

Forever Treasure the Spirit of Truth

✚ **Unacceptable to the world (vv. 15-17a)**

✚ **Known by God’s children (vv. 17b-19)**

✚ **Loved all around (vv. 20-21)**

In the name of Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, dearly redeemed believers:

Two men survived a crash. One sat peacefully while the other searched the island. “We’re lost!” he said upon return. “It’s uninhabitable. No food or water.” His friend leaned back peacefully, “I make over \$100,000 a week.” “Listen to me!” the other shouted: “No food, no water on this rock. We are going to die!” Again: “No, I make over \$100,000 a week.” Wounded by panic, “For the last time, I tell you, we’re doomed. Get this! No food, no water, no people. We’re dead!” Unblinking, “Don’t make me say this again. I make over \$100,000 a week. I tithe 10%. My pastor will find us.”

Such attitudes make me rarely preach about money. This pastor doesn’t even know individual members’ giving. We’ve had one pledge drive in this eighteen-year-old congregation – for architects and builders. And that puts me in danger of not preaching all of God’s Word. You see, the Bible says plenty about money, it’s just not the way most churches extract dollars like dentists with massive pliers. I’m convinced that one Good Book reveals God’s love, and two books expose yours and mine: date book, check book. Today examine them and let God teach us to **Forever Treasure the Spirit of Truth**, so...

✚ **Unacceptable to the world (vv. 15-17a)**

When God does a biopsy on either of our books, He always finds cancer. Where is your time set aside to analyze your percentage of giving to the Lord? Is it less than 3% of gross income like most WELS communicants? Father Abraham gave 10% centuries before the tithing laws of Sinai. Why does \$20 look so big in the collection and so small at the store? Are we or are we not part of the 18% giving 82% of church support? Movies fly by, but two hours in God’s house with God’s Word? Read a novel in a day, but how long will you take to read God’s true Book still novel in our day of sin? Front row seats? Yes, but please not in church. We need weeks to plan events like Christ’s Ascension, but drop everything for our American idols. God-facts go down hard and are rarely seen or heard again, but gossip? In and out and rarely forgotten! Magazines, newspapers hardly questioned, but we doubt God’s Word? Isn’t it strange how every spirit seems acceptable to our worldly hearts, except God’s **Spirit of Truth**?

And aren’t you glad God loves us the way we are, but loves us too much to leave us in lies? He paid the ultimate penalty for every wasted hour, every misspent dollar – not in cold, hard cash, but in warm blood that flowed freely from His innocent head and hands and heart. Is that acceptable to you? Only if you honestly admit with me how stingy and selfish we’ve been with our time and our treasure. I’m just so glad that Jesus died for me. I’m grateful for **the Spirit of Truth** He sent to teach me.

“If you love me,” Jesus says, *“my commands you will guard as treasure. And I will ask the Father and another Friendly Counselor, He will give you in order that with you into the forever future He may be, the Spirit of Truth, the One whom the world cannot grasp, because it neither sees nor knows Him.”* We treasured the Holy Spirit when WELS Bible study attendance doubled (1993-2000). But now less than 10% of our adult male church leaders attend Bible study every week while fewer than half of our people worship on Sunday, and only 17% every week. What song is this? “We are the world”?

✚ **Known by God’s children (vv. 17b-19)**

“God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16 MC) That’s “*life*” in our New Life

budget, life our WELS to stop recalling world missionaries, begin again to open new home missions and win the struggle to train future pastors, teachers and staff ministers while young people are offering themselves in record numbers! Christ's "*life*" will help us to stop robbing God – first of time to thank Him for His blessings and secondly of offerings to spread His Word. God is no stingy miser; He gives us life, health and happiness every day. His gifts are no tiny mincemeat pie to cut into smaller and smaller pieces. God makes the pies. He can make more. And He will give us according to what we believe. What Richard Radke said years ago in a budget meeting is still true today. When someone asked, "Are we tempting God with this budget, Richard retorted, 'No! God is challenging us!'" He lays these challenges upon us in love in order that we can learn to *know* Him not just in our heads but in our hearts.

By experience is the only way to *know* God. In my first "220" in a 4th grade track meet I learned to *know* something about sugar. Bad advice to eat a candy bar just before a race: rubber legs! So we need more "sugar," to give God more offerings? No, God wants us to give from what we have, not from gambling on empty dreams. He wants us to be as generous with Him as He with us. Remember how the widow's mite meant more to God than big money from "fat cats"? Remember the "bad boy" tax collector with his 50% gifts? Overflowing with gratitude to Jesus, Zacchaeus said, "*Half my possessions I give to the poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times as much.*" Jesus remarked, "*Today has salvation come to this house.*" (Luke 19:8ff) And salvation has come to this house when we take God at His Word and "*test*" Him with the 10% as He promises to "*throw open the flood gates of heaven and pour out on you more blessings than you have room for.*" (Malachi 3:10) Not because we must, but because the treasured **Spirit of Truth** is **Known** by experience **by God's** all **children**. Let God prove how far He can stretch the dollars, and how lovingly He cares for His own.

Loved all around (vv. 20-21)

Does God care? Is God "into" you? Are you "into" God? A book entitled, *He's Just Not That Into You*, helps dating women understand why some men say they're busy. No time to pick up the phone? With cell phone speed dial, says author Greg Behrendt, "I sometimes call people from my pants pocket when I don't even mean to. If I were into you, you would be the bright spot in my horribly busy day....I'd never be too busy to call you..." And coauthor Liz Tuccillo says this book is "intoxicatingly liberating. It deserves a place on every woman's night table. It knows you're a beautiful, smart, funny woman who deserves better....Maybe *he's just not that into you*....Set yourself loose to go find the one who is."

Here's the One who is. **Forever Treasure the Spirit of Truth**. He teaches us that our Father in heaven is "into" the Son, the Son "into" the Father." So we are "into" Jesus, and He "into" us. God's actions absolutely show how He feels. Never is Jesus too busy to hear our prayer. We're never fooling ourselves about how God feels. The Triune God proved His eternal, unconditional, self-sacrificing love for us on the cross. And the Father showed how passionately He is "into" Jesus as the Savior of sinners by raising Jesus from the dead. We don't sit by the phone pining away to convince ourselves we're "beautiful, smart, funny" or whatever. God set us free from all our delusions about self and from selfishness with time and treasure. He freed us from our sins. Now we truly live "in" Him who is so "into" us. That's why single Christians can be so confident. You're not really single; you're married to Jesus Christ. And by God's grace He is so "into" you that His eternal love can never change, nor will His heart ever grow cold. He just wants you to feel the same about Him. He wants you to **Forever Treasure the Spirit of Truth – Loved all around** as you spread God's holy Word.

Do you see? This is not really about a budget. It's not about money for church or synod. It is about your heart and mine responding in thankfulness and real-life praise for the bleeding, dying, eternal love of God in Christ. May we prove our love to God as He has loved us. **Forever Treasure the Spirit of Truth**. Amen.