

2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters
Sermon Series - Focus on Your Witness
Sermon Title - The Truth About Giving!
Sermon Text - Matthew 6:1-4
Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry

Introduction:

“You call the sun to rise, and You lay it down to rest! You hold this heart of mine, and You hold my every breath!”

If we truly believe that then our willingness to trust God with every area of our lives should be a given! And that includes our willingness to have a giving spirit in the way we live our lives! And I’m not just talking about the giving of money. I’m talking about the giving of our time, the giving of our love, the giving of graciousness to others, and the giving of our commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Let’s pray and ask God to teach us the truth about giving!

Happy Father’s Day! We celebrate our Dads today. I’m sorry I don’t have any good dad jokes, but I do have a really funny story. Two good friends were sailing in the ocean when a storm came up and blew them way off course. Their boat hit sand and broke apart. They held onto parts of the wreckage and made it to a remote uninhabited island. One of the guys says we’re never going to be found, this is so far off the charted shipping lanes, we’re doomed! The other guy who was a businessman says, oh we’ll be found, I’m wealthy! His friend replies, your money is not going to save you out here pal. No one is going to come looking for us! Oh yes they will, I’m not just rich, I am a millionaire many times over!!! The friend says, “You just don’t get it do you, all the money in the world’s not gonna help you out here! We’re doomed!!!” The wealthy guy replies, “No you don’t get it, you see, not only am I wealthy, I go to church and I tithe! My pastor will find me!!!!”

Anyway, Happy Father’s Day! You know, one thing about a good father is they are always willing and wanting to become better at one of the most important jobs they have in life, to be a good Dad! So with that goal in mind let me ask you dads a question. Dads, what are you teaching your Children about giving? You might not think this is a very important topic or in your top ten most important lessons list for your kids, but it is more important than you could possibly imagine! What you believe and practice when it comes to giving speaks volumes about your priorities and teaches valuable lessons! It teaches about caring for others. A spirit of giving teaches selflessness vs selfishness. A spirit of giving teaches loving God and others first! It teaches trust in God to meet our needs! It teaches faith, compassion, priorities, motives, and what really matters in life! The spirit of giving you have or don’t have in your relationship with your wife teaches your daughters what to expect in a marriage relationship and teaches your sons how they should treat a woman! Your giving spirit, or lack thereof, is either a good witness to others or a poor witness to others. And, we’ll see today, that while our motive is not to be seen, it will nonetheless be evident to others in your lifestyle and attitude whether or not you are a giving person. So let’s examine some truths about giving. Let’s start with this...

The Truth About Giving - The World has a different understanding

The world tells us that life is all about rewards, what you get in life! Rewards, in the world's eyes, are all about personal recognition, satisfaction, and gratification! Jesus had a totally different and radical approach, but sadly, many churches do not teach or reflect what He taught. Most people, when they think of a reward, they think of something they get, and that is somewhat true, but it's way more than that. Jesus's teaching on giving was pretty radical, but absolutely true! So let's jump right in and see what Jesus had to say in His Sermon on the Mount on the subject of giving and rewards. Go ahead and get your Bibles out and turn to the first book of the New Testament. While you're turning there, let me say this. I believe today's message is going to be very relevant to your life! Ok, let's read Matthew 6:1-4. Jesus said...

Matthew 6:1 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

Matthew 6:3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matthew 6:4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

The Truth About Giving - Motives are Important

Evidently, according to Jesus, not only what you do is important, but why you do what you do is extremely important! Of course, I may be missing something here. Maybe I just mis-read it. But it sure seemed like Jesus was concerned about the motive behind any act of righteousness. Would you agree? And it is clear that Jesus views giving as an act of righteousness. And there is a reward! Jesus said...

Matthew 6:1 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

It is very clear that we are not to do an act of righteousness to impress other people and God doesn't want us to do good to impress Him! He wants us to do acts of righteousness because they are the right thing to do. Not for what we will gain. Not that we don't benefit from doing the right thing, we do, but that should never be why we do the right thing. Selfishness is never a good reason to do something good. Here's one of the reasons self is a bad motivation for doing good: If self has nothing to gain, then self will skip on doing the good. If self has something to lose, then self will skip on doing the good. If the gain is not substantial enough to outweigh the sacrifice then self will not sacrifice and good will not be done. It's kind of a human nature thing.

Of course we are not only talking about material gain. Jesus said "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them." Why did He say "be careful"? Sometimes

people will make great sacrifices and do good things for the "glory" it will bring them. It's all about self. Sometimes good things are done for self-glory, but, as Jesus said, that will be the extent of their reward. Jesus used the word careful because selfish pride is very powerful and very sneaky. And when pride becomes the motive, you will pick and choose when you will do acts of righteousness based on the amount of attention it will bring you and that means you may not give help when help is needed because there's nothing in it for you. There have even been people in the past who've gone so far as to do destructive things to create a situation where they can try to be a hero. There are people in jail for such things. So motivation really is important. And if you're doing something outwardly to impress God or to earn His favor, you've forgotten several fundamental truths of Scripture including...

The Truth About Giving - It's not about your goodness or greatness!

I know we've read Ephesians 2:4-10 recently, but it is so important to this context!

Ephesians 2:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

Ephesians 2:5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

Ephesians 2:7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

Ephesians 2:9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

So you see, it's not about our greatness or goodness, but our great need for God's goodness to be bestowed on us and through us! God wants us to do good works, but not to impress Him or to win His love. He already loves you, you don't have to earn that, you can't, and when it comes to impressing Him, don't forget this other fundamental truth.

The Truth About Giving - Regardless of what you do on the outside, God knows what's on the inside!

1 Samuel 16:7b "... Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

A man who knew this concept well was Coach John R. Wooden who coached the UCLA Basketball team and won "ten NCAA national championships in a 12 year period, including a record seven in a row." (Wikipedia) He was a devout Christian who lived to be 100 years old. He said this...

“Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.”

“The true test of a man's character is what he does when no one is watching.”

He was echoing something C.S. Lewis had written...

"Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching."

Dads, you may be providing for your family financially, and may be protecting them physically, but you have to understand that the way in which you accomplish those things will have a lasting impact on your children because they are watching! Remember, your responsibility to protect and provide for your children goes way beyond the physical. It includes spiritual protection and provision and if you aren't setting a good example in those areas it can put your children at extreme risks. Why? Because children have a tendency to follow their parents' example even though they might not be willing to admit it! You are a powerful influence in their lives even when they are living in rebellion. And there's more to what Jesus said about and it leads us to yet another truth about giving...

The Truth About Giving - Giving is an Act of Righteousness

Matthew 6:2 “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

Did you notice Jesus said "When you give to the needy?" Not if!! God created life and made giving and receiving very important and essential aspects of life! God wants us to have faith in Him, and to share our faith, and to have knowledge of the Bible, and to love others, but He also wants us to have a heart for giving. Giving is an act of righteousness! A spirit of giving is such an important aspect of family life, and it's no different in God's family. Not long after Jesus' death and resurrection persecution, including economic punishment, began to face the Palestinian followers of Christ in Jerusalem. Paul shares with the Corinthians about the need and then shares with them a powerful testimony from the churches of Macedonia. Check it out...

2 Corinthians 8:1 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

2 Corinthians 8:2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

2 Corinthians 8:3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,

2 Corinthians 8:4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.

In other words, the people of Macedonia were saying: "Don't rob us of the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints!" Did you know the Bible tells us God loves a cheerful giver? I think the Macedonians meet that criteria!! Paul may have expected them to ask for a love offering to be taken up for their own needs, but that's not what happened. Paul tells us...

2 Corinthians 8:5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

Their priorities were God first, others second, and their belief was that God will take care of the rest. Listen to what Paul then says...

2 Corinthians 8:6 So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

2 Corinthians 8:7 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

2 Corinthians 8:8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

2 Corinthians 8:9 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 through his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:10 And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so.

2 Corinthians 8:11 Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.

I love what Paul said in that last verse...

2 Corinthians 8:12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

God's not looking at the size of the gift, He's looking for people who have a desire and motivation to be a part of what He's doing and are excited to have the privilege to contribute to something bigger than themselves! Do you ever wonder why we don't harp on money at Northshore Church? The reason is that money is not our goal and we truly trust that God will provide what we need to do the ministries of this church! And He has for over 21 years and He will continue to do so. Every once in a while I will preach about giving, like today, not so people will give more, or because we look at the ministry needs and go, "Wow, we need more!" Nope! When I preach on giving it's because the concept of giving is a concept that you and I need to understand, and it would be wrong of me not to give you the privilege of this act of righteousness. It would have been wrong for Paul not to give the Church at Corinth the opportunity to give to help the hurting Church at Jerusalem. He would have been robbing them of an awesome privilege to be a part of what God was doing. And by the way, the fact that Paul used the Macedonian Church as an example proves that Jesus wasn't creating some kind of new regulation about giving saying it would be wrong for someone to find out that you gave! He

was saying that you shouldn't do your giving for the purpose of looking good in the eyes of others. Some people think if someone finds out, then they lose their reward. No, it's if you did it so they would find out, then that's all the reward you'll get. And while my motive for preaching about giving is not to get more, sometimes, I have to be reminded that it's wrong of me not to let you know when there's a need and allow you the blessing of giving to meet that need. Because of my desire to never cross the line of abusing your generosity, I have sometimes been reticent to talk about the needs, and inadvertently, rob you of a blessing. I apologize for that! And speaking of rewards here's another truth...

The Truth About Giving - The greatest rewards come from God

As I said in our very first point, giving has its rewards and Jesus let us know the origin of the rewards...

Matthew 6:3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matthew 6:4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

So again, Jesus is saying don't sound the trumpet! Don't do what you do to be seen by others. Do the right thing because it's the right thing, not because you will be hailed as a hero! But, here's something to think about: If your heart is in the right place and if you do things for the right reason, God will reward you and that might include God using you as an example of doing the right thing for the right reason. In other words, if God decides to use your good deed as an example, don't fight it, it's a reward. What a blessing! The greatest rewards for giving come from God and think about this...

Reward: You have the honor of Giving God Glory

2 Thessalonians 1:11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.

2 Thessalonians 1:12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Give God the glory and thank Him for the blessing of being used to bring Him glory. Simple as that! I'm I sure about this? Yes. You have to take all of Jesus' teachings together. They don't contradict, they compliment!! He said...

Matthew 6:3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

But you have to remember Jesus was making a point about the ill fated motives of wanting to bring glory to self. Jesus had said earlier in His Sermon on the Mount and we talked about it a few weeks ago. Jesus said...

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

We don't do good deeds for the purpose of being seen as goody two shoes! But we don't hide our light, we shine that light to give praise to our Father in heaven!! And that is part of the reward of giving. We know when we give for the right reason and good happens, it brings praise to our Father in heaven! That makes my heart happy. Man, I love my earthly dad and am so glad I still have him in my life and I love it when I can make my earthly Dad smile, but if I can make my Heavenly Father smile, that's what I live for!! There's multiple rewards in living a life of giving and some of them are eternal.

Reward: Treasures in Heaven

Dr. Nave is going to preach a message on this in July, but let me just remind you what Jesus said...

Matthew 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

Matthew 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Now I don't know what those treasures will be in heaven, but I know they will be awesome. I've got to tell you a little story. The guy that was preaching the night I got saved, was preaching another sermon one day and I thought he had lost His mind. We all thought something was wrong. He said "When I get to heaven I want to have lived a life that gets me lots of rewards. In fact, I want so many that I have to have a big wheelbarrow to carry them. In fact if it's a crown, I want it so big and with so many jewels in it that I would still need the wheel barrow." I was thinking, "Well that's it, the preacher's lost his mind!" Then he said, "The reason I want all those rewards is so I can wheel them right up to Jesus and dump them at His feet, fall on my knees and tell everybody that I could not have done one measly thing if it hadn't been for the grace, mercy and love of my Savior Jesus. To God be all the glory!!" We were all relieved that the preacher hadn't lost his mind and were so moved by his heart!! Well, there's one last reward I want to talk about. Some of you may be thinking, "Okay, this is where he tells us about all of the material blessings God's gonna give us when we give. This is the part I was waiting on! Whoo Who!!"

Reward: Treasures on Earth

First, a disclaimer, this may not be what you expected! God never promised to meet all of your wants, but He will meet all of your needs, and I can testify that He will sometimes even give you more than you need.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:9 As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever."

2 Corinthians 9:10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

2 Corinthians 9:11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

So that you can be generous on every occasion. You might be thinking, "He makes me rich so I can be generous? Where's the reward in that?" It's found in Paul's words to Timothy...

1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

1 Timothy 6:18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

1 Timothy 6:19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Life that is truly life is found when you start receiving more pleasure from allowing God to work through you to help someone else rather than always having the universe revolve around you! It's finding great satisfaction knowing that you put a smile on a little kid's face because you volunteered with Shore Kids in the back and they learned about Jesus' love for them in a safe place and their parents were able to worship and grow in their faith! It's knowing that your giving helped our youth go to camp in Cleveland, TN this past week and a number of young people gave their lives to Jesus and some will be baptized today! Someone handed me an envelope a couple of weeks ago and told me to use it for whatever ministry needs might come up, and there was a family working and trying really hard to make ends meet and they needed 300.00 more to make their rent! That's exactly what was in the envelope! Life that is truly life is found when you start receiving more pleasure from allowing God to work through you to help someone else rather than always having the universe revolve around you! It's knowing that your giving is not only helping here at home, but is making a difference in Mexico, India, Africa and Haiti! I pray we will continue to be a church that discovers as Paul did, the following truth..

Acts 20:35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

I want to leave you with this little video that shows some of the work that is being done in Haiti even in the midst of terrible trials and tribulations there. These short video clips and pictures have all been sent by Pastor Monoit, who coordinates our ministry efforts there. We met Pastor Monoit through my dear friend Phil Murphy, who along with his wife Lonie, started the House of Blessing Orphanage in Haiti back in the 80's and is the one who got us involved in missions in Haiti. I talked with him and prayed with him last night on the phone. He got very sick and had to be hospitalized last week. They figured out what was wrong and began treatment, but they also discovered another issue, leukemia. He has great faith and such a positive attitude. He said, "Larry, if I hadn't gotten so sick with this other problem, they would not have found the cancer! God is going to work all things together for my good, and for the glory of God! He shared with me how God is already using this difficult situation to touch other people's lives in powerful ways! When you have a giving spirit, you give God glory even in the really hard times of life as well as the good times! Amen? Amen! Once the video finishes, the praise band will lead us in a time of prayer and invitation. If you would like to come and kneel at this altar to pray you are welcome to do so. If you want to come to the back and pray with me or one of our counselors, feel free to do so! Turn your attention to the screen...