

I don't know about you, but I'm feeling rather assaulted by vendor "attacks" promoting "Black Friday," "Cyber-Monday," "Tech Tuesday," and as many other things as they can think of to get me to buy things I don't need and don't want so that the engines of capitalism can continue their mad rush toward conspicuous consumption and planned obsolescence. If I hear one more vendor quoting Satan's very first lie—"You *deserve* it," I think I'm going to . . . well, you know.

And, while I was pondering these things, I got an email from a friend this morning that quoted a few lines attributed to Ernest Campbell when he was the pastor of The Riverside Church in New York City. Here are those lines:

"To be **young** is to study in schools that you did not build.
To be **mature** is to build schools in which you will not study.

"To be **young** is to swim in pools that you did not dig.
To be **mature** is to dig pools in which you will not swim.

"To be **young** is to sit under trees that you did not plant.
To be **mature** is to plant trees under which you will not sit.

"To be **young** is to dance to music you did not write.
To be **mature** is to write music to which you will not dance.

"To be **young** is to benefit from a church that you did not make.
To be **mature** is to make a church from which you might not benefit."

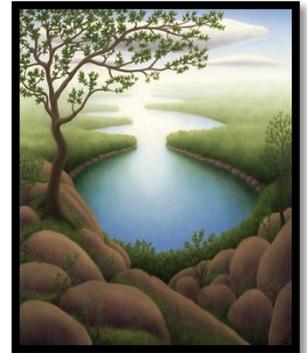
And as I read those lines, I was reminded of a poem nearly a century old by Will Allen Dromgoole. It's called "The Bridge Builder," and you may well know it:

An old man going a lone highway,
Came at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast, and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.

The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fear for him;
But he turned, when safe on the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim, near,
"You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again will pass this way;
You've crossed the chasm, deep and wide -
Why build you this bridge at the evening tide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today,
A youth, whose feet must pass this way.



This chasm, that has been naught to me,
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him.”¹

Both of these poetic expressions emphasize the stewardship of wisdom and maturity, gained through the benefit we ourselves have received from the stewardship of others, and which we have the glad opportunity to build into the lives that follow ours. I was poignantly reminded of how that dynamic works in our families when I returned to my office after worship last Sunday morning to find our grandson, Hadley, sitting at my desk. “*I’m pretending to be you, Pop, Pop,*” he said.



Although our culture tries very hard to get us to “Get all you can, can all you get, and sit on the can,” God’s purpose for our lives is much, much greater than that. As the generations come and go, for whom are you building schools in which you will not study? For whom are you digging pools in which you will not swim? For whom are you planting trees under which you will not sit? For whom are you writing music to which you will not dance? **And, most importantly for our life together, for whom are we building a church from which we may not benefit?**

We invest our time, talent and treasure in and through the Body of Christ, both locally and globally, not so much for what we’ll get out of it, but so that God’s Kingdom will indeed come on earth as it is in heaven. In Gen21 last Sunday, Imani Henderson led us in a study of the “Parable of the Shrewd Manager,” the point of which is found in Luke 16:9, where Jesus said, “*I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.*”

Jesus’ point was that as we invest that portion of God’s resources that are under our personal management in eternal causes, many whom we have never met will come to know and love our Lord, and some of them will precede us to the Heavenly City. It is they who will welcome us “*into eternal dwellings.*”

Paul made the same point in 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, and Ray Boltz made the point again in his Gospel song, “Thank You for Giving to the Lord”:

I dreamed I went to Heaven; you were there with me.
We walked upon the streets of gold beside the Crystal Sea.
We heard the angels singing, then someone called your name.
You turned and saw this young man, and he was smiling as he came.

He said, “Friend you may not know me now,” and then he said, “But wait -
You used to teach my Sunday School, when I was only eight.
And every week you would say a prayer before the class would start.
And one day when you said that prayer, I asked Jesus in my heart.”

*Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am a life that was changed.
Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am so glad you gave!*

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_Allen_Dromgoole;
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bridge_Builder

Then another man stood before you, he said “Remember the time,
A missionary came to your church; his pictures made you cry.
You didn’t have much money but you gave it anyway.
Jesus took that gift you gave and that’s why I’m in Heaven today.”

*Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am a life that was changed.
Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am so glad you gave!*

One by one they came, far as your eyes could see.
Each life somehow touched by your generosity.
Little things that you had done, sacrifices that you made,
They were unnoticed on this earth in Heaven now proclaimed.

*Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am a life that was changed.
Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am so glad you gave!*

And I know up in Heaven you’re not supposed to cry
But I am almost sure there were tears in your eyes
As Jesus took your hand and you stood before the Lord
He said “My child look around you, great is your reward.”

*Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am a life that was changed.
Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am so glad you gave,
I am so glad you gave.*

Build well, my friends. Build well.

Dave

