

Giving and Receiving Gladness

Acts 20:35 | Dave Geldart | March 27, 2022

1. John Wesley & Farmer Story – intro

- a. John Wesley, pastor and evangelist in the 1700s and the founder of the Methodist movement and the Wesleyan Denomination, was preaching in the countryside one day about money to a bunch of farmers.
 - i. His first point was ‘Get all you can’
 - 1. and one farmer whispered to his friend ‘That’s good’.
 - ii. Wesley’s second point was ‘Save all you can’,
 - 1. and the farmer whispered to his buddy ‘Even better’.
 - iii. Wesley’s final point was ‘Give all you can’
 - 1. the farmer leant over to his friend and sighed ‘Now he’s gone and spoilt it’.

b. How many of you resonate with the farmer!

- i. Don’t have to raise your hands
- ii. When the church starts a new series about Giving – like we’ve done this month!, how many of yall (if you’re honest) also feel a little demotivated.
- iii. A subtle threat

c. This is so tough to talk about

- i. The last thing to be converted is a man’s purse (wallet, venmo)
 - 1. It’s HARD
- ii. Not only has money and giving become such a culturally taboo topic
- iii. We have so much cynicism about churches asking for money
- iv. Just another preacher trying to guilt us into giving to his salary.
 - 1. OR NEW JET
 - a. (show funny image)
 - 2. But honestly there have been many stories of abuses and financial impropriety by church leaders
 - 3. So our reaction isn’t completely misplaced. **There does seem to be problems WITH THEM!**
- v. And it’s not just cynicism, **we have DEFAULT heartsets toward materialism and greed ourselves.**
 - 1. Both saver kind and spender kind.
 - 2. Both look to MONEY and possessions to secure their life.
 - a. Bring you safety
 - b. Pleasure
 - c. Happiness
 - 3. It’s our default here – the air we breathe
 - 4. We’re rich and don’t know it!
 - 5. **And our only hope** is to be constantly drinking the antidote to greed and materialism
 - a. Gracious Generous Giving
 - 6. WOMP WOMP

2. Series review – that episode that is just flashbacks to earlier episodes (ran out of season money!)

- a. today we’re gonna recover some of the same ground

- b. in a little different package

3. WHY Do we give?

a. We give to worship God

- i. Because he have everything for us
- ii. It's a worship issue
- iii. Who/what will you PRACTICALLY trust for your life?
 - 1. Money, stuff, things you can earn, hoard, play with?
 - 2. Or the Creator God who gave himself up for you on the cross?
- iv. Ultimately, our lives are lived a spiritual battle
- v. **It's normal to NOT WANT to give.** It's normal to be afraid to give, afraid you won't have enough. Suspicious that you'll waste your money.
 - 1. That's NORMAL
 - 2. It's natural.
 - 3. But Jesus invites us into something supernatural = active trust in God as your Good Father.
- vi. In this way, Giving back to God for the blessing of others IS AN ACT OF REBELLION
 - 1. Against the dark system of greed
 - 2. Against the evil one himself
 - 3. **Matthew 6 24 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.**
 - 4. Giving is Spiritual rebellion
 - a. Against the dark, FOR the light
 - b. To escape the mind numbing, soul shrinking, LIFE WASTING pursuit of money
 - c. And evidence our trust in God for our life

b. We give to care for others

- i. Meet needs around us
- ii. Good WORKS that GOD has prepared in advance for us to walk in
- iii. Good works for the blessing of others
- iv. Starts with supporting Good Works in your church family, and overflows into good works out into our neighborhoods and around the world

c. We give to care for ourselves

- i. Giving actually makes US happy
- ii. **More blessed to GIVE than receive – ACTS 20:35**
- iii. That's just what our scientific studies are finding

4. Heres an excerpt from an article published by Utah State University:

- 5. In a 2008 study, subjects were asked to rate their happiness and given an envelope containing either \$5 or \$20. The participants were randomly assigned to either spend the money on themselves or on someone else by the end of the day.¹

Those who spent the money on someone else reported happier moods than those who spent the money on themselves.

6. A separate group was asked to predict outcomes of the experiment and most believed those who spent money on themselves would be happier. Not only were they wrong, they were significantly wrong. The research suggests "thinking about money may propel individuals toward using their financial resources to benefit themselves, but spending money on others can provide a more effective route in increasing one's own happiness." ²

a. UtahStateUniversity

b. <https://www.usu.edu/science/discovery/fall-2017/does-giving-make-you-happy>

c. 1 Elizabeth W. Dunn, Lara B. Akin, Michael I. Norton (2008). *Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness*. *Science* 21 March 2008: Vol. 319, Issue 5870, pp. 1687-1688.

d. 2 Elizabeth W. Dunn, Lara B. Akin, Michael I. Norton (2014). *Prosocial Spending and Happiness: Using Money to Benefit Others Pays Off*. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 2014 23:41.

e. As this and numerous other studies have shown

f. Giving begets happiness which begets giving

- i. Sleep begets sleep
- ii. Givers become more happy, and happy people give more

g. There's a powerful feedback mechanism here,

- i. One that not only frees up more resources for caring for others
- ii. But that also increases our own happiness.
 - 1. MORE than spending it on ourselves!

h. Jesus is calling his followers to a type of Redeemed self interest

- i. In light of what's true
- ii. He even teaches and motivates with the promise of **Eternal Rewards**
- iii. **Matthew 6: ¹⁹ "Do not store** up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- iv. **2 other times in Ch 6** – Jesus motivates his followers with the promise that their **Heavenly Father sees what they do, and will REWARD THEM**
 - 1. Not at all like some in the Prosperity Gospel heresy say, give some money so that God will give you more money back and make you rich in this life.
 - 2. Rather the correct context of these and many other passages in the NT are about being motivated by real, eternal rewards. Riches laid up for us in Heaven.

7. **1 Timothy 6: 17**As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. **18**They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, **19**thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

- a. Use your temporal, physical money – which has no value in itself, and will leave your hands with your death
 - i. And exchange it for eternal treasure
 - ii. Good works that bless others and glorify God
 - iii. Eternal treasure and reward FOR YOU for the life to come.
- 8. He's not calling his disciples to divest themselves of wealth
 - a. He's calling them TO USE IT WISELY
 - b. KINGDOMLY
 - c. In light of the reality of HIS KINGDOM as REAL, and eternal, and imminent
- 9. **Civil war money exchange**
 - a. **Randy Alcorn – Money, Possessions, and Eternity**
 - b. Imagine you're alive at the end of the Civil War. You're living in the South, but you're a Northerner. You plan to move home as soon as the war's over. While in the South you've accumulated lots of Confederate currency. Now, suppose you know for a fact the North's going to win the war, and the end is imminent. What will you do with your Confederate money? If you're smart, there's only one answer. You should immediately cash in your Confederate currency for U.S. currency—the only money that will have value once the war's over. Keep only enough Confederate currency to meet your short-term needs.
- 10. **You and I are like that**
 - a. **Caught in the in-between** time. Still living here, but confident of the coming Kingdom of Jesus.
 - b. WE'RE DEEPLY INVESTED IN EARTHLY TREASURE
 - i. And it's hard to keep this perspective!
 - c. Deeply As we've seen before, we're almost all rich
 - i. Compared to the whole world
 - ii. Adjusted for all the things
 - iii. We're rich
 - 1. Need convincing, check out "Money Possessions & The Way of Jesus" Oct 10 teaching
 - iv. **We're rich, even though we don't feel like it**
 - 1. Even though we don't act like it
- d. **Reminds me of the story of the street urchin and the king**
 - i. This boy had lived his whole life on the street, orphaned, abandoned, scraping and fending for himself. Crouching in a corner with stolen bread. Draped in rags.
 - ii. One day, the king of the land passed near and caught his eye.
 - iii. The king looks upon this pitiful soul and loves him. Seeks and finds him.
 - iv. Brings him home into the palace and adopts him as his own son.
 - v. The boy was given access to everything!
 - 1. He was the prince!
 - e. He has a luxurious room
 - i. Fine clothes
 - ii. And 24 hour room service ON TOP of 3 royal feasts a day!

- f. **But night after night, the king would find him asleep on the hard floor beside his large, soft bed.**
 - i. **His Pockets full of dinner rolls.**
- g. Even though IT WAS ALL HIS
 - i. He still lived AS IF he was still on the street
 - ii. AS IF it was up to him to protect himself
 - 1. AS IF he didn't know where his next meal would come from
- h. **Brothers, sisters**
 - i. **That's us.**
 - ii. That's you.
 - iii. That's me.
- i. We are used to living in a world that doesn't work right.
 - i. Where we are not safe
 - ii. Not secure
 - iii. Resources seem scarce
 - iv. And it's up to us to protect and provide for ourselves
 - v. And the only way we're giving up the bread in our hands is if someone takes it by force.
- j. **AND NOW, everything is different.**
 - i. **You've caught the eye of the King of the Universe**
 - 1. And he looks on you and loves you.
 - 2. Brings you into his family
 - 3. Adopts you as his own royal princes and princesses
 - 4. And everything he has is yours.
 - 5. Everything.
 - 6. **Luke 12: 32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**
 - 7. There's more reason for joy in this concise truth than we realize!
 - ii. **But old habits are hard to break**
 - iii. And we do what feels familiar
 - 1. We live with a scarcity mentality
 - 2. We steal dinner rolls, and hide them in our pockets.
 - 3. Waiting for the other shoe to drop
- k. **But the great invitation of the King isn't just into the palace, it's into joy.**
 - i. He is kind. Patient with us.
 - ii. He knows our struggles. Or fears. Our stories.
 - iii. And he is committed to our healing
- l. And the king knows that the only way to free his son is to teach him to have the generous heart of the father
 - i. Only when the boy can learn to relax into his security in the Father, unclasp his hands from his crumbling dinner rolls
 - 1. And want to give what he has away to others
 - 2. And as the hands which used to clutch greedily to the scraps in a corner, open up to seek and find others in corners.

- ii. OTHERS in the streets whose eyes dart about, unsure if this offer of bread can be trusted.
 - iii. And HE begins to catch the vision that not only will HE be ok, but He's invited into something GREATER.
 - iv. More full than his belly.
 - v. A heart filled with gratitude, compassion, and generosity.
 - 1. Happiness now, and treasure in heaven
- m. Children of the king find joy as they give away their father's money.**
- n. I believe all heaven rejoices, and our father smiles with delight as you and I take staggering, awkward steps out of our bedrooms, and practice generous giving – even little steps!
 - i. I can just imagine Jesus elbowing an angel near him and say, **DID YOU SEE THAT?**
 - 1. My sister there just gave !!!!
 - 2. The evil one doesn't do that
 - a. Our world's fallen system doesn't do that.
 - 3. Street urchins who have to provide for themselves don't do that
 - ii. **ONLY GROWING, MATURING PRINCES AND PRINCESSES DO THAT**
 - 1. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also
 - 2. And when your heart is invested in God's upside down give-all-you-can because He's given all for you Kingdom,
 - a. the human heart finds real. Weighty. Profound. Joy.
- o. So, as Jesus said "It is more blessed/happy to give than to receive",**
 - i. It's not what I say
 - ii. It was Jesus says.
 - iii. He's not trying to trick you. He's inviting you into the life you've always wanted.
 - iv. The full, and happy life.

11. Practical Next Steps

- a. Become a child of the King**
- b. If you've never responded to the redeeming gift of the Good News of Jesus's death and resurrection for you
 - i. The invitation for YOU to become a son or daughter of the King
 - ii. Don't delay.
 - iii. Exchange your pocketful of scraps for the eternal kingdom of God
 - 1. Kept in heaven, for you.
 - iv. Ask God to change you from the inside out, and to give you a heart like His. And just see what he does!
- c. Everyone else**
- d. Take a step of giving beyond your natural bent
- e. First, begin giving back to God through tithing to your local church family.**
 - i. Or maybe it's another number to get you started.
 - ii. Just take a next step!
 - iii. It's all his money ANWAYS!
 - iv. And see what He does...
- f. Then enjoy experimenting with generous giving above and beyond this either to the church or other opportunities to do good**

- i. There's still time to join in our March Gladness challenge
 - 1. tallgrassatthewell.church/give
- ii. Ministries. Organizations that meet needs.
- iii. TG financially supports HIS, Orphan Helpers, and our Neighboring Fund (to help TGians care for their neighbors)
 - 1. To free you to give even more
 - 2. As your income increases, INCREASE your giving percentage
 - a. Make it fun!
 - 3. Pray for opportunities!

g. Finally, Talk about this more together.

- i. Encourage one another – WITH STORIES about money and giving
- ii. We're all in this together!
- iii. Hebrews 3:12-13 – encourage one another so you're not hardened by sin's deceit!
 - 1. We're CONSTANTLY being bombarded by the sleepyjuice of materialism and Greed.
 - 2. We need constant encouragement from ONE ANOTHER to keep snapping out of it
 - 3. Jesus wants our money and possessions to be a DISCIPLESHIP issue! So he wants us to be able to talk about it. It's how we grow

iv. Stories of faith and steps are encouraging

- 1. And they testify to the Work God is still up to in our world, and in our lives.
- 2. That's worship.
- 3. As we give and receive gladness!

- v. We need to talk more about this, together.

12. Testimonies Panel – Dilan, Paxton, Chris (if available)

13. Otherwise:

14. Me – I'll go first

a. Historically afraid about money

- i. That I won't have enough
- ii. That the bottom's going to drop out.
- iii. And we'll be left destitute

b. I'm a saver

- i. Even since I was a kid – easy for me to save, delay gratification
- ii. But this became the entry point for greed
 - 1. The saver kind
 - 2. Looking (subconsciously) to money, my savings, to bring me security

c. Todd Stewart, dship walk around city park

- i. The cure for anxiety about money is to give more
 - 1. We were already faithful tithers
- ii. **But we decided to take the step of faith and increase to 11%**
 - 1. And we still had enough
 - 2. And I began to feel more peace
- iii. So eventually we decided to bump that up to 12% and see what happened
 - 1. And we still had enough

2. In fact, I began to feel not only peace, but some joy in giving
3. Every time unexpected income would come in, I'd get pumped to make sure I gave 12% back to God.
 - a. It actually became fun-ish
- d. **Another step for me personally came when I became aware of the financial difficulty of one of my old friends.**
 - i. We didn't have any "extra" money set aside to be generous with, so all I could think of was my "special money"... the few hundred dollars a year I'd been saving up from Xmas and birthdays. I had a little over \$1,000 in there... I'd been saving it for years!
 - ii. For something fun for me
 - iii. A war raged inside me.
 - iv. **No.... not MY SPECIAL MONEY!!!???**
 1. Can't we find something from our budget???
 - v. After dragging my feet a while, I finally decided to give it.
 1. All of it.
 2. So I wrote a check for the exact amount in my special money and tossed it in the mail.
 3. And it was fine.
 4. I had a settled sense that it was ok. And that the Father was proud of me.
 5. And honestly, I've never truly "missed" that money.
- e. **God continues to work on me.** He's so so so patiently helping me grow out of my default anxiety that I won't have enough, into a peaceful, joyful giver.
 - i. I knew I'd made some progress with Him when a few years ago we had an unexpectedly large tax bill due.
 1. **Like sweating panic in my basement office at 3am.**
 2. But it didn't take long for me to choose to say to myself "Well, if that's what God wants to do with his money...."
 3. And the anxiety melted.
 4. And we've had enough.
 5. In fact, more than enough.
 - ii. I've got a LONG way to go
 - iii. But I'm on the journey. With yall. And I know God is at work in my life.
 1. And theres joy.
 2. And gratitude, where there was once only fear
 3. I've got less dinner rolls in my pocket these days.

15. What's God leading you to in response to his words about giving?

- a. How might you choose to worship Him with a specific act of trust with your money?

16. PRAY