

September 17, 2023
Generosity – part 2
“How We Should Give”
Luke 12:16-21

Intro:

Last Sunday we began a sermon series on generosity – and yes, the series has a strong focus on generosity as it applies to our financial state, but it also spills over to cover those resources we have that are beyond dollars and cents: time, equipment, talent, and so on.

The topic last week was introduced by addressing the question of “why we should give”, and that is a topic that can take many sermons and would cover many passages of Scripture, but there were at least a few compelling suggestions from the sermon.

This morning we are covering the topic of “how we should give”. Now before you start thinking, “Oh yeah, here it comes. The ask for money for the church,” this sermon isn’t really about putting cash in the offering box at the back of the church. The idea of how we should give is something far deeper than that. In fact, coming to the amount that you should give is really informed by the “how” that we are going to talk about this morning.

As this is a series that is inspired by a series of videos provided by the CBWC Foundation, it is only fitting that we allow Bob to give an introduction to the topic today. Let’s watch that video now.

You can watch Video #2 [on their website](#).

Why do these four principles that Bob presented: prayerfully, wisely, freely, and voluntarily, matter to our giving and our generosity? I don’t think any of us would debate the importance of approaching any of our decisions by praying about them first and seeking God’s wisdom in knowing how to proceed. And certainly

when it comes to the concept of how we are to be good stewards of what we have been given, prayer and wisdom are significantly important. Just as important is the expectation that God has on us as givers. He does not cajole, blackmail, or demand our generosity. It is something that is asked of us, but the skies don't open up and lightning bolts strike us down if we fail to be consistently generous. We have the total freedom to do with what we have been given, as we will.

Of course decisions have consequences, and that is part of the lesson in the parable of the talents. You recall the parable? A rich king gives three servants an amount of money to manage while he is away, 10 portions to one, 5 to the next, and 1 to the third. The first two fellows get to work multiplying what they had been given through investments and what not. The third fellow puts his share under a rock for safe-keeping. When the king returns, the three present their efforts, with the last servant showing how he hadn't risked what he was given by hiding it away. The result was that servant got fired, and his portion of the money given to the one who had started out with the 10 portions. The consequences for the third guy are fairly obvious. Jesus' message from this was that what we have been given by God is to be used for God and for expanding His kingdom.

But in spite of cautions like this, we still have the freedom to do with our resources – money, time, talents, stuff, etc., whatever we choose to do with it.

This is why “how” is such an important piece of the generosity topic. It is about our attitude and ultimately about our relationship with God. Generosity helps us to grow closer to God and deepens our understanding of Him, and as I have mentioned, puts into perspective just where our blessings come from.

The Luke Passage:

The passage we read earlier from Luke helps to fill this thought out a bit more. Here is a farmer who has had a good crop year. That is a blessing. There is nothing wrong with our farmer yet. Having a good crop is the result of hard work and favourable weather. No problems just yet. He has such a good crop that he has run out of storage room for the excess. What should he do with that? Should he

go on a crazy spending spree and blow it all? Should he buy a controlling share in the local football team so he can get some name recognition? Ok, that example doesn't fit where Jesus is going with the story. Notice that at this point nothing is being asked of him, and he is trying to sort out a wise decision.

The solution he comes to is that he should build bigger barns so he can safely store all the surplus. Honestly, this doesn't sound like too bad of an idea. This is something that is encouraged and considered wise. Put your extra money into savings. Make some smart and careful investments. Put it towards an RRSP, or if you have kids, and RESP for their future education. At this point, there is nothing in the actions of the farmer to warrant any sort of warning to him or to us.

But the process of building those barns to store the excess moves our farmer friend into a problematic position. He has gone from probably thanking God for the bountiful harvest, to thinking that what he has been given is fully owned by him and is for his pleasure alone. Look at the plan once the barns get built – he will remove himself from the needs of the world and just relax and eat and drink and be merry. At this point, he is no longer listening to God's voice, nor is he doing anything that will help to draw him closer to God. This is why Jesus' story takes a radical turn and he gives a judgement to the poor farmer that he will die that night and all his carefully hoarded wealth will be distributed without his input.

It is greed that is the farmer's downfall – possessive greed. Jesus says we need to hold what we receive with an open hand, ready to be obedient to God when he asks us to be generous with it.

Cheerfulness and Love:

While Bob has provided a helpful foundation for how we are to give – one that is not about the output, but the heart behind generosity, there is just a final thought I would add to it.

I would challenge us to take the attitude of giving another layer deeper.

I recall a time that I was part of a missions work crew and at the start of the first day, the fellow in charge stood up and said to all of us, “The Bible tells us that God loves a cheerful giver. So, let’s go and give ‘er!”

Of course, that wasn’t exactly the intention behind those words of Paul, found in 2 Cor 9:7. They are part of a larger section of instruction in that chapter about the attitude we are to have when we do give. We are not to give out of pressure or to impress people. God doesn’t want us to be reluctant in giving or to grumble and complain about how we are being generous. If you look at this section in 2 Cor. 9, Paul is in fact telling the people that it is entirely up to them on how much and what they give. Again, verse 7: “You must each decide in your heart how much to give.” It really is up to us. And the attitude that we give from is more important than the amount.

Jesus has something to say about that as well. You might recall an incident where a rich man made a big show of putting a bunch of money in the offering box, and a poor widow humbly put a small amount in box, and Jesus commended her because she gave generously from what little she had, as opposed to the rich man who gave but a small portion from the excess that he had.

And so, our attitude in giving matters. It matters to how we release what we give, and it matters to how the process of it all draws us deeper into our relationship with God. If we truly understand God and our relationship to Him, then being generous won’t be done out of compulsion, or with grumbling, but with a cheerfulness that flows from a heart of love.

In the famous love chapter of 1 Cor 13, which is often reserved only for weddings, there is a lovely verse on giving. Listen to verse 3 “If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it, but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing.”

Generosity needs to come from a heart of love. If we are truly seeking to be obedient to God, and truly desiring that what we give be a blessing to others, then we must make sure we are giving out of love and only love – love for God and love for others. For indeed God is our example in this: His great generosity in giving Jesus for our sins came from His great love for humanity.

As you wrestle with this stage of being generous, may you come to a deeper understanding of God's love for you, and a deeper experience of your love for Him.

Let's pray.