

“How We Do Anything Is How We Do Everything”

Luke 16:10-13

“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much;
and whoever is dishonest in a very little
is dishonest also in much.

If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth,
who will entrust to you the true riches?

And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another,
who will give you what is your own?

No slave can serve two masters;
for a slave will either hate the one and love the other,
or be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth.”

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Is How We Do Everything**

Luke 16:10-13

September 21, 2025

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I.

I would like to begin this morning by thanking everyone for their patience, understanding, and forbearance during my weeks away *from* the church this month and this past summer for some much needed rest and relaxation knowing that all of you continue to endeavor to *be* the church while I do so.

Though it may surprise you to discover, I am usually here *in* Canton on those Sunday mornings when I am not preaching. At least for a few minutes. You see, Linda loves reading the Sunday edition of the New York Times. Typically I get up early on those days, fill a travel mug with coffee, and make the drive to the Mountain Mart here in town to fetch the paper. When I do so, occasionally I will also go to the Tim Horton's and get us a few bagels as a vacation treat. Which is exactly what I did on the morning of Sunday August 3rd.

II.

As some are aware, I keep a keen eye on my sugar intake so I was quite specific when I asked for two multi-grain bagels for myself, one sesame bagel for Linda (her favorite) along with three other kinds of bagels, randomly selected, for our house guests that weekend. This brought the order to an even half dozen at a cost of \$7.99.

A half hour later I arrived back at the lake, gave the paper to Linda, and went to pull out my two multi-grain bagels to make the egg sandwiches which I had been eagerly anticipating for my breakfast. However, when I went to do so I discovered there was no sesame bagel and there were no multi-grain bagels. Of the six bagels I ordered only three were correct, none of which were the three that actually mattered. Which, I don't mind tell you, was *shocking*. While it is absolutely the case that I should have checked the bag before I paid for them and left the store, it never once dawned on me that anyone could get anything so simple so wrong. A 50% success rate on 6 items?!?

III.

Each of us has certainly had a similar kind of retail experience, typically with young people working the counter or cash register, and usually when making change. Rather than get mad, however, I realized this could be a learning experience for the rather nice young woman who took my order. Often the best lessons in life are the hardest. That, and I don't think it is fair that I paid for pay two multi-grain bagels and a sesame bagel but did receive them.

After giving it some more thought, I decided to call the Tim Horton's here in Canton. I did so and asked to speak to the manager. I was told they were not in, so I had the person who answered take a message where I explained the situation, provided my cell number, and asked that the manager return my call. Then, I promptly forgot about the whole thing.

IV.

A few weeks later I was cleaning out my wallet and came upon the Tim Horton's receipt. Ever the dog with a bone, I once again called the store. This time, however, I asked for the *owner*. Who, of course, was not there. So, I asked the person who answered if they would take a message for me. After only a few words, the person said my original message was, apparently, sitting right there and read it back to me. Then, I promptly forgot about the whole thing.

A few weeks after that, on August 30th, I was doing my monthly expenses and saw the Tim Horton's receipt. Curious to see how far this situation might go, I went to the Tim Horton's website and sent an email repeating to them what I have just articulated to you. The very next day I received a response from "Sabrina" in Tim Horton's Guest Care part of which read:

I've forwarded a copy of your concerns to the management and restaurant owner of this location, who will follow up internally to ensure that your concerns are addressed at the restaurant level. I've also requested that they follow up with you about this."

It has been three weeks, now, and not a peep.



V.

Before we go any further, I need to tell you that I *love* Tim Horton's coffee. To me it is head and shoulders above Starbucks, Dunkin's, or any other brand. Moreover, I have been partial to Tim Horton's ever since I was a kid when we would go over to Crystal Beach in Canada during the summer and enjoy some Tim Bits. This would have been at *least* 20 or 30 years before their stores started coming to the US. Heck, Patrick LaPierre, Brent Bartley and I are probably the only people here who can even tell you that Tim Horton was a renowned Canadian Hockey player who co-founded the business in 1964 and, later, died in a car accident at age 44.

Suffice to say, I'm not looking to pick nits with Timmy Ho's (far from it) and the four bucks I'm out owing to the erroneous bagel order isn't going to break my bank (this sermon illustration is worth far more, so as far as I'm concerned I'm ahead). That said, there comes a point when you have to call it the way it is. Because, as this story vividly illustrates, how we do *anything* is how we do *everything*.

VI.

Which, I believe, is just another way of expressing what Jesus is saying to his disciples, both then and now, in today's scripture reading from Luke 16. "*Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.*"

While Jesus references such a notion with respect to faithfulness verses dishonesty, as well as the impossibility of simultaneously serving both God and wealth, I would like us to extrapolate and expand on the idea with respect to the Sacrament of Baptism which we have undertaken today, and how it relates to the actions which we, both as individual believers and as a united community of faith, undertake each and every day of our lives together.

As I proclaim to you from this pulpit on most Sundays, it is almost always about the little things we do rather than the quicksand of big and broad-sweeping concepts, issues, or controversies which ever endeavor to quite literally swallow us whole.

VII.

Curiously, the past few months I have had reason to explain the nature and role of the Sacrament of Baptism in the Reformed Tradition (i.e., Presbyterian) to more than a few people. Both with respect to what Baptism it *is*, but also with respect to what it is *not*. In the early church Baptism was *everything*. Baptism was THE way believers proclaimed their own faith, became members of the Church, the body of Christ, and were understood to, now, share in the salvation won by Christ on the cross.

Which, as you yourselves rightly realize, are *enormous* concepts with which to grapple. Though we *all* recognize it takes a *lifetime* of prayer, study, and practice for us to fully and rightly comprehend them (if ever) we cling to the notion (either out of sheer stubbornness or stunning obviousness) that one has to have all of this figured out at the front end, from the start, and as precursor to being baptized, welcomed into the church, and sharing in God's salvific plan for the world. Which, you may be relieved to know, is absolutely *not* the case.

VIII.

Putting aside for a moment that, ultimately, God is an unknowable mystery, whatever we *do* learn of God typically comes to us not as an unshakeable and emphatic burning bush but in drips and drabs of realization and fits and starts of comprehension. Said another way, the spiritual task is not to *summit* the mountain but to simply *start the climb* and see how it goes from there. Only in doing so may we discover that God has graciously provided us all that we will ever need to make the journey of faith and ascend any spiritual height to which we might aspire.

We aren't ever going to know *everything* about God, but if we aspire to truly know *anything* about God everything else will follow as it must and as it should because this is what God intends for us...and always has. The trick is, to understand that the battle is half won simply by not worrying about the war that was never coming in the first place.

IX.

The decision to have one's child Baptized, or the decision that you, yourself, would seek to be Baptized is only ever a glorious beginning. A first step that begins the journey in acknowledging that there is, in fact, a journey to make. Baptism is an "anything" that holds the promise of leading us to "everything." Conversely, Baptism is *the* way (or, at least *a* way) that the "everything" which is God might most easily find its way to anything in this world including, and especially, to the "anything" that is you and me, and each and every Child of God. This morning we celebrate that it is now Chris and Alistair's turn to take that first step, or next step, in their spiritual journey aided by both the Spirit of God and the love, nurture, and support of the Body of Christ as it is manifested here in we who are the Church on the Park.

X.

Now, I would be remiss if I did not take all that I just said to you and translate it into the language of theological orthodoxy. In the Reformed Tradition to which we Presbyterians belong, Baptism is a sign and seal of what God has *already* provided us. In the Reformed Tradition Baptism is not understood to be "saving" simply because it does not need to be. With respect to salvation, we believe that Chris and Alistair were just as "saved" *before* they were Baptized as they are, now, having *been* Baptized. Redemption does not come us by means of humans hands, but through divine compassion, forgiveness, and healing which has *already* taken place and is *always* taking place. All that God has to give Chris and Alistair was already theirs even before they walked through those doors. In the Reformed Tradition Baptism is the affirmation of, and belief in, that as we will share in Christ's death so too will we also share in the new life the Cross of Christ provides us.

XI.

There is, though, one *new* thing that Chris and Alistair have received today: a promise, a covenant, a vow offered by us and received this day by them. That we, both as an distinct congregation and as representatives of the Church Universal, will love and support this man, this child, and their family all the days of their lives in *anything* they do such that it might mean *everything* to them.

How we do anything is how we do everything. If we believe in the “everything” that is God, “anything” we do should serve to honor that God in our lives and make known that God to those around us. Anything isn’t everything, but it is certainly a start, and almost always enough.

Conversely, how we do the everything is how we do anything. If we seek to be faithful in everything we must be faithful in very little also. Remember, it is almost always about the little things we do as anything is what leads us to everything. Amen.