

Scripture

Mark 12: The Most Important Commandment

²⁸ One of the religion scholars came up. Hearing the lively exchanges of question and answer and seeing how sharp Jesus was in his answers, he put in his question: “Which is most important of all the commandments?”

²⁹⁻³¹ Jesus said, “The first in importance is, ‘Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.’ And here is the second: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment that ranks with these.”

³²⁻³³ The religion scholar said, “A wonderful answer, Teacher! So lucid and accurate—that God is one and there is no other. And loving him with all passion and intelligence and energy, and loving others as well as you love yourself. Why, that’s better than all offerings and sacrifices put together!”

³⁴ When Jesus realized how insightful he was, he said, “You’re almost there, right on the border of God’s kingdom.”

Introduction

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we celebrated with Kenny and Samantha in the dedication of their children, Rose, Savannah, and David. It's so good to welcome these precious young lives into our church family.

I hope we will always remember our commitment to stand alongside Samantha and Kenny in the care of their children and to live our lives in ways that teach them about Jesus.

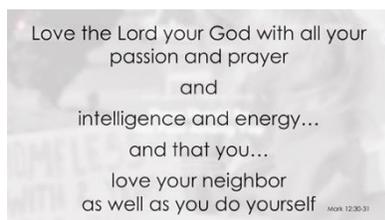
And I am so grateful that you, Samantha and Kenny, had the courage to share your journey with us. It was powerful. It was encouraging. It was challenging. And I hope I can live out my life the way you are committed to living yours.

If you missed last Sunday, Kenny and Samantha described for us the challenges of coming together as individuals who had been and were independent, to blend their children into a new family, and to learn how to be one together.

They talked about how through the first three months of their marriage, the irritations turned to anger, the raised voices turned to screaming.

And then, as they both realized the need for God in their lives and in their family, they began to turn to God in the difficult times and learned to humble themselves before God and each other. They learned to give each other space...

Samantha said, "I began to think about Kenny first – and not just about myself."



They began to live out what Jesus said are the two greatest commandments:

"That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy — and that you love others as well as you love yourself."

Mark 12

Our families, our communities, our country, and our entire world would be a much different place if only we can live our lives like Kenny and Samantha have chosen to live theirs...

And to think about other before ourselves.

Then, Jesus promises, we'll be *"right on the border of God's kingdom."*

Prayer

Lord, Jesus, I am so thankful for Kenny and Samantha's example for all of us.

May seeing them and their children each Sunday remind us of your command to love others as well as we love ourselves.

And, remind us of our promise to live lives that demonstrate your love and care to Rose, and Savannah, and David...and to each other, and our community, and our world.

May we today, understand your concern, care, and love for the poor and those who are struggling.

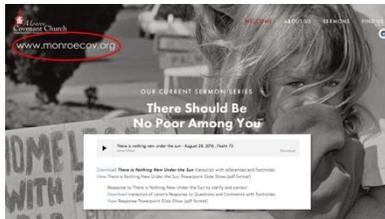
Thank you for your constant and never ending love for us.

May my words and my thoughts be yours,

Amen

A couple of housekeeping matters...

I realize that some of the facts or statements in my message today will run contrary to what you might hear from other news or talk sources.



I'd like to remind you and encourage you to visit our website where you'll find recordings of all of our sermons and transcripts of these messages on poverty. In the transcripts you'll find links to our sources of information. Check the facts, challenge us, talk with us...

That's what this is all about – to talk together through some of the difficult issues facing us and our country.

If you'd like to visit with me after the service, I'll stick around – the bulletin says downstairs – let's just meet up front here.

Someone responded to this series by saying “politics don't belong in the pulpit”.

That's an interesting statement...

God sent his Old Testament prophets to speak directly to the politics of the day...to challenge the kings, and those in authority...to call out the powerful who oppressed the poor.

The prophet Ezekiel slammed the people of Jerusalem, saying,

“The sin of ... Sodom was this: She lived with her daughters in the lap of luxury—proud, gluttonous, and lazy. They ignored the oppressed and the poor. They put on airs and lived obscene lives. And you know what happened: I did away with them.

Ezekiel 16:48... MSG

That's not what we were taught in Sunday School. Ezekiel went on to say...

⁵¹ *You people of Jerusalem have sinned twice as much.... In fact, your evil ways have made ... Sodom ... look innocent. ⁵² So their punishment will seem light compared to yours. You will be disgraced and put to shame because of your disgusting sins.*

CEV

Proud...gluttonous...oppressing the poor...putting on airs...living obscene lives...that was the true sin of Sodom.

Jesus took on the Pharisees and the Sadducees – the political and religious leaders of the Jews – he preached in the Temple and threw the merchants out...he didn't pull any punches when he told the Pharisees:

*"You are masters at making yourselves look good in front of others, but God knows what's behind the appearance. What society sees and calls monumental, God sees through and calls **monstrous**.* Luke 16:48... MSG

The Church (capital C), too, has a long history of pushing against the political establishment and social order for what is good, and right, and just in God's eyes...abolition of slavery, voting rights for women, civil rights...and more...

The Church has come together to do some great things in the name of loving God and loving our neighbor.



I want to take you back 105 years to Sunday, January 22, 1911.

Churches all across the country came together to declare January 22nd **Child Labor Sunday** because in *25 states children were by law, allowed to work in coal mines...in 33 states they could work all night – locked inside glass houses, cotton mills, and other factories.*¹



It seemed impossible. Trade groups said child labor laws were an attack on business.

The Supreme Court even ruled that federal legislation banning child labor was unconstitutional.²

It took three tries before the first Child Labor laws passed Congress as part of the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act.

27 years after the Church became involved.

Today, we can't imagine an 8 year old child running spinning machines or mining coal.

I wonder, 100 years from now, how will people sitting right here in Monroe Covenant Church judge us?

What will we have done to love others as well as we love ourselves?



This past weekend Chicago area *Covenant churches* took a stand and participated in [Calls for Peace](#) events.

People prayed and shared resources in response to the violence that is raging in parts of the city.

3,100 people have been shot and more than 500 killed so far this year in Chicago. On average, 12 people are shot each day and the murder rate is at a 20-year high.³

Taking action to right a social or economic wrong is not politics – it's justice.

And, I agree – partisan politics do not belong in the church. No one person in any church should tell you how to vote, or who to vote for – as a matter of fact, it's illegal...

Sadly, that is not always the case, either from the pulpit or in the public arena...



In this month's Covenant Companion Magazine, Jelani Greenidge⁴, makes a strong case for taking Evangelical out of our denomination's name.

Today, the word Evangelical has become charged with meaning – far from its origin.

[Jelani writes...](#)

*...in our attempts to defend both our faith and our legal right to practice it, we have become more identified by what we are **against** than what we are for. And we've inadvertently come off as rigid, defensive, judgmental, even ignorant.*

But this issue is bigger than ... the American presidency, the U.S. Supreme Court, immigration, abortion, mass incarceration, or any other hot button issue.

*This is about how people perceive American Christians as we attempt to share the good news of Jesus Christ. When it comes to the word "evangelical," somewhere along the way of advancing **our organizations and our worldview**, something has gotten lost in translation.*

So I think we oughta stop using it. Not stop telling the truth about Jesus, not stop praying for our communities, not cease being a visible, incarnational presence—but stop calling ourselves evangelicals. Take it out of our denominational name, and banish it from active usage.

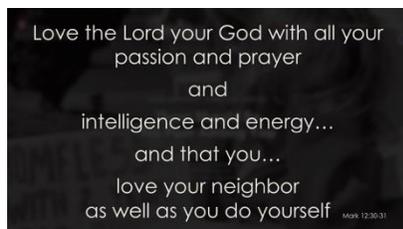
Telling the **truth** about Jesus...that is our calling as the Church.

If you don't subscribe to the Covenant Companion, it's a great magazine. You can also sign up for e-mail news. It comes a couple of times a week and it's always good stuff.

Another person responded to our series on poverty by saying, "I'm tired of all that...I want to get back to the Bible..."

Let do...let's get to the Bible!

God's Command: Love others as well as you love yourself...



When Donna first went back to teaching at Everett Community College, she was asked to teach GED and Life Skills in a Welfare to Work program.

She always tried to bring Biblical principles into Life Skills. One day, their Life Skill was the Golden Rule – “treat others the way you'd like them to treat you.”

The single moms in her class said, “Wow, what a great idea!” They had never heard it before.

Donna encouraged them to try it with their kids that night. She said, “If you don't want them to yell at you or treat you disrespectfully, try talking softly to them and treating them with respect...”

They couldn't stop talking about what a great night they'd had with their kids – how they actually enjoyed being with them.

For Donna's students, it was a totally new concept – and it worked!

The Golden Rule wasn't a new, radical idea that came to Jesus when he woke up one morning...

It goes all the way back to the commands God spoke through Moses as the Israelites were preparing to enter the Promised Land.

In Leviticus chapter 19, God ends a long list of instructions about how the people were supposed to live in community with Him and with each other ... by saying...

I am the LORD, and I command you to love others as much as you love yourself.

For God, it's not an option – it's a commandment just as important as any other:
love others - as much as you love yourself!

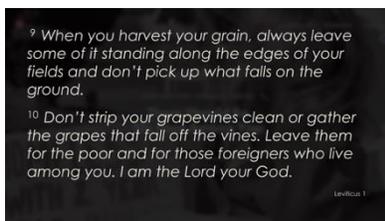
Let's see what led up to that commandment...

In **Leviticus 19** *The Lord told Moses*² *to say to the community of Israel:*

I am the Lord your God. I am holy, and you must be holy too!

³⁻⁴ *Respect your father and your mother, honor the Sabbath, and don't make idols or images. I am the Lord your God.*

And right alongside those familiar commandments God said...



⁹ *When you harvest your grain, always leave some of it standing along the edges of your fields and don't pick up what falls on the ground.* ¹⁰ *Don't strip your grapevines clean or gather the grapes that fall off the vines. Leave them for the poor and for those foreigners who live among you. I am the Lord your God.*

When God led the Israelites into the Promised Land he said this is a rich, lavish land. You'll have everything you need and so much more that there ***should be no poor among you.***

And that is my contention, too, for us in America today. We are the richest, most powerful nation the world has ever known. There should be no poor among ***us!***

There is plenty of money in America. We've simply allowed our system to get way out of balance.

Today, in America, there is no grain around the edges... or fallen grapes for the poor to pick up.

Jesus's good news...

Jesus said, "I've come to preach the good news to the poor..."

So, where is the good news? It feels really discouraging, doesn't it?

It hasn't always been that way. The good news is that we can get back to the days "when America was Great" ...when wages were rising and the middle class was strong. (see following: When America Was Great and what's happened since...)

Here's the good news...



There is plenty of money in America. Let me show you just one small example.

In 2015, Wall Street paid \$25 Billion in bonuses – that's on top of an average salary of \$404,800!

\$25 Billion in bonuses alone.⁵

The three highest paid hedge fund managers earned more than \$5 million A DAY!⁶
5 million A DAY!

The total earnings for all of the 900,000 people who worked all year long at minimum wage jobs was only \$12 Billion.

You don't have to a math whiz to see where this is going...

If **only** we could change the system, to make it a little more fair...



Less than half of Wall Street's bonuses would more than double the income of all those 900,000 people working at minimum wage - they'd all be earning \$15 an hour, or more.

Can you imagine the difference that would make in the lives of nearly one million people?

That's the good news Jesus said he came to bring to the poor – it's the stuff of Jubilee years!



We could change a lot of other lives, too...

All the restaurant workers, or home health care workers, or fast food workers could be making \$15 for less than the total paid in Wall Street bonuses alone.

Well, we can't simply take money away from Wall Streeters and give it to others, can we?

And even in God's most radically economic command, that of the Jubilee, the call was not for equality, or for the rich to give up all their money and redistribute it to the poor. God's command was to hit the reset button, to give everyone a chance to earn a living again...to regain their family land so everyone would have a means of production and be able to feed their family. God was, and is, all about leveling the playing field. Giving everyone a chance.

A more level playing field is not impossible – we can do something about this incredible inequality.

After the Great Recession, the European Union now limits bonuses for key bank employees to not more than 100% of their base salaries.

We could do that, too.

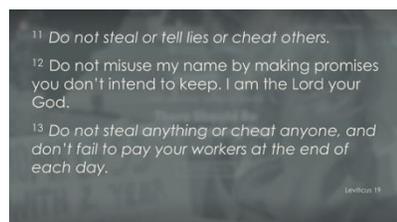
We could also close the tax loopholes that let hedge fund managers and others pay much lower capital gains and carried interest tax rates than the rest of us have to pay on our hard earned income

If a fair tax was paid on these bonuses and other extremely high earnings, we could, for instance, put that money to work rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure and create a whole lot of good paying construction jobs.

We could do it...***if we had the political will to get out and vote for people who have the courage to make those changes*** – to elect candidates who are not controlled by those who gave the most money to their campaigns.

Each one of us, as a citizen of the United States, has the power to vote for change.

Back to the Bible...verse 11



11 Do not steal or tell lies or cheat others.

12 Do not misuse my name by making promises you don't intend to keep. I am the Lord your God.

13 Do not steal anything or cheat anyone,... and don't fail to pay your workers at the end of each day.

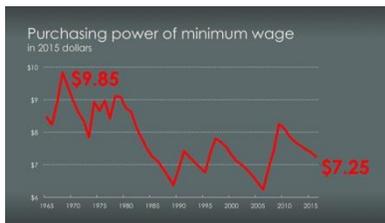
Let's do something...

Other places God says, "Pay your workers a fair wage."

In Old Testament times, workers really needed their pay at the end of every day. They were living day to day – just like so many people are living paycheck to paycheck today. If Old Testament workers didn't get their wages, their family went hungry that night.

But what about fair wages?

We hear a lot about \$15 an hour, but let's begin with the minimum wage – it's the foundation upon which all other wages are built.



The \$7.25 Federal minimum wage was last raised in 2008 – 8 years ago.

In 1968 it was worth almost \$10 in today's dollars – 48 years ago you could buy 1/3 more with the minimum wage.



29 States have passed minimum wage laws that are higher than the federal minimum of \$7.25 per hour.

But still, in only three states and the District of Columbia can a single mother with two children working full time at a minimum wage job rise above the official poverty line.

In Washington State, we're close...but still fall short.

Last year, our Senator Patty Murray and Representative Robert Scott from Virginia introduced the Raise the Wage Act of 2015, a bill that would raise the Federal Minimum Wage in five steps to just \$12 per hour by 2020. It didn't even make it to Committee for discussion.⁷



Opponents of raising the minimum wage say it's totally unnecessary – we don't even need to talk about it.

The minimum wage is for burger flipping teens working part time for pocket money.



When we look at who will benefit from raising the minimum wage to \$12 an hour, you're going to be surprised:

- The average age of affected workers is 36 years old
- (Half again) more of the affected workers are over 55 (15.3%) than are teenagers (10.7%)
 - only 1 in 10 minimum and low wage workers are teenagers
- More than half are women (55.9%)
- Of all the workers who would receive a raise:
 - The majority work full time (57.4%)
 - Nearly half have some college (45.1%)
 - And more than one-quarter have children (27.7%) – raising the minimum wage will impact the lives of more than 17 million kids
- On average, workers who would benefit are the primary breadwinners for their family and earn more than half (54.3%) of their family income

These are not part time burger flipping teens looking for spending money – they are hard working adults trying to provide a living for their families.



We hear a lot about \$15 an hour. There's a good reason for that.

42% of American workers earn less than \$15 an hour.

Let that sink in...almost half of everyone working in America earns less than \$15 an hour.

\$15 an hour is just beginning to be a living wage job.

No matter which way we lean politically, if we're for Trump or Hillary or the Green or Libertarian parties, or this year, even if we're for none of them, here are two things I think we can all agree upon -

None of us want to live in poverty.

We all want a living wage job.

Do we agree? Can I have an amen?

None of us want to live in poverty.

We all want a living wage job.

Amen?

This is what Jesus said...



Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior:

Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them.

Matthew 7:12

What would it look like ***if we grabbed the initiative*** and did something for all those people who live in poverty and for those who no matter how hard they work, they are not paid enough to provide for their families?

There's the great irony in all of the negative talk we hear about how we can't afford the minimum wage and that \$15 an hour will destroy businesses and put people out of work...***we are already loving our neighbors - we are already doing something for them*** – it's just in a sort of perverse and hidden way...

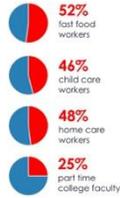


We, the taxpayers of America, are already paying the price for low wages...

The Labor Law Center at the University of California at Berkeley discovered that...

Nearly 3 out of every 4 people (73 percent) who receive assistance through one of America's major public support programs **are members of working families.**⁸

Let me say that again – it's not the lazy, the indigent, those who we're told don't want to work because entitlements make their lives so easy and comfortable that they don't even look for jobs - who receive the majority of government benefits...



3 out of 4 people who receive public assistance live in working families.

More than half of all fast food workers receive public assistance benefits – because they can't get by on the wages they are paid.

The same for child care and home health care workers.

And this one is especially important to me – having a wife and daughter who teach at Everett Community College – 1 out of 4 part time college faculty and their families are enrolled in at least one public assistance program...we have to look into that!

We pay \$153 Billion dollars through our taxes to support Wal-Mart, McDonald's and all the other low-wage paying businesses in America.⁹

How does that make you feel?

Low wage workers need our money to survive because the giant corporations they work for don't pay them enough to live.



A number of studies show how Wal-Mart, for instance, could easily afford to give all of their workers a raise to \$12 or more.

Wal-Mart is an interesting contradiction for me – the seven children of Sam and Bud Walton, the founders of Wal-Mart still own the majority of Wal-Mart stock and are worth \$130 billion – the richest family in America. That's pretty incredible since they built the business on, and continue to make their profits from, selling cheap stuff to poor people. And what's more interesting is that their combined wealth of \$130 billion is more than all the wealth owned by the bottom 140 million Wal-Mart Americans – nearly half of all Americans - their customers. But, that's for another day.

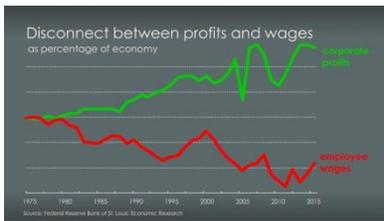
Anyway, **even if** the Waltons and Wal-Mart executives and shareholders refused to pay for raises out of their profits (which they could easily afford to do), and the entire cost of raising Wal-Mart employees to \$12 an hour was passed on to consumers – consumers would pay on average, 46 cents more per trip to Wal-Mart.¹⁰

46 cents – a pretty cheap way to love your neighbor as yourself, don't you think?

Raising the minimum wage is the good, and fair, and I would go so far as to say, the righteous thing to do.

If you need more information to understand why living wages are good for the economy, and why we can't rely upon or wait for corporations to pay fair wages on their own, you can read more in my transcript (see following: Why We Can't Rely Upon Corporations to Increase or Pay Fair Wages...).

And here's why it is so important for the Church to take a stand...



Corporations (for the most part) and CEO's have little incentive and certainly no requirement apart from minimum wage law to raise the pay of their workers.

In the 40 years since I was in college, corporate profits as a percentage of our economy have increased almost 300%...wages have gone in the opposite direction.

You can read about why that's happened in my transcript.



For now, I'm absolutely sure if Jesus was here today, he'd be walking alongside the 15 NOW folks, marching in solidarity with them in front of the Seattle Ferrari and Maserati dealer.

This fall, we have an opportunity to do what I believe Jesus would do.

We rarely have the chance to vote on something concrete that will improve our lives and the lives of others – we usually have to rely on politicians and their promises. This is one of those times you can cast a vote for what is just and right.



This November, you can choose to advocate and vote for fair and just wages and I'd like to encourage you to learn more about Initiative 1433 and then, to vote your conscience.

Initiative 1433 will phase in increases to the minimum wage over the next four years to \$13.50 per hour.

Study after study has shown that phasing in wage increases over time does not hurt the economy or reduce employment – it does exactly the opposite.

Because...people earning the minimum wage right now have to spend everything they earn on basics like rent and groceries.

Raising the minimum wage for more than 700,000 Washingtonians will add nearly \$2.5 billion into local economies.

When workers have \$600 more in their pockets to spend every month, businesses hire more employees, our economy grows, jobs multiply, and families are fed.



A couple of weeks ago at the Retreat, Andrea Johnson reminded us of a good example of multiplication from Jesus and the disciples' experience in the story of the feeding of the 5,000.

The disciples were tired of the crowd and told Jesus to send them away to get something to eat in the surrounding villages.

Instead, Jesus said, “You do it – you feed them!”

As I've been thinking about this story in the context of income and inequality and today, as it relates to the minimum or living wage...

The disciples could have held tightly onto those two fish and five loaves of bread.

They could have each had a few bites, but they would have still been hungry.

Instead, they let Jesus take the loaves and fishes and bless them – as Andrea said, “They made space in their hearts for God to work...”

The disciples became a blessing because they became active participants in what Jesus called them to do – to share what they had... two fish and five loaves of bread.

The disciples lost their little lunch...

But, you know what? Because they chose to act, there was plenty for everyone to eat their fill...all 5,000 and 13 full stomachs – Jesus and the disciples included!

What about us?

Could we lose our 46 cents so Wal-Mart workers can earn a more fair wage?

Might we chose to become active participants...to cast our vote so people in our state can begin to earn a living wage...

The disciples gave up their little bit of lunch...but they came away with full stomachs AND twelve baskets full of leftovers.

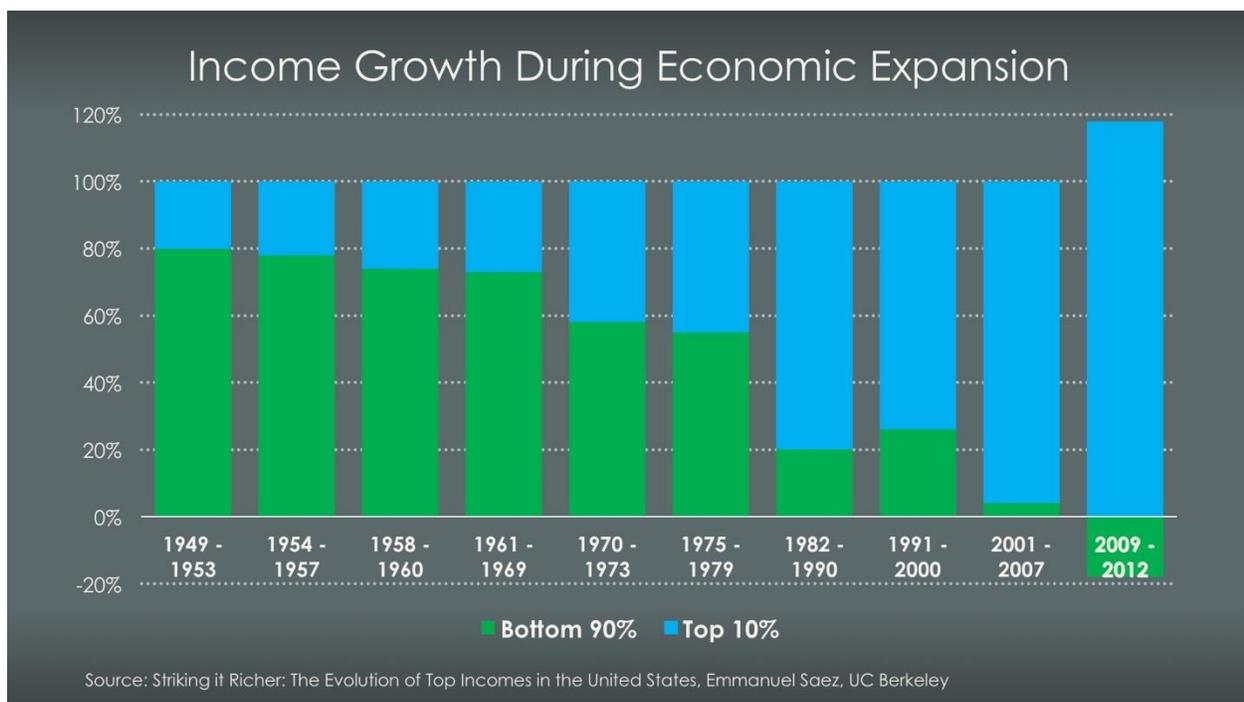
There is plenty for all...every one of us.

Additional information and sources contemplated for, but not included in, actual sermon:

When America Was Great and what's happened since...

Income and wealth inequality hasn't always been so extreme and we can get back to the "good old days" ...the time when America truly was great.

Let me show you what's happened...why what used to be a much more fair and



equitable system has broken down. We talked a bit about this before.

As we recovered from World War II and went through the 50's and 60's life felt pretty fair. The middle class was growing and we were all thriving.

The wealthiest 10% took home about 20% of the growth in income – about twice that of the rest of us.

We can understand that. Maybe they are better educated or have special skills, or maybe they were just lucky to land a great job.

To me...if they earn 2 times more than I do, that feels OK. They probably have a whole lot more stress in their lives anyway.

In the 70's life for most of us was still comfortable. My mom didn't have to work and neither did most of my friend's mothers. ***One average income*** was enough to buy a house and put money away in a savings account. Donna and I were able to pay for college working part time and come out the other side without any debt. But income inequality was growing.

Still, in the 70's, maybe it's possible justify the wealthiest 10% taking on average, 4 times as much as the rest of us...but it's beginning to feel not quite so good or fair.

In the early 1980's politicians took a dramatic turn in economic policy.

Prior to 1980, we thought if you pushed money into the economy you would create good, living wage jobs.

A good example is President Eisenhower creating the interstate highway system. He poured a bunch of money into building freeways and a lot of people had great jobs and – and we all benefitted from new, fast roads.

But, as with most things in life, excess is never good – the economy got fat and bloated.

Too much money came into the economy, there was incredible inflation – in my business we had to print new price lists every three months...interest rates soared – at one time we were paying over 20% interest on our business loans and Donna and I bought our house in 1978 with a 9.75% loan – almost 10% interest! We had a great rate at the time. Many people were paying 13% or more.

We had to do something to put the economy on the right track.

President Reagan and many others became proponents of Supply Side or Trickle Down Economics – we talked about that before. The idea was that if you give big tax breaks to the wealthy and corporations, they will turn around and invest that money in new factories and we'd have so much growth and create so many more living wage jobs, we'd all be fat and happy.

It worked - for a while, we just forgot to reign it back in. We let the tax cuts go too deep and last too long.

In the 1980's the wealthiest 10% (over \$116,500 in 2013 dollars) took home almost **40 times** the rest of us and it was only going to get worse.

In the expansion leading up to the recession in 2008, when we all thought life was great, everyone was buying a house, and a new car, and taking out second mortgages to go on expensive vacations...it was all an illusion, play money – the top 10% took nearly all the income growth...the rest of us got almost nothing. For many in the 90%, their “income” grew only by borrowing more and plunging further into debt.

Now, in the recovery since the Great Recession, the 90% have actually gone backwards – our incomes shrank by 20%. And, it's actually worse than this graph shows – nearly all of the income growth went to the top 1% - the rest at the top, the 9%, they lost out, too.¹¹

Why We Can't Rely Upon Corporations to Increase or Pay Fair Wages... because, for the most part, they won't...

As we continued to recover from the Great Recession in early 2014, Reuters asked and answered the own question: [Why are US Corporate profits so high? Because wages are so low](#)

U.S. businesses have never had it so good.

Corporate cash piles have never been bigger, either in dollar terms or as a share of the economy.

The labor market, meanwhile, is still millions of jobs short of where it was before the global financial crisis first erupted over six years ago.

Coincidence?

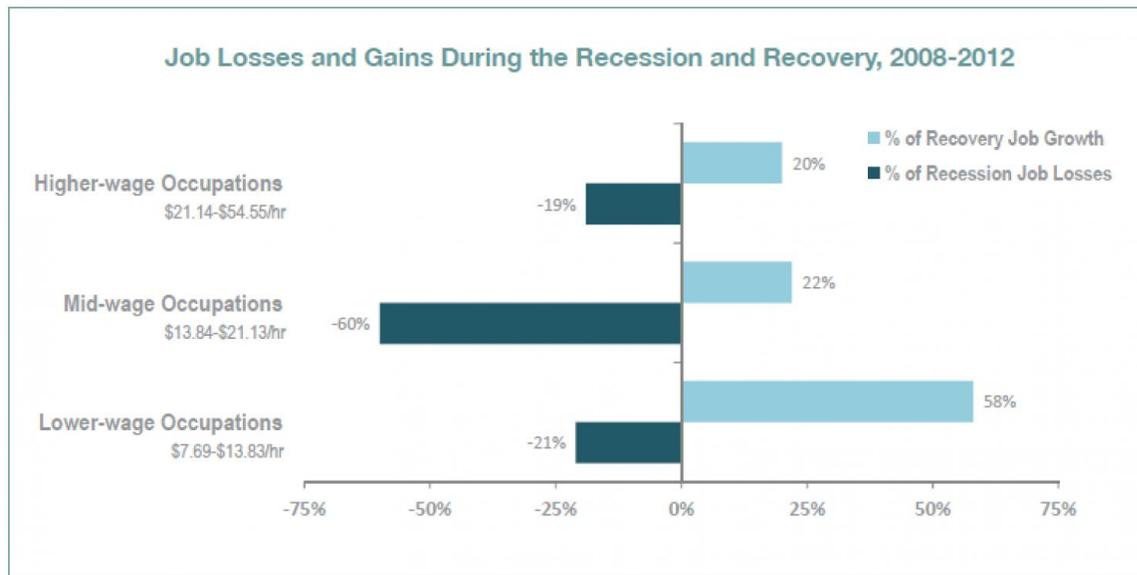
Not in the slightest, according to Jan Hatzius, chief U.S. economist at Goldman Sachs:

“The strength (in profits) is directly related to the weakness in hourly wages, which are still growing at just a 2% nominal pace....”

*Companies have not been able to raise prices much because the economic recovery has been fragile. But **they've still managed to boost profits beyond anything ever seen before because they've gotten away with employing as few workers as possible at as low a rate as possible.***

Corporations (and it's not universally true, but a significant fact) took advantage of the recession to reset wage scales. When the jobs came back, nearly 2 million

people who pre-recession had good middle income living wage paying jobs found themselves working for low wages. ¹²



Source: National Employment Law Project

When you're a CEO trying to maximize your paycheck and bonus and grow Shareholder Value at any cost, there is no incentive to pay higher wages – it's too easy to say, "If you don't like your pay, someone else will be happy for your job." And that is exactly what happened through and after the Great Recession...

In August, 2014 [Bloomberg reported](#):

Jobs gained following the U.S. recession pay 23 percent less than those lost as a result of the 18-month slump that ended in June 2009, a report by the U.S. Conference of Mayors finds.

For a compelling explanation of why corporations have little to no incentive to raise wages or hire workers, watch Nick Hannauer's TED Talk:

[Rich People Don't Create Jobs](#)

Hannauer explains how and why the health and growth of our economy is dependent upon consumers having enough money to spend to drive the economy – raising wages at the bottom is good for everyone – even the richest Americans.

And, if it was true that lower taxes for the rich and more wealth for the wealthy create jobs, we'd be drowning in jobs...

Hannauer is a Seattle billionaire investor who is a strong proponent for raising the minimum wage and treating workers fairly.

Another good article by Hannauer: [The Pitchforks are Coming...for us Plutocrats](#) also as a [TED Talk](#).

Why it's important for all of us to raise the incomes "at the bottom" ...

The economy grows when we raise the income of lower wage earners because they spend all their money.

Beyond the morality of advocating for what is right, just, and fair, there are many practical reasons for the Church (capital C) and each one of us as individuals to get involved in advocating for fair wages.

The best reason to raise the minimum wage is that it benefits everyone – the wealthiest included – not only those who receive the higher wages.

The fact is...poor people spend all the money they earn which stimulates the

economy whereas rich people squirrel it away which only makes them and Wall Street better off instead of all of us together.¹³

When the Federal Government considered how to put the stimulus package money to work to lift us out of the recession, here's what they found:

If Congress increased Food Stamps (SNAP) – every dollar of increase in the program would generate \$1.73 in the economy because poor people spend all their money and it keep turning over.

When we help the poor with food they then have money to spend on other things – a

Table 2. Impact of Various Fiscal Options

Policy option	Congressional Budget Office		Moody's Economy.com	
	Cost-effectiveness	Time from enactment to impact	Cost-effectiveness ^a	Time from enactment to impact ^b
<i>Tax cuts</i>				
Nonrefundable lump-sum rebate	Large ^c	Medium	1.02	Medium
Refundable lump-sum rebate			1.26	Medium
Payroll tax holiday	Large	Medium	1.29	Medium
Temporary across-the-board cut	Small	Short	1.03	n.a.
Accelerated depreciation	Medium	Medium	0.27	Medium/long
Extend AMT patch permanently	Medium	Long	0.48	Long
Make Bush tax cuts permanent	Small	Long	0.29	Long
<i>Make dividend and capital gains cuts permanent</i>				
	n.a.	n.a.	0.37	Long
Cut corporate tax rate	Small	Long	0.30	n.a.
Extend operating loss and carryback provisions	Small	Medium	n.a.	n.a.
<i>Spending increases</i>				
<i>Extend unemployment insurance benefits</i>				
	Large	Short	1.64	Short
Increase food stamps temporarily	Large	Short	1.73	Short
Provide aid to state governments	Medium	Medium	1.36	Short/medium
Increase infrastructure spending	Small	Long	1.59	Long

Notes:

(a) One-year dollar change in real GDP for a given dollar reduction in federal tax revenue or increase in spending. Estimates are for the year the spending or tax change takes effect, which is not necessarily the year in which it is enacted.

(b) TPC's assessments are based on the discussion in Moody's Economy.com (2008).

(c) The CBO table does not distinguish between refundable and nonrefundable rebates, but its text states, "Making the rebate refundable would further boost the cost effectiveness of the stimulus." n.a., not available; the source does not provide an assessment of the indicated policy option.

Source: Congressional Budget Office (CBO, 2008) and Moody's Economy.com (2008).

mom has money to buy shoes for her child, Fred Meyer sells more shoes, they hire another clerk, who then goes out to lunch at Red Robin to celebrate her new job, Red Robin needs to buy more hamburger so the farmer sells more cows, and now he can buy a new tractor...on and on.

But...giving tax cuts to the wealthiest actually shrinks and slows our economy.

The rich already have what they “need” – they don’t need to buy more food to feed their family. Their children already have many pairs of shoes.

Instead, the wealthy “invest” their new “extra” money from tax cuts. In most cases, it does not go into building new factories or creating more jobs like Trickle Down Economic tells us it will – it goes to Wall Street and simply adds to the churn of money in the financial sector, benefitting only a few and making them incredibly wealthy.

The Tax Policy Center, a joint venture between the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution confirms this:

Almost 80 percent of the [stimulus tax cut] benefits would go to the richest 20 percent of households, who would be least likely to spend the additional funds and stimulate demand.”¹⁴

In this case, for every dollar given to the wealthy by making the Bush-era tax cuts permanent took 71¢ OUT of the economy – most of the tax cut money disappears which would lead us into an even deeper recession.

The impact on our economy of raising wages is nearly 6x the bang for the buck of giving the rich more tax cuts. (\$1 in food stamp generates \$1.73 in purchasing power - \$1 in tax cuts generates 29¢).

In the final stimulus package, just under 40% of all funding was devoted to tax cuts, the majority going to those who need it least and whose actions do the least to stimulate the economy.

Sadly, corporate and moneyed interests carried the day with Congress...

And, the recovery was slow and weak because...

...high-income households are less likely than low-income households to spend much of their rebate. The Bush tax cuts in general – and tax cuts that only benefit high-income households in particular – favor the wealthy, and so are a particularly poor way to stimulate a weak economy.¹⁵

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- ¹ The Western Christian Advocate, January 4, 1911, <https://books.google.com/books?id=H5kxQAAMAAJ&pg=PP35&lpg=PP35&dq=the+church+in+advocating+against+child+labor&source=bl&ots=30ful1TCe0&sig=Bzyp4sysYSNWhuz2wXR7YZY A5U&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjB6-Oo6bLPAhVE62MKHfh0Bx0Q6AEIQzAH#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- ² Child labor public education project. (2011), http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child_labor/about/
- ³ http://covenantcompanion.com/2016/09/28/covenant-churches-participate-in-peace-rallies/?utm_source
- ⁴ <http://covenantcompanion.com/2016/09/21/a-modest-proposal-about-the-e-word/>
- ⁵ Off the Deep End, The Wall Street Bonus Pool and Low-Wage Workers, Institute for Policy Studies, <http://www.ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Wall-Street-bonuses-v-minimum-wage-2016-FINAL.pdf>
- ⁶ The Highest-Earning Hedge Fund Managers and Traders, Forbes, <http://www.forbes.com/hedge-fund-managers/>
- ⁷ Raising the Minimum Wage..., The Economic Policy Institute, <http://www.epi.org/publication/raising-the-minimum-wage-to-12-by-2020-would-lift-wages-for-35-million-american-workers/>
- ⁸ *Fast Food, Poverty Wages: The Public Cost of Low-Wage Jobs in the Fast-Food Industry*. University of California, Berkeley, Center for Labor Research and Education and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Department of Urban & Regional Planning, laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2013/fast_food_poverty_wages.pdf
- ⁹ Americans are spending \$153 billion a year to subsidize McDonald's and Wal-Mart's low wage workers, The Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/04/15/we-are-spending-153-billion-a-year-to-subsidize-mcdonalds-and-walmarts-low-wage-workers/?utm_term=.6c513f8bf3d7 citing The High Cost of Public Wages, UC Berkeley Labor Center, <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/the-high-public-cost-of-low-wages/>
- ¹⁰ Living Wage Policies and Big-Box Retail, UC Berkeley Labor Center, http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2011/bigbox_livingwage_policies11.pdf
- ¹¹ Striking it Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States, UC Berkeley, <https://eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/saez-UStopincomes-2013.pdf>
- ¹² How the recession turned middle-class jobs into low-wage jobs, Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/02/28/how-the-recession-turned-middle-class-jobs-into-low-wage-jobs/>
- ¹³ Evaluating Economic Stimulus Legislation, Taxpayers for Common Sense, <http://www.taxpayer.net/library/article/evaluating-economic-stimulus-legislation>
- ¹⁴ Stewart claims that the stimulus bill is one-third tax cuts, Politifact, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2010/feb/10/jon-stewart/stewart-claims-stimulus-bill-one-third-tax-cuts/>
- ¹⁵ The Bush Tax Cuts: The Least Effective Stimulus, Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-bush-tax-cuts-the-least-effective-stimulus/>