DAY 2

Building Nests

“And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”
— Luke 12:20

One March morning, I saw a large Red-Tailed Hawk fly overhead carrying a long heavy stick. I smiled at this indisputable sign of spring. Non-migratory birds of my area were beginning to build nests. Earlier I had seen an American Crow carrying straw for the same purpose, and the day before I had watched House Sparrows tucking threads of grass into the hole in a convenience store awning.

During the months to come, birds of all kinds would pour extraordinary effort, time, and ingenuity to the construction of nests, the protection of eggs, and the feeding of their vulnerable young ones. After the little ones hatch, I’m always amazed at the unceasing care offered by the parents. Every ounce of the adults’ energy is devoted, not to their own comfort and feeding, but to the survival of their young.

The notion of building nests is often used as a metaphor to describe people successfully providing for their own comforts. If someone arrives at a career position of some ease and security, friends say, “You’ve built yourself quite a nest for yourself here!” When we are comfortable, secure, and feel at home in our workplace or living area, we talk about the space being “our own little nest.” The word nest often connotes shelter, coziness, homelike, comfortable.

In actual fact, the nests which birds build are not for the birds who build them, but for their young, for the next generation, for the future of the species. The hours of carrying straw, sticks, and mud; the days of defensive watchfulness; and the weeks of endless feeding are all for the benefit of the new ones, the young, the future.

Now consider “nests” we build in our churches. The buildings, programs, ministries, job descriptions, and services we build—are they for our own comfort and coziness? Or are they to further the faith and provide for future generations? Does our giving serve us and our needs or serve God by serving the mission of the church to reach new people? Vibrant, fruitful congregations focus as much energy, prayer, and planning on those who are outside the congregation as they do on those who are already active in the congregation. When they initiate new Bible studies, outreach ministries, or worship services, they give less emphasis to “what do I want, prefer, or find convenient” and place more weight on “what will feed the souls, nourish the spirits, and sustain the steps” of those outside the church or new to the faith. Those new to the faith are as vulnerable as hatchlings, and require a steady and dedicated effort of feeding. And the budding faith of young people requires our committed attention; extra care; overtime in planning, teaching, encouraging, generosity, mentoring, and support. For those who practice Extravagant Generosity, the nests we build are not for ourselves—they are for the next generation, those new to the faith, the future of the body of Christ.

• What motivates you to support the ministries of your congregation?
• How does your focus on generosity and level of giving support the mission of reaching other people with the grace of God you have received?