

How did you stand your seats for that right there? I don't understand. Sometimes I think I know this congregation pretty well, and then there's times I go, I don't know who these people are out there. You were able to sit there the whole time. Listen, I grew up pentecostal to do this kind of jig was for boat.

Now we're on the aisles absolutely do it all day long. But doing a little jig on the platform, you had to be under the the power and the influence of the Holy Spirit in a frenzy to do that kind of stuff right there. I love being at Sherwood Oaks where I can do this and no one's going to write me up. Amen. No one's going to write me up, are they?

No one's going to write me up. Hey, good to see you all this morning. Got some good friends in the congregation this morning. I'm glad to have them here. Good to see people here.

Good to see people in their pajamas. I like to see that. I've not had the courage to actually do it yet, but I'm working up to it. I'm working up to it. We're glad to have you guys here.

I love seeing us gathered last week. We had a big breakfast there. I love that. I love to see how this church gathers around each other. If you've been a recipient of that like I have this week, I just want to say thank you.

It's amazing. I love to see how the church gathers around people going through challenging stuff and providing comfort by way of food to those who are going through grief. I love how this church shows generosity to folks who need some rest and recuperation by providing food for them. I love how this church just is so generous providing support for families with new babies or new teenagers in the house by providing food. I love how the church is building fellowship among each other on Sunday mornings.

On fifth Sunday mornings, breakfast back there by bringing in lots of casseroles. You called it. Yeah. Trick question. Got you.

I guess what I'm saying is that I love how this church provides food. We do great with food. We're pretty generous that way. Just like kids can have their dad's eyes or their mom's nose or their grandpa's ears. When the church demonstrates generosity in any of its forms or permutation nations, man that's the way the world sees Jesus in us.

It's a beautiful thing. It's a trait that we share with our Father, who generously gave us Jesus, his only son. Radical generosity. Isn't that's radical generosity? But the early church displayed this kind of radical generosity.

When they shared their lives and their resources with one another, they pulled together the stuff that they had to help those who didn't have what they needed. Individuals and families and other church members or even other churches. Their generosity was radical, but not surprising. They're just practicing what they saw Jesus do. They were motivated to give by Jesus, who taught them to be generous through his teaching and his example.

Today, as we look at what it means just to be generous with our lives, we're going to learn that it's not really about the amount or the perceived ability to be generous, it's about something else. We're going to look at what Jesus taught us, and I think we're going to learn a lot about how the early church lived that out. My prayer this morning is that as we talk through this, we would be the kind of church that Jesus would go, man, they look just like their father. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, your Word teaches us that generous living is the key to joyful living.

We want to live joyful lives. So as we open Your Word, we pray that you would help us to discover it there. Speak to us by Your Holy Spirit about the joy of generosity. Open our hearts to experience it as we grow in the discipline of generosity. We pray this in Jesus name.

Amen. Our Scripture this morning comes from Mark, chapter twelve. If you got your Bibles and want to open there, you can because there's some stuff I don't know how long those guys are going to leave the Scripture up on the screen, but we're going to unpack a little bit of this. So if you go to Mark, chapter twelve, we're going to be in chapters or verses 41 through 44. Just a few verses there, but there's a lot of stuff to unpack in those three verses.

I'm going to go start reading, but you guys can start turning if you want to do so. It's Mark, chapter twelve, verse 41. And here's we find Jesus in the temple courts, and he's teaching his disciples there. He's got a crowd around him. Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting in their money into the temple treasury.

We don't really encourage people to look at what you put in the offering plate, but we don't prohibit it either. If you want to look, you're welcome to do so. Jesus says that the Scripture says that many rich people threw in large amounts, but a poor widow came and she put in two very small copper coins worth only a few cents. Right now in my pocket, I think I have a few cents. I may have, may have 72 or \$0.74 in there, depending on how I last looked.

So he called his disciples over and he says, listen, I tell you truly, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others combined. They all gave out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty, put in everything. All she had to live on.

If you've got your Bibles open and you write in your Bibles underline all she had to live on, that's a key little passage right there.

How does Jesus define generosity? First of all, if you notice in this scripture, it's obviously not about the amount, because lots of rich people were throwing in lots of money. Jesus says nothing about them. He points to the woman, he put in a few little coins, two little coins, and he says, she is the one that is demonstrating real generosity. Forbes every year publishes their annual list of the most generous donors charitable givers in the United States.

There's a few names that always jump to the surface. Warren Buffett, if you know that guy. Bill and Melinda Gates, they always they're not even together again, but together they are still very generous. Givers Warren Buffett his worth is 115,000,000,000. 115,000,000,000 with a B.

Over the course of his life, he will give away almost half that, 46 billion, \$46 billion I've been giving since I was a young kid, since I first got my allowance. I have not yet come close to that amount right there. Bill and Melinda Gates are worth about 133,000,000,000. They gave away 43 billion. Now, we may be impressed by that.

I would love to have a Warren Buffett and a Bill and Melinda Gates in this congregation. Wouldn't that be amazing? But Jesus isn't impressed with that at all. After all, many rich people put a lot of money into the plate, and Jesus didn't draw his disciples' attention to them. The one who gets the attention, the one who gets the accolade, is the little woman, the poor woman who gave two cent.

So from this, we learn two things real quickly. One, it's not based on the amount that you give. That's not how generosity is determined, is it? And the second thing is this. It's really interesting, I think, to see this.

It is not based on on her financial ability to give. We do this sometimes, don't we? We say, Lord, this week's really tight, so I'm going to wait till next week to give, or Lord, when I get the new job and I'm making a little bit more money, then I can afford to give. Jesus makes no mention of the ability to be generous. That is not even a factor in his definition of what generosity looks like.

It's sort of surprising to me, honestly, because the same Jesus who saw that a wedding party was running out of wine says, Ah, we'll do something about this. All it took was a word from his mom and he turned water into wine and fed the guests their delicious wine. The same Jesus who saw the crowds on the hillside with little hungry look in their eyes, told his disciples, feed all these people with what they said, I don't know. Find stuff. Feed them fish and loaves, fed 5000.

And you might expect this Jesus, who is so compassionate and gracious and kind, to say to this poor widow woman, oh, precious, precious lady, here no other people have the ability to give a lot more. You keep what you've got. You might need that. Save your two pennies and let the rich people give. He doesn't he doesn't he doesn't press the coins back into her hand.

He doesn't say, my father owns the cattle in a thousand hills. He'll cover you. You keep what you've got. Instead, he says, well done. You gave everything you had to live on.

You gave everything you had to live on. The amount we give and the ability to give, it seems, are secondary issues to Jesus when it comes to what generosity looks like. At the core of God honoring generosity is this heart that is eager to honor Jesus with all of everything, even if it's

just two cent. One of our values here at Sherwood Oaks is that we live like God owns everything. We just don't talk it.

We just don't put it on a poster on the hallway. But we want to live like God truly owns everything we have mentally. Just go through I'm off script guys right now, but I think this is good for us. I don't know if you've ever mentally gone through all your stuff and just assessed what you've got in your house. I've been in Rob Muncie's garage.

Can I tell you that Rob Muncie could put in a big offering of toilet paper, I think at one point in time, yeah, he had stockpiled during COVID I did not worry a bit about how much toilet paper Walmart had because I knew where Rob Muncie lived. You guys are probably the same. You've got stuff, he got stuff. And all of that we teach here is actually God's. It's for God to choose how and where it will be used.

We live like God owns everything, and that means that we hold nothing back. Nothing back. Our purse, our time, our home, our skills, our abilities. Even when what we have to offer seems like very, very little, we offer it because we're commanded to. Even if you're like the widow woman, and especially when times are tough, this, for me, is the hardest part of discipleship, this idea of financial generosity.

Man, you want me to die for my faith? Blindfold me and put me up against the wall, okay, you want me to go on a mission trip to a far flung country where we're going to have to step over sewage? That sounds like great. I'll take plenty of pictures and have a great time. I'm sort of a culture vulture that way.

But man, you want me to faithfully give a percentage of my income? You want me to faithfully give some part of me consistently all the time? That's a little harder to do, especially when you're living in a season of economic uncertainty. We are living I don't know if you guys are feeling it, but we are living in a season of economic uncertainty. If you're not feeling that you are very blessed right now, but there's plenty in our congregation who are.

And there's a temptation when we're living in this economic uncertainty, to hoard and to hide our stuff and our time and our resources and say, this is mine, I need to keep it because it's my security, it's my future, I got to hold on to it. And Jesus says, I don't want you to do that. He says, do not lay up for yourselves treasures. Don't scuttle away your security, because the deal is it's not really safe. That kind of treasure disappears overnight.

Interest rates go up, stocks go down, stuff disappears. Your retirement that looked great eight years ago looks pretty sad right now. That's not where I want you to invest your life in that stuff. Instead, he asks us to live differently. He asks us to live generously by investing in things that are eternal.

He says, lay up for yourselves treasures where in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal. And he says this where your treasure is, there your

heart will be also. Jesus challenges us with a choice accumulate stuff here which will ultimately have no value. We have had several funerals here recently. What got put in the ground, what went with them into eternity, was about this much.

Maybe a ring, maybe a watch, maybe a piece of jewelry, maybe a gold tooth, maybe the clothes they had on. That was it. Everything else gets left behind. Says you can accumulate it and you can really focus on getting a lot of stuff, or you can live in a different way. You can see that stuff that God has blessed you with as his and invest it in something that's eternal.

You see, it's not wrong to have stuff. I've got plenty of stuff. But how we use that stuff matters to God. He says. As we invest our stuff, our resources of time, our resources of finance, our resources of like, material goods in God's kingdom, what happens is our hearts get pulled in the direction of God's kingdom.

Where your heart, where your money is, where your treasure is, where your stuff is, that's where your heart's going to be. Also, we want our heart fully invested in the kingdom. If you've ever found yourself praying that God would build this kingdom sensibility in your mind, in your heart, then try being generous for a couple of weeks, see what happens. See where you're thinking, where your attention starts to drift. And I'm going to tell you, if you live in the way that God asked you to live, with your resources, your attention, and your time and your hearts, I'm going to be drifting over more and more into the things of God.

It's a beautiful thing. Generosity was a feature of the life in the early church. Acts tells us that all the believers were together and had everything in common. It sounds radical to us, doesn't it? Radical generosity.

These people, when they saw a need, went so far as to sell their property and their possessions so that no one went without. And that radical generosity birthed this intense, strong sense of community. They were together. They were together and they held everything in common. And those looking in from the outside looked at that and said, that is craziness.

Maybe you hear me talk about this. And you go, yeah, Tim, that sounds pretty crazy.

In the first century world just like ours, society was built on rank and status. Does that sound familiar? How much you got, where you live, what you do for a living, what you drive. Rank and status. The more you have, the higher up the plane you are.

You start up here with the emperor, you work your way down, you got the senators, you got the merchants, and then you got the people down below, the servants, the slaves. These people lack any currency in rank and status. And the early Christians said, listen, Jesus has called us to live different than that. He's called us to do our lives in a different way than the focus on rank and status. We're called to create something different.

We're called to create something. Jesus calls the kingdom of heaven to be part of it, to be investing in it, to be building it. That kingdom of heaven, as we've talked about, it's like the spiritual community inside the larger community, the spiritual kingdom that's sort of inside the larger kingdom. And yet when you get inside that community, when you get inside that kingdom, you realize it's much bigger on the inside than it is on the outside. It embraces everything bigger than everything around us.

And it had nothing to do with rank or status. It's about righteousness and peace and joy. And when those are your focus, when the kingdom of heaven is your focus, you can be generous, because the old things no longer matter. And so this is what the early church did. They took care of each other.

They took care of widows and orphans. They took in little infants that no one wanted. They built schools and hospitals. They supported other churches, read some of Paul's letters. They supported other churches going through rough times.

It wasn't just about them. It was about the larger community of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. And it was a struggle for them as well, to be honest. They had to be reminded. Paul reminds them in two corinthians.

He says this remember, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. Whoever sows generously will also reap generously. This is a farm metaphor, by the way. Farmers in the room. You know how this works.

You scatter five seeds, you get a minimal harvest. You scatter 100 seeds, you get a bigger harvest. You scatter 1000 seeds, you get a magnificent harvest. So he says, Listen, guys, just decide what you want to give, make a decision and just do it. Do it cheerfully.

Don't let anyone don't let Tim Thompson pressure you into giving more than you feel comfortable doing so, because it's not about the amount. Don't let Tim Thompson say, well, you're really rich. You should give a lot more, because it's not about the ability, it's about the heart. God loves someone who just eagerly says, I live like God owns everything. Here's what I got.

I got two pennies this week. I'm putting it in.

This promise that he mentions is amazing. God is able to bless you abundantly. Do you believe that? God is able to bless us abundantly so that in all things, not just in your bank account note that. Not just in your bank account, in all things, god will give you all that you need.

God will cause you to abound in every good work.

I love this quote. Pastor friend of mine just recently passed away says this god created us to be channels of blessing, but our ability to receive the resources with which he wants to bless

others depends on our being able to give them away freely, faithfully, and generously. Jesus said it this way freely you have received, freely give.

So remember, Jesus doesn't demand obedience. God doesn't demand obedience to his commands. If he did, the world would look a lot different, wouldn't it? He does not demand that we obey what he asks us to do. He wants us to be cheerfully, generous, not generous under compulsion.

He never forces us to trust Him, never forcibly makes us obey, but in obedience. That's where we meet Jesus. That's the spot. I think about Moses at the Red Sea, and God says, I want you to go across it. And Moses sees the Red Sea and says, there's no way.

And God says, I want you to do it. And Moses takes the first step of obedience. And what happens if you know the story? The Red Sea parts, and they walk across this place where we are very aware of our need and very aware of our inability to meet. Our need can make us hold back, step back, tighten up.

And God says, I want you to do exactly the opposite. I want you to step forward. I want you to open up. I want you to release. And when you do that, he says, you will find me.

You will seek me, and you will find me when you look for me.

It's in obedience that we meet Jesus. In obedience that we meet Him. In obedience that we experience his power. And his presence in obedience is where we learn his character. When we trust Him, even with our two little coins, we experience his provision and his faithfulness.

You see, obedience is always met on the other side with the power of God. Our obedience is always met on the other side with the power of God. Jeremiah says, Call to me and I will show you great and mighty things. And this is it. We will experience things that we did not believe or imagine possible when we simply step into the next step of obedience.

Paul described it to the Corinthians this way. Things that no eye has seen, things that no ear has heard, things that no mind has conceived. These are the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. God loves us. I'm standing here and I'm trying to express something that I've learned and I am yet still learning.

So I told you. I think some of you have heard my story about being at the Walmart aisle, looking at toothpaste and deodorant and going, okay, my bank account says I can afford one of these. Which one is it going to be? My dentist told me I chose wrongly.

That was a rough season in my life. I've talked about living in Out West in Reno, Nevada, working three jobs to be able to afford to pay rent and cover utilities. That was a hard season of life. In all of that, we maintained a generous spirit. What can we give?

I may not have a lot of money to give, Lord, but I'll give what I can. It doesn't look like much. I've given more in the past, and hopefully I'll give more in the future. But right now it looks like a small bit. But I'm going to try to be generous in every other aspect of my life because I know that when I give myself to you and I give myself to your purposes, you meet me on the other side with provision.

God provided in every way possible for me. I'm standing here today. I can go to Walmart and buy both toothpaste and deodorant. It's a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful thing.

I'm living under the umbrella of God's blessing. I'm living as we sing in the goodness of God. I'm still learning. However, if you are at my table on Wednesday nights in our group, Harold knows this. I still struggle with this.

This is an ongoing discipleship issue for me. I think it's great that Warren Buffett gave away \$46 billion, but, you know, he's still got 60 billion in his pocket. Did you notice that? Do the math. Learning to follow Jesus and learning to give and give and live generously is tested at the point where we really don't feel like we've got anything left to give.

Sometimes it's emotional, sometimes it's materially. Sometimes it's financially. Sometimes it's just resources where we just like, I got nothing. I got nothing left. Jesus says, do you have two bits?

I got two bits. Okay. I want you to give that. I want to give of yourself this finite amount of money that sort of embarrasses you to even step up an offer. But I want you to give this of yourself again.

I'm not talking about money. I'm talking about our lives. I'm talking about our lives. The place where God loves to meet us is at that place of like deep insufficiency, where we really recognize that we don't have anything of worldly value to offer. And God says, ha.

Perfect. You are exactly where I want you to be. That Jesus says, that is the heart of the Father right there. You step up in that because here's what happens when we come to Him in this place of need. We are met on the other side with God's power and provision, and more importantly than that is his presence.

That's where we learn to know Jesus, in these spots. You are going through this place this morning where you are just sort of overwhelmed with life and you are feeling completely depleted and you're wondering what tomorrow is even going to look like because today was hell. Jesus says, I want to meet you there. I want to be there.

The point of life is not to accumulate stuff. The point of taking up an offering is not so that we can increase the treasury in the church's bank account. That's not it. The point in giving and living generously is so that we can experience God, we can experience Him in our lives. That's the point.



If you want that and you don't have it, I'm going to invite you this morning to come and talk to me. I want you to know Jesus who can bless you. I've completely lost my place here, guys. But this is the deal about living generously is that this is what God wants for us. He wants to bless us abundantly, but it requires us to live in this place where we are conduits of his blessing all the time.

This is where we meet Jesus. This is where he shows up. This is where we learn his character. We learn his voice in our ear. We learn what he's saying to us.

We learn how to discern everything else. We learn how to block out the enemy's voice and the world's voice, and the flesh voice. We learn to hear Jesus and we experience his presence in us. And the Psalmist says that in his presence there is fullness of joy. That's what I want.

I don't need a big bank account. I don't need a big bank account. I want to live in the fullness of joy. Anyone here say amen to that? Amen.

Heavenly Father, this morning as we come to a time of communion where we get to spend time with you, we are so thankful for Your love. This is how we know what love is, that you laid down Your life for us and we now can lay down our lives for our brothers. Lord, you tell us if we see our brother has a need and we've got the ability to help meet it, and we close our heart, we close our fist, we close our eyes, then how does the love of God dwell in us. We do not want to love just with word and talk, but we want to love indeed and in truth. Jesus, thank you for your free gift.

We have freely received. May we be freely givers as we test you as we test you in this, as Malachi says. As we test you in those places where we have nothing and the temptation is to hold tight to what little we have. Lord, we pray that we pray that we would learn as we test you. We pray that we would learn how to trust you better.

Lord, as we take the bread and the cup this morning, we pray that we would do it with hearts that are open to receive free movement, hearts that are open to give out from the free grace that you have given to us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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