

Operation Cultivate

Luke Series Slide

Luke- Pillars- Open Hands

Ben Rector- Range Rover

**I'm looking for a girl that's fine
If I drive a Civic and she does not mind
Riding in it with the windows down
Cranking Steve Winwood loud, next to me
I'm looking for a girl who sees
Past blown speakers and a broke A.C
And a two-seater with a
Quarter a million miles on the motor
And she was looking for that Range Rover**

There are 2 basic reasons that I do things I don't want to do. One reason is because I know its good for me.

Like- Nobody gets a dopamine rush from brushing teeth....but we all do it because we know. It has benefits like better breath, fewer dental bills, and a sparkling smile.

So we brush our teeth as a part of a twice a day ritual. Most of us don't even think about it, we just do it because a long time ago we decided "This is good for me."

The second reason we do things we don't like is because we think its good for society.

Take picking up trash for example. I have this moral responsibility whenever I pass by a piece of trash on the sidewalk- Because I know- man- I owe this to my city, to my fellow man- to pick this up.

So- we do some things that don't necessarily make us feel good because we think "This is good for our society."

Now, think about giving away money. Generosity.

I think most of us would put that in the 2nd category.

We think- “I need to give money because this is good for society. I have something that someone else needs- so I’ll take the hit and give some money for this charity, or church, or buy this Smart card from this kid because it's a help to a local school.”

So to summarize- we think Generosity is mainly about helping others. It's a hit we take to ourselves for the betterment of our society.

Science disagrees.

Social Science research has revealed that generosity is firmly planted in the “Good for me” category- as much or more than the “Good for Society” category.

After a 5 year study in the early 2010’s, Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson wrote the book “Paradox of Generosity: Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose”. This is not a Christian Book. Its not written by pastors. Its written by PhD researchers with on the faculty of Notre Dame, with Phds from Harvard.

In the book, they release their research that clearly shows-

Giving is actually very good for you. Intentional and regular practices of generosity are associated with the release of oxytocin, dopamine, and endorphins. (The same stuff that happens when you exercise or have a really good laugh).

Generosity is strongly associated with a sense of purpose in life, personal happiness, emotional, and physical health.

Giving money away lights up the same part of the brain that goes off when you win the lottery or get a raise.

On the opposite side of the coin, if you don’t give your money away- its bad for you.

People that don’t give money away regularly have been found to have higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which links to headaches, stroke, and depression.

Additionally, if you live ungenerously you may struggle with pain management, body temperature regulation, blood pressure, and the ability to control your fears.

Basically- being greedy is bad for your health.

Here is Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson, authors of the “Paradox of Generosity”- which is the book that came out of

“Americans who do not give away 10 percent of their income run the significant risk of ending up less happy than they might have otherwise been. In fact, as a group they are less happy. So, whatever Americans lose by giving away 10 percent of their income is offset by the greater likelihood of being happier in life...Rather than leaving generous people on the short end of an unequal bargain, practices of generosity are actually likely instead to provide generous givers with essential goods in life- happiness, health, and purpose- which money and time simply cannot buy. That is an empirical fact worth knowing.”- Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson, The Paradox of Generosity: Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose

Pic 1- Pie Graph

Results of that 5 year study found that only 2.7% of Americans gave away at least 10% of their income

Pic 2- Bar Graph

and that over 86% of Americans gave either NOTHING away or less than 2% of their annual income.

In other words- most Americans either don't understand how important giving is to their own well being-... or more likely- they just don't believe it. We believe grasping money is more important to a good life than giving it.

That might be inspiration for you to write a \$1000 check to a charity or do some random act of kindness.

Except that in the 5 year study- another thing turned up. These benefits don't apply to random acts of kindness. Being nice and smiling at strangers is not enough. Giving away money in your will or giving blood at the blood drive when your company holds one does not bring a sustainable benefit to your life.

This kind of soul-soothing generosity has to be integrated into your lifestyle on a regular basis- and it has to be done out of an attitude of joy and abundance- in other words- you have to be a regularly planned cheerful giver.

Like Winston Churchill said-

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.” - Winston Churchill

Or as Jesus put it

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” -- Acts 20:35

Title Slide- “Lookin’ for that Range Rover: The Grace & Grit of Generosity”- Luke 12:13-34

Today we are looking at Jesus’ teaching about generosity and money in Luke’s gospel.

Before anyone was running sociological studies on the the science of generosity, Jesus was already teaching people that a life lived with open hands to receive from God and give to others is a much better life.

13 Someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

14 “Friend,” he said to him, “who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you? ” 15 He then told them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions.”

16 Then he told them a parable: “A rich man’s land was very productive. 17 He thought to himself, ‘What should I do, since I don’t have anywhere to store my crops? 18 I will do this,’ he said. ‘I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there. 19 Then I’ll say to myself, “You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.” ’

20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared — whose will they be? ’

21 “That’s how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

22 Then he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat; or about the body, what you will wear. 23 For life

is more than food and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens: They don't sow or reap; they don't have a storeroom or a barn; yet God feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than the birds? 25 Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? 26 If then you're not able to do even a little thing, why worry about the rest?

27 "Consider how the wildflowers grow: They don't labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. 28 If that's how God clothes the grass, which is in the field today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will he do for you — you of little faith? 29 Don't strive for what you should eat and what you should drink, and don't be anxious. 30 For the Gentile world eagerly seeks all these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

31 "But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. 32 Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won't grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also

Transition:
Grace and Grit slide

1) When you close your hands around your money- it closes its grip on you.

V13

The scene here is actually kind of funny to me.

This guy in a crowd tattle-tells on his brother who won't share his Father's money with him.

This guy is LITERALLY banking on Jesus' sense of moral responsibility.

But Jesus says,

V 14-15

Hey buddy- I ain't your lawyer.

Then look what he says next- "Watch out! Be on guard against all greed."

Here's the implication. Greed is sneaky. You don't see it unless you are keen to watch for it.

Greed is so easy to justify. Because it can all sound so noble.

Isn't it good to save?

Isn't it good to provide for my family?

Shouldn't I enjoy the good gifts God has given me?

What if something terrible happens and I don't have enough money to cover it?

And all of those things are definitely things you should think about. For sure.

But Greed is Sneaky. It disguises itself in a whole host of excuses that center themselves around entitlement (I've earned this) and fear (I might not have enough).

Then Jesus tells this story about a rich man who has a great crop production.

V17

The man's first instinct is I should store my excess.

Instead of "I should share this- its I should store this"

V19

Then in all the man's introspection (he's talking to himself a lot in this short parable- he's taking to his soul)- he never once considers that

maybe he has been blessed to be a blessing.

He never considers that maybe he should give it away.

V20

God calls this rich man foolish....

Because he thought he was entitled to a life of ease because he had worked so hard to attain it.

V21

Then Jesus tells these fighting brothers and everyone standing within earshot "That's how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

What does he mean? WHAT is how it is?

Well, it means that to store up treasures for yourself in an act of entitlement (I earned this and after my earning I am entitled to a life of ease that money and possessions allow me)- that attitude is contrary to the Kingdom of God.

In fact- it can be so consuming, so distracting- that we forget about God- and our soul- altogether. In such a way that we not only lose our possessions when we die- but we also lose God.

Now lets think about the water we swim in everyday.

This is the intended outcome of the American Dream.

Work hard enough with a little luck, and then make enough to store up for retirement so you can live an unbothered life of ease and self-focus.

According to Jesus- if you have bought that dream- You aren't holding money- money has got you by the spiritual throat!

V20

And You need to hear Jesus say again- “You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you, And the things you have prepared- whose will they be?”

Now look at what Jesus turns and says to his disciples

V22

Notice, he goes from addressing high-rollers who are trying to live a life of ease- to people scraping together a daily living.

V29

But he says- there is still a way that Money can have you- even if you don't have money.

That word is ANXIETY .

Jesus rebukes ANXIETY over money.

Why?

Because anxiety over money fails to consider God as the owner of everything- and God as the one who supplies the birds and the flowers with all they need to flourish- and he loves you a lot more than birds and flowers.

In other words- anxiety that comes from not having enough money is rooted in a distrust of God's love for you.

V30

Anxiety sends you on quest- seeking out what you think will solve your problem- that is having money.

But Jesus says- you are approaching this the wrong way- you will never find anxiety's antidote in money. Only in God's love.

V31

If you seek money to cure your anxiety over money- it just sends you on a never ending cycle of more anxiety.

Rather- you should seek the Kingdom of God- seek Jesus' way, and everything you need will be provided for you. You will realize that God loves you and will provide what you need, when you need it.

V32

And- don't be afraid- Because God is not trying to keep you from himself- he wants to give you the kingdom.

Just get your eyes off of money and listen to him.

Back to 1)

Think for a minute with me.

Jesus says- Greed is sneaky. Money can't make you happy or cure your financial anxiety.

The science says- Greed is sneaky. Money can't make you happy or cure your financial anxiety.

Lived experience says- Greed is sneaky. Money can't make you happy or cure your financial anxiety.

To seek after money is to sell yourself into slavery. It is to miss God altogether.

It pushes you into a cycle of earning and consuming.

Earning is the opposite of receiving Grace- God's undeserved favor meeting your desperate need.

And leisurely consuming like the Rich man Building bigger barns is the opposite of Gritty cultivating. What you do when you know the spiritual wealth you have through Jesus- instead of looking to sit back and consume- you are

ready to do hard things for the sake of the Kingdom of God and a Savior whose love you are sure of.

You cannot serve 2 masters. You cannot serve both God and money.

Transition- So if you find yourself in either of these positions- what should you do? With lots of wealth that you are going to store away or spend on yourself...or living paycheck to paycheck living in anxiety about money.

Well- to both situations Jesus teaches that-

2) When you open your hands to give, you also open them to receive from God.

Jesus uses a couple of phrases in these passages that are worth noting.

V21 & 33 on same slide

He references being “rich toward God”

Make money-bags for yourselves that become inexhaustible in heaven... impossible to lose

What does that mean- to have treasures in heaven and be rich toward God.

I can tell you right now- it doesn't mean that you put off riches now- and then in heaven you have a bigger mansion and more of Heaven's dollar bills. You don't trade in temporary greed for heavenly hoarding.

There is story a chapters over- in Luke 18 about a Rich Young Ruler who meets Jesus. And he asks Jesus “What do I have to do to get eternal life?”

Jesus walks through some of the 10 commandments with him and the guy goes- “I've been obeying all those commands since I was a kid”

Luke 18:22-23

Look at Jesus' answer to him.

“Fantastic, just one more thing- sell all you have and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me.”

After this, the Rich Young Ruler walks away sad, because he cannot imagine giving away his possessions.

Back to 2)

That Rich Young Ruler is in the same category as the rich man who built bigger barns as storage units.

And Jesus says the EXACT same thing to him that he says to those who are worried if they have enough to eat and clothe themselves.

He says the cure for anxiety over money is the same as the cure for greed.

That is- Be Generous- Give away your possessions.

Notice, Jesus is not trying to answer the question “How will the poor have enough”

Or “How do we solve homelessness”

In fact, there is another point in the Gospels where Mary Magdalene breaks a bottle of expensive ointment on Jesus’ feet and Judas says- “HEY! We could have sold that and given the money to the poor”

And Jesus responds- “You always will have the poor, but I’m only with you for a short time.”

In other words- we often think about giving our money away to solve a problem, but first and foremost- generosity is a spiritual discipline that helps free us from the grip of money so that we worship Jesus- not the security or beauty that money promises to provide.

Jesus told the Rich Young Ruler- “Sell your possessions, give away the money- and follow me!”

The prescription for the rich and the poor is the same. Give away your money for the sake of the Kingdom of God- to help others see the Kingdom of God.

Remember- Jesus' miracles weren't displays of power- when he healed someone it was a sign of the Kingdom he was bringing. Where brokenness is healed. Death doesn't reign.

Those people he healed would eventually die. The point was never just a healing. They were all signs to where real healing is found. In the coming Kingdom of God. Where we will resurrect with bodies that won't break down. Because Sin no longer infects us or the world.

Likewise- giving to the poor is not about making the poor not poor anymore. All of us, no matter how much money we have- will lose all of it. That is Jesus' point with the Rich Man.

Instead when you give your money away with a posture of joy toward Jesus and the coming Kingdom of God- it keeps reminding you of where your true riches lie- with Jesus' love- and it keeps you dependent on the Lord to put more in your hand.

At the same time- its a sign to others about what the Kingdom of God is like. Not people that leisurely consume....or that constantly worry about their provision. Rather spiritual wealthy people who are sure that God WILL ALWAYS provide.

So lets sum this up.

True Wealth- is knowing, worshipping and being relationally close to God forever.

And the only way to do that- is to make HIM the goal of all your pursuits.

So- if you are serving money- give it away- so you can see his worth and sufficiency.

Or like the Rich Young Ruler- you will walk away sad.

In the *Paradox of Generosity*, the authors make the case that there are 2 ways to live life.

You can live from a mindset of SCARCITY or ABUNDANCE.

Someone with an abundance mindset views the world as a place of blessing, sufficiency and overflow.

Someone with a scarcity mindset sees the world as a deficient place- full of danger and insecurity. No

The authors show that those perceptions don't really correlate with how much people ACTUALLY DO OR DON'T have- rather they relate to underlying mental issues. About the way you think.

For both groups of people that Jesus spoke to in this text, the rich and the poor- both are operating from a scarcity mindset.

The rich man because he's afraid if he gives his money away- there won't be enough leftover for him to be happy.

The poor in the passage are afraid if they don't make it their daily focus to seek after food and clothes- they won't have any.

See, both the rich and the poor are operating in a scarcity mindset.

But- a mindset of abundance- comes from being sure of God's provision that flows from his love.

That he owns a cattle on a thousand hills.

That his arm is not short that he cannot save.

When you believe you have access to the God that owns everything- and that he deeply and intimately knows and loves you...your hands open up that death grip on money- that actually has had a death grip on you.

You fool! Tonight your life will be required of you and where will your possessions go!

Jesus is challenging you- "Seek first the Kingdom of God- and all you need will be provided"

Jesus said to those who were anxious about money “Don’t be afraid, little sheep.”

In the gospel of John he says about being our good shepherd

John 10:10-11

A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance. 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Jesus didn’t lay down his life to bring us a scarcity mindset, but a mindset of abundance and overflow.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd;

I have what I need.

**2 He lets me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside quiet waters.**

**3 He renews my life;
he leads me along the right paths
for his name’s sake.**

**4 Even when I go through the darkest valley,
I fear no danger,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff — they comfort me.**

**5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.**

**6 Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
as long as I live.**

Is this not what the rich man building bigger barns wanted anyway? Rest
Fearing no danger...comfort with a table of choice foods prepared for him?

Grasping money makes a promise that it will save you...if you just keep earning
and spending.

But ultimately you lose it all. Your soul included.

Jesus makes a promise that he'll lay his life down for you. In fact- that's exactly what he did.

On the cross, Christ took the curse for all our greed on himself. He himself was consumed in death- like we should be for our greed.

But he Resurrected- he defeated death SO that you can be forgiven- no matter how many ways you have misused money- no matter how greedy you have been- the truth is that now you can follow Jesus in his way. And he is offering you what he earned with his life- and taking from you what you deserve with his death.

The only question is do you believe what money promises- or what Jesus promises?

She was looking for that range rover
I was in a Civic
I tried to take a road trip and she just wasn't with it
If this music wasn't payin' she'd've left me in a minute
Left me in a minute

OPEN HANDS SLIDE

Card- we want you to take a memorable demonstrable step. Because money is gonna talk to you this week. Its gonna try and convince you that you can't afford to give- or that you have earned the right to a life of leisure and convenience. I want you to actively reject it...and with this we can provide some encouragement and accountability along the way.

Lords Supper

The Lords supper is a table of abundance prepared for us by the good shepherd in the presence of our enemies.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Jesus offered it to his disciples on the night before he died. Because the next day- the good shepherd would walk into the valley of the shadow of death...of scarcity, vulnerability, lack...but on the third day would emerge in overflowing abundance...sending out the invitation for all who would trust him to come to his table