



GRACE GIVING

MATTHEW 6:24

Did you hear about the Israeli woman who used her bed for a bank? Evidently she had some bad experiences with banks so she decided to deposit her money in her mattress.

Well, her thoughtful daughter decided to replace her mother's bedding, which the mother thought was wonderful. However, the next morning she woke up to the realization that all of her money in the world went out in the trash early that morning.

Did you know that Jesus Christ said more about money than he did about heaven and hell combined. He said more about money than any other single topic. Surprised?

In fact the entire Word of God has a lot to say about what we do with our wealth. You say, "But I'm not wealthy." Yes you are compared to much of the rest of the world.

God wants us to know what He says in His Word about our resources and how to handle them. Why? Obviously God doesn't need our money. He's not poor. But God does want us to become like Him. And that will only happen if we learn to be generous.

1. Giving is a priority of Scripture

Generosity begins with God—For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son—giving is a priority of Scripture. God is concerned that Christians have the same attitude.

Many people in the world today are prisoners behind bars of their own choosing. Jesus said in Matt. 6:24 (NIV) No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

According to Jesus, there is a fundamental connection between our spiritual life and our attitude about money and possessions. In fact our attitude about money and possessions is often a barometer of where we stand in our walk with the Lord.

Here's a little test: when you know the preacher is going to talk about money and giving, how

do you feel? Do you squirm a bit; are you uncomfortable; believe that talking about money is not spiritual; and so on?

Let me help you out here-- Jesus was not a fund raiser, but he dealt with money matters because money matters.

There is Only Three Ways to Invest in Eternity:

God has given us only three ways on this earth to invest in eternity. Talking about two of them is okay, even expected.

(1) Time

The first way we invest in eternity is by what we do with our time. Time is an irretrievable value in our life that can only be spent once and never captured again.

(2) Talents

The second way we invest in eternity is with our talents and spiritual gifts. These help the church body to function well and efficiently, and God expects us to use them for His kingdom. You expect me to preach about time and talents.

(3) Treasure

But when the preacher announces that he's going to preach about your money and treasure many of us think that's getting too personal.

When I preach about money and giving I'm just being true to God's word. The word "give" is used more than 1500 times in the Bible, more than the words faith, hope, love or prayer.

By perspective stewardship is one of the most important subjects in the Word of God. For instance, there are 40 verses concerning baptism; about 500 on prayer; faith 500; love 650; and 2,350 verses about finances, wealth and possessions.

If you were to cut out every section of the New Testament that refers to money or wealth, the binding of your Bible would fall apart. If it matters to God, it should matter to us.

2. Giving is response to God's grace

2 Cor. 8:9 (NIV) For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Last week we learned that grace simply means free or undeserved favor. It is a beautiful word from the Greek charis. We owe our salvation to the charis of God. The church owes its existence to the charis of God.

Grace takes on incredible meaning when we transfer it into the realm of giving back to God. It is a whole different mentality when we understand that giving to God is because of Him giving to us. This is grace giving.

Grace giving becomes an exhilarating activity that fills you with joy. We've received God's grace! In turn we become cheerful givers.

We become channels of God's grace. But it's more than being just a channel—we become the overflow of His grace in our lives. God wants us to be gracious givers just as He is.

The very idea of grace is “gift”—freely given with no expectations. Think of synonyms for “gift”: present, bequest, endowment, grant, favor, boon, benefaction, bonus, largess, and so on.

These are all pictures of the grace of God given to us in salvation. This is what God wants us to be—grace givers.

(1) Grace giving is sacrificial

God gave to us through the sacrifice of His own Son. When you understand the grace of what Jesus did for you, you don't resist giving—you pursue it. You look for opportunities to give.

Even bad circumstances don't keep you from giving. Some say, “When I get it all together I'll start giving.” Be honest now, we don't really ever get it all together, do we?

(2) Grace giving is spontaneous

Grace giving is never given out of obligation. There are many motives for giving: Some give because the general good of the church is at stake. Some give out of pressure from the other members.

Some give out of embarrassment, some out of pride (Ananias and Sapphira-Acts 5:1-4). Some give out of pity or for social approval, or looking for a tax write off.

Some give expecting rewards from God. Some give out of simple loyalty to their church. Others give out of fear—they are afraid not to. Some feel guilty and are trying to salve their conscience.

There are any numbers of reasons that people give. But the motivation that pleases God is the

spontaneous giving out of thankfulness for His wonderful grace given to you.

Don't give grudgingly, but cheerfully, with great joy (2 Cor. 9:7). If we give out of duty, we miss the whole purpose of grace giving.

Giving is one of the most wonderful privileges we have in all the world. We are most like God when we are giving. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

(3) Grace giving is spiritual

Grace giving is an act of worship. Remember the Macedonians? They gave themselves first to God (2 Cor. 8:5). Grace giving is giving 100% of yourself to God.

It's not about how much of what I own will I give to God. It's about how much of me have I given to God. Grace giving is not paying your dues like into a service club or fraternity.

Though that might be easier—just tell me how much I owe and I can pay the Lord just as I pay the bills. No, grace giving is an act of worship. It's giving your time, energy, talents and what you own to God.

When the offering is taken during each worship service, it should be a time of worship for you. Your tithe and offerings should be a pure gift to God in thankfulness for what you have already received. It should be an exciting and worshipful time.

(4) Grace giving is sincere

I'm afraid there's so much playing games with God. I'm afraid that some of us put our money in the offering plate with the attitude of, "There God, now you've got it. Do you feel better?"

Well, I'm obligated to tell you that God doesn't need anything you have. He doesn't need a dime of your money. What's at stake here is your own spiritual welfare.

You have a right to keep what you have all to yourself. But I'm also obligated to tell you that when money and things is your god, ultimately it will rust, decay, and destroy you.

That's Jesus' whole point in Matt. 6:24 when he says that we cannot serve both God and Money. If you are controlled by your money, it will destroy you.

God is not going to merely judge us on the basis of what we gave but also on the basis of what we did with what we kept for ourselves.

What you give and what you keep is all God. When you give do it out of love for Jesus and his

church, out of thankfulness for your salvation, and out of a sincere desire to be obedient to him.

Application:

The critical issue is the attitude of our heart. God cares about the amount of love and grace that's in your heart. Be faithful with what you have. Learn to be a grace giver. God certainly gave His grace to you.