can’t do. Please note it is about we can do ALL THINGS, not just some things. We CAN DO everything God calls us to do. WHY? When we are “IN HIM”. Through Christ and in the power of God we can do all things, not on our own. HOW? Because HE gives us strength. Whatever HE calls us to do we can do, when we do it in and through HIM, because HE will give us the means and the strength to do it. Are we or are we not “The Can Do Church”?

Stewardship, blessing and God’s favor is what releases a church to do wild, creative, extravagant and downright miraculous things for Him. Conversely, it can also discourage, dis-empower and destroy. The dynamic in the church is like this. People get together and they hope and pray and dream together. They catch a vision for being more; for doing more; for impacting the world in Jesus’ name in a bigger, better way. But then the fall campaign comes around and the Finance Committee declares there is no money to accomplish those dreams. And all the hopes and dreams are dashed to the dust. I always say it only takes three rounds of that, of hoping and dreaming, only to be told there is no money, for people to stop dreaming. The church of Jesus Christ has largely stopped dreaming, stopped having mighty visions for the Lord, stopped believing God has placed us here to have major impacts on our society and world because a lack of stewardship has told us to stop dreaming God-sized dreams for the Kingdom. Do we or do we not believe we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength? Are we or are we not “The CAN DO Church”?
I have before told you, my congregation whom I love, the story of “The Angel in my pocket”. There is a little metal angel, given me by my Mother, that I keep in my pocket with my change. The one she gave me has the word “strength” inscribed on the reverse side. Strength. And that Angel often reminded me that indeed I could do all things through Christ who gives me strength. She gave it to me in a time where I was VERY challenged in ministry more than 20 years ago, and there were days when the word “strength” on that little Angel got me through the day. I have lots of things like that in my pocket. I have a 50 cent piece that reminds me of my Dad; he always collected them over the course of a year and would put them in my Christmas stocking. When I’m asked by a poor person for a handout I will give away one of those 50 cent pieces. Then there is some charitable organization who sends me mail with a 50 cent piece attached. Whenever I give my 50 cent piece away I always get another one in the mail. I have the commemorative coin in my pocket for my friend, Scott Bashioum, a police officer killed in the line of duty two years ago, and every time I see it, I pray for his family and other police officers and their families. I have a coin that has “The Prayer of Jabez” on it in my pocket and it reminds me to pray, “O, that You (Lord) would bless me indeed, that you would expand my territory (for You, Lord!)” That ministry isn’t just about my own church but it is about establishing the Kingdom of God here in Washington and throughout the entire world. I pray the Prayer of Jabez and on a weekly basis God always asks me to do things and presents opportunities to serve in ways that impact the world in Jesus’ name. And then there is the Angel in my pocket. I lost it about 20 years ago and thought I rediscovered it by the ATM machine where I would get my cash in Virginia. I then realized God had provided ANOTHER different Angel in my pocket, because this one said on the reverse side “Hope”. And then I rediscovered my own Angel in the pocket, the one given me by my Mother, the one that said “strength” in pants I infrequently wore. So God, speaking through these coins, was providing me with both “hope” and “strength”. What I thought I had lost the Lord provided back to me and in abundance. So now I have TWO Angels in my pocket. And about a year ago a friend was having some worries and I got my angel out of my pocket and I gave it to him. You take this “strength” as a sign from God that he will provide everything you need. But when my Mother passed away I thought, “O, how foolish I am to give away my strength and what is more I have given away the very thing my Mother had given me,” So just recently another man returned to me the coin that I had given him that had on it the Prayer of Jabez; God had answered his prayer and provided in abundance. And I shared with him the story of The Angel in my Pocket. BY THE WAY, Christian stewardship is precisely this—whatever you give away returns back to you mani-fold and with blessing upon blessing attached to it. I gave away the 50 cent pieces and they returned. I gave away the coin that has the Prayer of Jabez on it and it returned back to me. So I gave away the Angel in my pocket, the one Mother had given me, the one that had “strength” on it, the strength that I happen to need right now. So I happen to be poking around and open my Dad’s little jewelry case, you know,
the place where old cufflinks go to die. And saw something shiny in the box. And, yes, there it was, an Angel in the pocket, the one Mother had given Dad, and I picked it up gingerly and turned it over, and what was printed on the reverse side? Why “strength” of course. Anything you give to God will be returned to you many fold. You can’t out give God. We CAN DO all things through Christ who gives us strength!

So do you think our country is a good place right now? Happy? Together? One nation under God? And where do the antidotes for all that is problematic in our world lie? With politicians? With burocracies? Do you think that the solutions to what ails us lies out there or do you think that our spiritual unity and strength in here is the solution to the problems in the world today? I know my answer; what we do here is essential for our nation. But some say, “O, I’m just one person; what can just one person do?” “O, the problems are too big; there is nothing I can do; it is hopeless.” “O, the world is going to hell in a handbasket and there is nothing I can do to stop it.” Can we dream of a different way of being? Can we believe in the transformational power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can we hope in a nation forged in faith and unified in God once again? Can we believe that what we do here at The Church of the Covenant has lasting eternal impact on our world? Do you believe, “I CAN DO all things through Christ who gives me strength?” or not? Are we, or are we not, The CAN DO Church? You decide. You’re casting your real vote today. What kind of church do you want? Better yet, what kind of world do you want for your children and grandchildren?

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Who stands with me today? Amen and Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!