**Calvary Fellowship 5.22.2022 Matthew 6:1-4 “When You Give”**

* **So 6 years ago my son had to get a tooth pulled (he was 7 at the time)**
* He loves telling the story b/c the dentist said he was braver than most of the teenagers who drive themselves in for procedures
* When they had finished pulling the tooth, he asked if he could have the tooth
* So she put it in a bag and gave it to him & asked "Xander, why do U want it?"
* He said, "It doesn't matter how the tooth comes out. If it's out, I get money."
* "B/c the tooth fairy that comes at our house is a big hairy man."
* So we drive to Orlando that afternoon he got the tooth pulled & he takes the tooth with him b/c he wants to put it under his pillow when he gets to the hotel
* So while we're driving, Mia asks Xander why he brought his tooth
* He says, "B/c I want to put the tooth under my pillow & the tooth fairy can give me money." - Mia says, "Xander, the Tooth Fairy isn't real."
* Xander says, "I know, but dad doesn't know that."
* Mia says, "Of course dad knows the tooth fairy isn't real."
* Xander says, "I know that dad knows. Dad doesn't know that we know. And if the big hairy man finds out, then we are out of business."
* There's something wrong in the parent/ child relationship when your kids refer to U as the big hairy man & there's another problem when losing teeth is seen as a business venture built on deception that all of your kids are in on
* **For my kids, money is serious business & it’s serious for U too**
* Now, here’ s what I know about U b/c the same thing is true for me as well
* U weren’t given any type of financial education in school - U were taught helpful things like Algebra & Trigonometry - things that U use everyday as an adult
* I also know that your parents probably didn’t teach U anything about money when U were growing up - why?B/c they wren’t taught anything by their parents
* And here’s where that lack of education has gotten us - to a place where we’ve made a lot of unwise financial decisions
* **But here’s the thing we’re going to learn today - that Jesus expects believers to give - it’s absolutely basic Christianity to be generous**
* Here’s the problem - and I can tell b/c some of U just got really nervous
* Don’t worry - we don’t do shakedowns here - we don’t even pass a plate
* But what happens in church is that the church historically has gotten a bad reputation when it comes to giving & some of that it rightfully earned
* Pastors and teachers have been saying lots of things about giving that simply aren’t true - so before we even get into this issue, I want to dispel the myths
* **#1 - Giving is Not a Get Rich Quick Scheme** - anybody who tells U that is lying to U - there’s no promise in the Bible that God makes every person who gives rich - God blesses people who give, but that’s not the same thing
* God promises to meet your needs, but that’s not the same thing
* Giving is a statement of faith - it’s a very tangible way that we show that God is 1st in our lives
* “The purpose of tithing is to teach you to always put God first in your life.” (Deutoronomy 14:23)
* Tithing - if U aren’t aware, is the ancient practice of giving the 1st 10% of your income back to God for the purposes of the Kingdom of God
* More on that later, but there’s no promise you’re going be filthy rich if U give
* **#2 - Giving is Not How You Get God to Love You -** Listen, God loved U before U were even a Christian - He has always & will always love U
* Giving doesn’t get anyone to heaven any faster - in fact, spending eternity w/ God isn’t about giving - it’s about Jesus, who loves U & died for U
* U go to heaven b/c of Jesus not b/c of giving
* **And let me say this b/c I know there’s people who are thinking, “Here we go - this is where Pastor Bob does the shakedown.”**
* Good news is, there’s no shakedown - so relax - in fact, I haven’t taught on giving in more than 3 years - that’s way too long
* Some of us need to be taught God’s principle for giving & others of us need to be reminded about what God has to say
* But here’s what I know - people who are givers love when I talk about giving
* Why? B/c giving has been such a huge blessing in their lives
* And people who aren’t Christians aren’t upset when a pastor talks about giving b/c they know it costs money to keep the lights on & do ministry
* I’ve learned that the only people who Harte messages on giving are disobedient Christians who don’t want to be convicted of their failures in the area
* **#3 - Giving is About Inviting God into Your Financial World** - when I obey God’s financial principles, I invite God to work in my financial world
* Let me explain it another way - let’s say a girl starts dating a guy - he’s not a Christian - they start having sex & they live together before they’re married
* And things are rocky in the relationship (which by the way, statistically, 1 of the worst things U can do is live together - people who live together are twice as likely to get divorced) - but what if that person says, “Why isn’t God blessing my relationship?” - what’s the answer?
* The answer is, “U haven’t invited God into your relational world b/c U aren’t following God’s principles for relationships”
* This is what I’m saying when I say that giving invites God into your financial world b/c you’re trusting Him every time U give
* **But as we get into this section the sermon on the mount, Jesus has been building a case about what real faith looks like**
* And He starts by talking about the thing that we like talking about least - money
* And He’s going to challenge us that our faith is seen in every area of our lives & that includes our giving…

**———(v. 1-2)———**

**#1 - Giving is Part of My Private Devotion**

* **Notice that Jesus says in these verses “when U give”, not “if U give”**
* Giving is 1 of the disciplines we do as Christians that disentangle us from building our own kingdoms & put God’s kingdom 1st
* Now, the theme of this section of the sermon on the mount is found in verse 1
* That we should not do our righteous acts publicly to be seen by people
* And Jesus is going to talk about giving, praying, & fasting all under this theme of doing things in secret so your heavenly father can reward U openly
* **According to the Mishna (which is like rabbis commentary on the OT), there was a place in the Temple called the Chamber of Secrets**
* I know U thought the Chamber of Secrets was found by Harry Potter - it wasn’t
* The chamber of the secret is where you’d give gifts – it was out of the way so no 1 would see U - it was a private place for U to honor God & help people
* Inside this place there was a chest shaped like a trumpet where you’d drop your gifts in – then those who were in need would go inside to receive help
* But the religious leaders who Jesus called hypocrites said, “It’s not practical to make people go all the way up to the temple to get help” - there’s no photo op
* So they armed themselves w/ a silver trumpet & when they wanted to give to the poor, they would sound the trumpet & all the poor would rather around
* Remember hearing this song as a kid ----Ice Cream truck music--- you ran from wherever you were screaming, “Ice Cream Man!!!!!
* That’s what the poor did when Pharisees would sound the trumpet - Pharisees!
* The poor would show up for help & others would say, “What a generous man!”
* This wasn’t real generosity - real generosity is when we want to give b/c know God is doing to use our giving to bless someone’s & further God’s Kingdom
* This was about attention & it robbed them of the blessing of being used by God
* **So let’s ask this question - why does God care about us being generous?**
* B/c God knows that generous people have way more joy than greedy people
* The problem is, most of us don’t think of ourselves as greedy
* But if we have organized our lives so that we spend everything we have on ourselves, it’s pretty difficult to all that generous living
* “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Acts 20:35)
* **The other day my wife & were driving down Pines Blvd by Whole Foods & she says, “Do U remember when U saved me when I got a flat tire?”**
* I said, “Oh yeah. I do remember that.” - She said, “I’ll never forget that”
* **So a couple of years ago my wife calls me & tells me she got a flat tire on Pines right in front of Whole Foods - which I thought was a sign from God**
* So I hop in my car & meet her & b/c we called a guy is come & plug the tire
* When I get there, I see the thing that Carey ran over - the tire was destroyed
* So I told Carey to take my car & I’d handle the tire change & bringing it to the tire place to replace it - I was the hero of my home that day & to this day
* And it brought me so much joy to do for her - Now, I’ve changed a lot of my own tires in my life - in fact, when we were building this building, I blew out a tire almost every month b/c of all the debris from construction & repairing my own tire never brought me any joy
* But doing the same act for someone I love, brought me tremendous joy b/c it’s more blessed to give than it is to receive
* The most famous verse in the Bible says that God so loved the world that He gave…we are never more like God than when we’re giving & being generous

**———(v. 3)———**

**#2 - Giving is Part of My Public Declaration**

* **When a person becomes a giver, they are making a declaration of their faith & trust in the Lord over anything else**
* And b/c our natural tendency is to trust in money, whenever we give, it proves our trust in God above anything else
* **We were at the movies a while back & we all got snacks - when I say we got sncks, that means I got snacks at Walgreens & smuggled the candy in**
* I did buy popcorn & a soda just to keep it real with the theater - that was $95
* So Livi & I are sitting next to each other & she gets M&M’s & I get Twizzlers & we ready to enjoy the movie
* So we’re into the movie & I ask Livi if I can have a few M&M’s & she says no
* I say, “Excuse me.” - She says, No. They’re mine.” - I say, “Listen, I bought them for U, so fork a few over.” - She still refuses
* She doesn’t realize that I have the ability to rain down thousands of M&M’s if I wanted to - so I reached in my pocket & pulled out the Reese’s Pieces box
* And she says, “Can I have some?” - And I’m like, “What U talking about Willis?”
* But this is what we do - we don’t give & for some of us, we’ve heard messages on giving before - but there’s a fear & lack of trust we haven’t gotten over
* **Now, let’s understand what it means to give - the Bible talks about 3 types of giving every believer can engage in: tithes, offerings, & alms**
* **#1 - Tithing** - that’s when we return to God the 1st 10% of our income
* In OT times, the tithe went to the temple - to the place where U grew spiritually
* In our case, that’s the church - if Calvary is your home church, then it’s here
* That’s where the tithe goes - nowhere else except your local church
* **#2 - Offerings** - this is where we have freedom to give wherever God leads us to give - if there’s a missionary U want to support, a ministry that’s doing good work, or another charitable cause U believe in
* But this is above & beyond the tithe - Carey & I support missionary work & we give to other causes that are important to us, but that’s after we tithe here 1st
* **#3 - Alms -** This is when U help the poor or someone in need
* So if U have a family member in need & U help them out financially, that’s alms
* I’ve had people say to me, “I tithe by helping out my mom or my brother.”
* Listen, that’s good to do & it’s important to help your family - but it’s not tithing
* Even if your brother’s name is Jesus, it’s not tithing
* The tithe is mandatory - the other 2 are optional - my hope for U is that U would be so faithful in tithing that God blesses U so U can be generous in the other 2
* **Jesus says, “Don’t let your left hand know what your right hand it doing”**
* His point is that our giving shouldn’t be a show - but He doesn’t say, “What your right hand might do or could do or wish it would do” - it’s doing it
* In Jesus’ culture, everyone was doing all 3 of these types of giving & the only way they could is if they made it a priority
* Now, this is where many of us would say, “Well, that was a different culture”
* And yes it was - they were overworked & overtaxed - in fact, some scholars estimate that people in the Roman world were taxes up to 90%
* So let’s not get it twisted & think we can drive in to church in 1 of our $40,000 cars & have a $700 cell phone in our pocket & say we can’t be generous
* **Here’s some of the realities that are happening in our church**
* There are about 2,500 families who attend here on a semi-regular basis
* 1,995 people have given zero to the work of God’s Kingdom at Calvary this year
* There are 456 people that give somewhere between $1.00 - $1,900
* The median household income w/in a 3 mile radius of our church is $110,000
* The poverty level is $24,000 - so it shows most of us aren’t tithing - we’re tipping God at best, even though we owe Him everything
* The number of people actually giving something that looks like a tithe? 72
* That’s not percent - that’s families - and that’s not going to cut it
* **When we shut down in 2020, giving in this church dropped by 35%**
* So we dipped into our savings & we cut everything we could cut
* Then we reopened & the giving hadn’t really bounced back & I was hesitant to make a big deal about it b/c I thought some people might be struggling
* But that hasn’t really been the case - it’s just been an issue of wrong priorities
* And then we wonder why God isn’t blessing our financial world - it’s b/c we aren’t listening to Him - we’ve taken what’s supposed to go to God’s Kingdom & we spent it over at the Magic Kingdom - and it’s not wise
* **We all enjoy the ministries here - some of U have met or will someday meet w/ 1 of our Pastors for counseling & U won’t be charged anything**
* Why? B/c counseling people is part of the ministry of this church
* Many of U bring your kids to our children’s ministry every Sunday
* Even though it’s 100 times better than the day care U leave your kids at Mon-Fri, there’s no charge - why? B/c teaching kids the Word of God is what we do
* Many of your teenagers are in our youth ministry & we aren’t charging admission - why? B/c it’s the ministry of our church to teach them God’s Word
* **Guess what? This facility isn’t free - And no other church, no rich uncle, no grant by the king of England is funding this church**
* God provides for us as God’s people are faithful to give
* Listen - this building fills up twice on Sunday & I had to put the brakes on the plans for the next building
* The city has approved the building plans - we have a contractor lined up
* But the finances aren’t there to take the next step forward
* We can’t next step into the phase if we haven’t been faithful paying for this 1
* In Deut. 26, Moses had this conversation w/ the people just before they took possession of the promised land - so it’s an appropriate conversation for us
* Can I be honest? It hurts my heart that some of U don’t trust God - It hurts me that many of U have forgotten the blessing of giving & the blessed life it gives
* “Is it right for you to be living in fancy houses while the Temple is still in ruins?" This is what the Lord All-Powerful says: "Think about what you have done. You have planted much, but you harvest little. You eat, but you do not become full. You drink, but you are still thirsty. You put on clothes, but you are not warm enough. You earn money, but then you lose it all as if you had put it into a purse full of holes.” (Haggai 1:4-6)
* **This is what happens when U don’t tithe - God makes things hard**
* It’s not b/c He’s spiteful & He’s trying to get us back - instead, it’s b/c He loves us & He wants to draw us back
* And He knows that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also
* **This issue of tithing is the reason people don’t experience the blessed life**
* This is where U invite God into your financial world & when U do, He does more than U ever could on your own

**———(v. 4)———**

**#3 - Giving is Part of Pleasing God**

* **This is a beautiful promise - that God who sees what we do in secret will reward us openly - that there’s a blessing attached to giving the right way**
* And listen, I get it - some of U don’t like this message - I’m ok w/ that b/c sometimes we don’t like things at first that we need to hear
* A friend of mine taught a message on giving & a woman was very upset after the service she came up to him & said, “Pastors, after a message like that if U were my husband I’d put poison in your coffee.”
* He said, “Ma'am, if U were your husband I’d drink it.”
* “The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller. The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped.” (Proverbs 11:24-25)
* **So how can we begin the journey of generosity or take a next step in the journey of living generously? Here are 3 ways…**
* **#1 - Become a Priority Giver - That means give to God before anyone else**
* You can only do 5 things w/ $ - spend it, taxes, repay debt, save it, or give it
* We usually do it in that order – Spend it on what we want/ Give Uncle Sam his cut/ give Visa minimum, save what we can & think, “God, I wish I had more.”
* Priority giver says, “God, U are 1st in my life & I’m giving to U 1st b/c I trust U”
* **#2 - Become a Percentage Giver - Become a believer who tithes**
* I wish I could do this for U b/c you’d see God to do the miraculous in your life
* You’d see God make tires last longer, vacations cost cheaper, homes sell quicker, & jobs pay more
* But that begins when we put God 1st & give the 1st 10% that belongs to Him
* **I know for some of us that sounds impossible - it’s not - U may need help getting there - that’s why I want U to attend Financial Peace University**
* This is a course designed to help U get your financial world in order
* Some of U are thinking, “I can figure it out myself. It’s ok. Everyone has debt.”
* Listen - financial management is no taught in school - most of us were not taught how to deal w/ financial issues by our parents
* So I’m asking U to not be too proud to get educated - this course is taught by Dave Ramsey & covers everything on finances A-Z
* **#3 - Become a Progressive Giver - This means we try to give more this year than we did last year**
* I was challenged by this several years ago when I realized that % wise, we were giving the same 10% were had for years
* God challenged Carey & I to step it up a notch - We decided that every year we want to give more than the year before - so 10% became 11% & 12%
* This might mean that after you give God the tithe, U want to support a cause that you’re passionate about - maybe it’s a missionary or sponsoring a child
* **Be a person who is marked by generosity b/c that is 1 of the hallmarks of a Christian - we should be known by our love for all & our generosity**
* Listen - some of U are suffering right now in your life & in your marriage b/c of financial pressure - it’s time to be free of the pressure
* It’s time to trust God in every area of your life & then U watch how God honors your decision to trust Him…