

1010

for

Week Three

OPEN HANDS

Sacrificial Giving



WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

This weekend is the third of a three-week stewardship emphasis titled *Ten for Ten*. In this worship series, we are looking at the daily struggle we all face when two paths are set before us, one by God and the other by this world. Shall we live for this life or the life that is to come? One very obvious way that struggle manifests itself is when we plan our finances.



Sometimes Christians will object, “The pastor talks too much about money!” Their quarrel isn’t really with the pastor, but with their Creator. The Lord speaks to us about worldly wealth and possessions over 2,300 times in his Word. Two weeks ago, we heard that the Lord asks, without apology, to be first in our hearts. The Lord’s position in our heart is to be reflected in our *firstfruits* giving. Last week, we considered the matter of *proportional* giving. What percentage of the Lord’s blessings do we really need to live on? This week, our series concludes by examining what God has to say about *sacrificial* giving.

Adding these three themes together, we see that people will invariably give *beneath their ability* when they fail to put the Bible’s teaching on firstfruits and proportionate giving into practice. Others give *at their ability*. This happens when people, confident in God’s blessing, prayerfully and thoughtfully practice firstfruits and proportional giving. Finally, one can even give *beyond their ability*. That’s the case when God’s people step out in faith and give in a way that, humanly speaking, doesn’t add up. Scripture tells us of people who, even in their poverty, opened up their hands and gave *beyond their ability*. They gave sacrificially, not superficially. How could they do this? They simply trusted in God’s unlimited ability to care for them.

These biblical accounts of *sacrificial* giving are another one of God’s blessings to us. May we hear them, be inspired by them, and—as God gives us opportunity—make them our own story!

Our worth is taking us on this path:

Week One: OPEN HEARTS (Firstfruits Giving)
Week Two: OPEN MINDS (Proportionate Giving)
Week Three: OPEN HANDS (Sacrificial Giving)

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Gracious God, all that I have comes from you: my body and mind, my strength and intelligence, my time and abilities, my energy and possessions. Guard me from the temptation to use these gifts only for my personal benefit. Make me willing to use them joyfully and sacrificially in service to you and to your people. Amen.

ORDER OF SERVICE

OPENING HYMN

Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly | CW484:1,2

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

DIALOGUE

M: The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

C: **Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.**

M: Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

C: **Follow God's example as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love.**

M: Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

C: **You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you.**

Psalm 24:1; Psalm 57:5; Ephesians 5:1,2; Hebrews 9:2 8; Psalm 118:28

The rite of Holy Baptism may take place here.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

M: Lord God, heavenly Father, we humbly come before you today knowing that we have failed to speak lovingly, think purely, or act rightly. We have sinned against you and against others...

...in wasting the precious time you give us.

C: **...in our slowness and hesitancy to spread your Gospel.**

M: ...in the faithful care of our relationships.

C: **...in our restless and relentless preoccupation with worldly wealth.**

M: ...in caring for the bodies and minds you have given us.

C: **...in our refusal to make you our first priority.**

Silence for personal reflection

M: Hear our confession, for we have sinned and are in need of your mercy and forgiveness.

**C: Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,
For sins of habit and sins of choice,
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,
You should cast me away from your presence forever.
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me for Jesus' sake.**

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord!

1 Al - might - y Fa - ther, heav'n and earth
5 O Fa - ther, whence all bless - ings come,
With lav - ish wealth be - fore you bow;
O Son, Dis - pens - er of God's store,
Those trea - sures owe to you their birth,
O Spir - it, bear our of - f'ings home—
So rich - ly fur - nished for us now.
Lord, make them yours for - ev - er - more!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

M: O Lord, giver of life and source of all love, we know that all we have received comes from your gracious hand. You call us to be stewards of your bounty, the caretakers of all you have entrusted to us. Help us to always use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously. Send your Holy Spirit to work through us, that many more might come to know the saving riches of your Son. May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the love of your Son in our hearts. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

C: Amen.

LESSON

2 Corinthians 8:1-9

St. Paul tells us of the Macedonians who, moved by the grace of Jesus Christ, gave sacrificially.

¹And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷But 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.

⁸I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹For 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.

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 73

Page 94 in *Christian Worship*

GOSPEL

Mark 12:41-44

Jesus commends the confident faith of a widow, faith made evident in her sacrificial giving.

⁴¹ Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. ⁴² But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

⁴³ Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

CONFESSION OF FAITH

First Article of the Apostle’s Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean?

I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my mind and all my abilities. And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Lord, You Love the Cheerful Giver | **CW489**

SERMON

Should Jesus Really Be Watching My Wealth?

OFFERING

OFFERING PRAYER

Lord of All Good | CW483:3

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Gracious God, giver of all we have and hold as stewards, grant the people of this church a deep and abiding awareness that all things come from you—our health, our incomes, our jobs, our talents and our generous impulse.

C: Send your Holy Spirit to empower us as we swim against the rising tides of materialism, envy, individualism and greed in our culture.

M: When we are tempted to think of money as a private matter, remind us that you have asked for a portion of our income to be returned to you as a symbol of our awareness that all we have has been given by you, and as a sign of our trust that you will continue to provide.

C: Help us in this grace of giving, for you are the lover of our souls.

M: Most Holy Spirit, you breathed life into humanity and gave us various gifts and talents that we might use them for your glory and the common good.

C: Help us to give ourselves to the well-being of others, just as Christ gave himself for our well-being, even unto the cross.

M: Savior Jesus, you gave your disciples the responsibility of taking your gospel to the ends of the earth. Make our congregation generous in the support of missionaries who preach the good news on our behalf in those places we cannot go.

C: Guard them and their families with your holy angels, and bless their labors as it pleases you.

Special prayers and petitions may be offered here.

M: Lord Jesus, we pray in your name, and as you taught.

LORD'S PRAYER

C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Holy Communion may be celebrated here. If so, the presiding minister will direct the congregation to the appropriate pages of Christian Worship or Christian Worship Supplement.

BIBLE STUDY: Sacrificial Giving

I. INTRODUCTION

A quick review of where we have been the last two weeks:

Firstfruits giving: Giving is a key _____ because I love and trust God.

Proportional giving: Stewardship includes prayerfully considering how much of God's money I need to _____.

This week we turn our attention to *sacrificial* giving, which is giving in a way that, to human reason, seems to be beyond ones means. It is giving *beyond one's regular firstfruits, proportional giving*. The cynical sinner in us would love to write off the topic of sacrificial giving as an exercise in "getting blood from a turnip." Yet, when we look at Scripture, we see that sacrificial gifts were never made under compulsion, but out of cheer; never out of fear, but out of faith; never out of obligation, but because there was an opportunity provided by God's providence.

Ironically, Americans are accustomed to *living* beyond their means. The average U.S. household is carrying over \$7,000 in credit card debt. Add to that an average household debt of \$28,000 for cars and another \$48,000 for student loans. So, we live beyond our income, assuming we will be able to handle that debt in the future. Yet, God has not promised us the next paycheck. Nowhere in Scripture does God promise the college graduate a high-paying job. There are exactly zero divine promises that would encourage us to be comfortable *living* beyond our means. But what about *giving* in a way that seems beyond our means?

Malachi 3:10

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

? What promise does the LORD give to the children of Israel there?

Let us look at how our generous God empowers his children to imitate his generosity through sacrificial giving.

II. GOD ENABLES PEOPLE TO DO AMAZING THINGS

Matthew 20:21

Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done.

Romans 10:17

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

- ? In Matthew 20, Jesus teaches us that if it was God’s will that a mountain would throw itself into the sea, we should have faith that mountain will obey our command. Obviously, it is *not* God’s will that mountains jump into the sea. It *is* his will that his children give generous offerings. Combine that with God’s promise in Romans 10:17. Together, we have heard God’s message on these important stewardship topics. Therefore, of what can we be confident?

John 15:5

Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

- ? Notice Jesus doesn’t say that if we remain in him we *should* bear much fruit or we *might* bear much fruit. He says we *will*. How can he speak so confidently?

The Point?

God is neither _____ nor a _____. If he asks us to do things that are impossible, he then gives us the _____ to do that which he has asked.

When Jesus told Peter “Come!” he was asking Peter to do that which is impossible—walking on water. But the word of Christ gave Peter the ability to do the impossible. While Peter’s faith fixed itself upon the promise, he was able to do the unthinkable. “*Apart from me you can do nothing.*” It is only when Peter took his eyes off Jesus and looked at his situation that he sank. We are *the family of the Father* who are filled with *faith*. When our God asks us to do something, we can trust he will give us the ability to do what he has asked. That is true when it comes to giving. Some examples...

The Widow Who Didn't Have Two Dimes to Rub Together

Mark 12:41-44

⁴¹ Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. ⁴² But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

⁴³ Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Amazing things we see:

- The widow gave _____ % of what she had.
- In God's ledger book, a fraction of a _____ can be more than thousands of dollars.
- Jesus is _____ what people give.

Poor As Dirt, Yet Serving the Saints

2 Corinthians 8:2-4

² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.

? Circle the best answer. For the Macedonian churches, giving was:

- a. like pulling teeth.
- b. something that they might find some use for.
- c. a privilege they pleaded for.

Circle the best answer. When it came to the amount of their gifts:

- a. It was just enough to keep Pastor Paul from sending a member of the Stewardship Committee to their homes.
- b. It was pretty respectable considering they didn't have much.
- c. It was shocking because God blessed them "to give even beyond their ability."

The Point?

**Giving is not a _____ of the rich, but a
_____ for the poor.
When it comes to giving, the _____, not the
_____, is what counts in God's sight.**

III. PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

- _____ *giving* teaches that giving to God comes first, because we are to *fear, love, and trust in him above all things*.
- _____ *giving* teaches that we give to God a pre-determined percentage of our wealth. Tithing, or giving ten percent, has served as a biblical benchmark for proportionate giving.
- _____ *giving* teaches that we may, in joy, give over and above our regular, proportional gifts.

Questions to Prayerfully Consider This Week

- As I produce our ten-week giving plan, how will I demonstrate that God comes first? What is the Spirit empowering me to produce in the way of firstfruits giving?
- What is the proportion of my income the Spirit will enable me to return to God over the next ten weeks? How much of God's blessings do I need to keep for myself to live and have a satisfying life? How much does he allow me to give back?
- How will Christ's sacrifice and his promises enable me to be sacrificial in my giving?

IV. NEWS AND NOTES

- Next weekend your commitment cards will be gathered during the offering.
- One last reminder: Your commitment cards will not be opened. They will be placed near the altar for ten weeks and then returned to you unopened for your prayerful reflection.
- Please do not place offerings in your *10 for 10* commitment envelopes. The only thing that goes in that envelope is your giving plan.
- Additional devotional material has been/will be shared. Read. Ponder. Pray.
- Throughout the ten weeks of *10 for 10*, we will receive additional encouragements from God's Word. Why? *"If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit."*

THE BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace.
Live in harmony with one another.
Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give ☩ you peace.

C: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us | CW486:1-2

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