

Most of the time when you say the word "stewardship" people seem to instantly think, "they are going to ask for more money." But stewardship is much more than just asking for money.

As I said last week, stewardship is the total giving of ourselves to God's glory. It is the giving of our time, our talents and our resources. Last week I talked about how we give of our time and talents as we do God's work.

So today, I will talk about the giving of our resources or our monetary offering. As I said before, what you give is between you and God. You know your financial situation better than anyone and because of that, you are the one who has to decide for yourself as to what you can give.

When it comes to figuring out what to give, there are some who believe in tithing. Tithing has its roots in the Old Testament and it was probably more of a tax than anything else. The people of the Old Testament would take a tenth of their crops or herds and give it to God as a sacrifice.

In the New Testament, the mentality of what you give as an offering changed a bit. Instead of emphasizing a tithe, the New Testament church emphasized the concept of "freewill offerings" as a means of supporting the church. So basically, they went from paying a certain amount based on what was made, raised or earned by an individual or a family group to giving based on a freewill offering when it came to giving an offering to the temple.

So what does that mean for us? What is the best way for us to give? In reality, both models are probably used. There are people who choose to give 10% or more of their income to be used for ministry. At the same time, there are others who give an offering that is not based on their income.

The ministry is not done here at Immanuel because of what one or two people give to God. The ministry gets done because everybody's offering is gathered together and is used as one offering. God takes everything that is given, blesses it and then uses it to share the gospel.

So that brings us to the question of why do we give an offering. In the Old Testament, it was more of a tax type thing that was based on your crops or livestock. In the New Testament, it was more of a freewill offering.

Today, we give as a response to what God has already done for us. We receive forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. We have been blessed with family and friends. Our daily

needs are provided for us. We are fed through the Word and the sacrament of Holy Communion. We also have the reassurance that God is always with us. Even when we wonder where God was during some tragedy such as Paris, we know that God was with them as those attacks were happening.

We worship a God who is active among HIS people and we trust that God will never leave us. It is in response to God's love for us that we respond by giving an offering to HIS ministry so that God may be glorified through each one of us.

This week, I invite you to think about all of the blessings that you receive from God. Praise HIM for all that you have and then ask for guidance as you decide what you want to give for 2016. I invite you to then fill out your pledge card and time and talent sheet and return them next week as we finish up our stewardship emphasis.