

The Joy of Giving

Sermon Synopsis: Being "rich towards God" includes growing in generosity

Text: Luke 12:13-34 (ESV)

Intro: You heard in our SOTU by Allen the things we've done, are doing, and things we are dreaming about. In the next couple of week, we're going to be giving you ways to engage that vision...

AP!

Time (next series)

Talent (next week)

Treasure (today)

I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer.

1. Money won't ultimately satisfy you

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for **one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.**" (Luke 12:13-15, ESV)

Don't covet other people's stuff, thinking you're missing out

Caveat: there does seem to be a baseline (Jesus speaks about our needs being met)

But "beyond a certain point money stops providing happiness" Ed Diener & Martin Seligman¹

So what does satisfy?

2. We need something deeper

And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not **rich toward God.**" (Luke 12:16-21, ESV)

1. Our "stuff" won't last

2. We need to be "rich toward God" (NLT: a rich relationship)

Our hearts must be reoriented towards God

1. Born again

2. Practices that reform our affections (we'll talk about a bunch later)

- Our "treasure" tells us a lot about the condition of our heart

Matthew 6:21 (ESV)

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Your treasure shows your attachment

What Jesus is doing with these disciples (and us) is showing us how to reorient our hearts by redirecting our treasure.

3. Invest in the Kingdom

And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you,** O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. **Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.** "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. **Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** (Luke 12:22-34, ESV)

Invest in what matters: the Kingdom of God

API!

What does it mean to seek the Kingdom of God with our *treasure*?

1. Sharing what you have with those around you

- Acts 2:42-47 (here is an example)
 - Sharing meals together, practicing hospitality, and meeting needs
- Galatians 6:10 (bearing burdens, emphasis on the household of the faith)

2. Contributing to your local church **API!**

- Old Testament: "Tithe" or 10%
 - Genesis 14:20; 28:22
 - Sacred Tithe (Numbers 18:21,24)
 - Tithe of Feasts (Deuteronomy 14:22-27)
 - Tithe for the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28,29)
- New Testament: Jesus changes everything
 - No longer under Mosaic covenant
 - Tithing is not abrogated in the NT, but neither do they say much about it
 - So does Jesus loosen God's stance on giving?
 - No! He makes it more intense...
 - He speaks on money more than most topics
 - He reveals our heart through our attachment to our belongings²

He calls us not to a flat giving number, but to give the way that He gives...

2 Corinthians 8:1-3 (ESV)

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, **their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.** For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,

2 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV)

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (NLT)

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say, "They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever." For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous.

New here? No obligation to give! Glad you're here. This is for those who consider Reality their church. But it's also for you in the sense that you might be considering Reality your future church. And I want to show you on the front end what the Bible says about money, and why it might actually end up in your joy.

New Testament: Our giving should be proportionate and sacrificial

It shouldn't break you, but it should stretch you

- For some people, that will look like 5%
- For others, that will look like 10%
- Others, that will look like more than 10%

And yes, we are called to give to our local church, as well as to one another

2 Corinthians 16:2 (NIV)

On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

And to the needy...

1 Timothy 6:17-19

2 Corinthians 8-9

So why give?

1. **To reorient our hearts** – An act of worshipful trust in God
 - Lazo's story of tithing when times were hard
2. **To grow "rich towards God"** – A formative practice for the soul
 - The effect: God took care of us, sometimes in big ways.
Malachi 3:10 (ESV)
Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.
 - More importantly, our faith in him grew because of his faithfulness and our detachment to money
3. **To invest in what matters** – Involvement in a story greater than ourselves
 - If you consider this church you're home, I want to invite and challenge you to step out in obedience to Christ and give generously to the mission and vision of our spiritual family

Application question: what does my spending habits reveal about my heart? What is Jesus wanting to do in my heart? How does that tie in with my treasure?

For those of you who are ready to step out, bring up two things before God: **AP!**

1. **Spiritual friendships** (how is God calling me to share what I have with them?)
2. **Your local church** (how is God calling me to contribute with my treasure?)

¹ Ed Deiner and Mark E.P. Seligman. "Beyond Money: Toward an Economy of Well-Being," *American Psychological Society*. 2004. Quoted in Eric Chester. *On Fire At Work*. 39.

² Rich young ruler, Lazarus and the rich man, etc