

Our text this morning is Luke 6:38 NIV

Luke 6:38 NIV

'Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'

Let's pray together:

The title of the message this morning is **'What Did Jesus Have to Say About Giving?'**

What a line up huh? Two weeks ago it was "Love Your Enemies"
Last week it was "To Judge or not to Judge"
Now this week it's "What Did Jesus Have to Say About Giving."
It just doesn't get any better than this does it?

So **'What Did Jesus Have to Say About Giving?'**

Well, I have to tell you that the verse we just read from Jesus' Sermon on the Plain taken in context isn't specifically addressing giving.

Look at the preceding verse Luke 6:37

'Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.' Remember that one? Has it been knowing on you all week as it has me?

Jesus clearly is instructing us not to be judgmental and condemning with each other, but rather to extend forgiveness and He emphasizes that if we

'Give forgiveness that forgiveness will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will forgiveness be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use forgiveness, forgiveness will be measured back to you.'

This is another representation of the law of sowing and reaping which is referenced in both the Old and the New Testament over 20 times.

Galatians 6:7 NIV *'Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.'*

The principle certainly can be fairly applied to our giving, granted. Yet the context has more to do with our willingness to give forgiveness rather than judgment and condemnation; not money.

When talking about giving it's really not necessary to pull a scripture out of context which is dealing with judgment and forgiveness and try to 'use' it to make a point about giving. There is enough specific scripture already there!

Actually the subject of money, possessions, and giving is handled by Jesus in the New Testament more times than any other subject other than the Kingdom of God. Close to 2/3 of the 40 some parables in the New Testament concern the subject of money, possessions and giving and how as disciples of Christ we are to respond.

As you will be able to tell by the conclusion of the message Jesus obviously wasn't shy about speaking up on the subject.

Over the past number of weeks we have been examining whether we are disciples of Christ or not; whether He is indeed Lord of our life or not; and whether we are willing to be obedient to Him as well. That includes our money, possessions and our giving.

This week and the next we are going to center our discussion along these lines because according to scripture our giving is one of the truest tests of genuine discipleship.

That's what Jesus had to say. I didn't say it; Jesus did, for when Jesus was at the peak of his popularity He laid out these conditions of genuine discipleship to the crowds in Luke 14:25-33. Listen to this:

Luke 14:25-33 NIV

*25*Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: *26*"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. *27*And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. *28*"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? *29*For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, *30*saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'
31"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? *32*If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. *33*In the same way, **any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.'**

According to this passage in order to be His disciple Jesus said we must

- Love Him more than our family
- Carry our cross and follow Him
- Give up everything!

That's what Jesus said. In fact He ended it this way: ***if you can't give it all up you can't be my disciple.***'

That's pretty strong isn't it?

To help us understand what He was saying let's look at **'What Else Jesus Had to Say About Giving'**

Matthew 19:16-22 NIV

16Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" 17"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." 18 "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, " 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, 19honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'¹" 20"All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" 21Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

He came seeking eternal life and left the same way He came. And why? It wasn't so much that he had all those possessions; it was that all those possessions had him! They had him so tightly that he went away sad, never to be heard from again in the scriptures as far as we know.

'It's okay to have possessions but it's not okay for possessions to have you!'

George Mueller who ran an orphanage in England early in the last century totally by faith, never once asking for contributions and watching God miraculously provide all that was needed, said *'God judges what we give by what we keep.'*

What is it that we keep? A better question might be *'what is it that is keeping us?'* Have we given our all to the Lord?

I have to be honest with you I got a little concerned listening to the political conventions these last couple of weeks as one particular candidate spoke of The American Dream and all that it entailed.

According to Historian James Truslow Adams 'the American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.' That sounds good, really good, doesn't it?

I like what Will Campbell said about us: *'we borrow money we don't have, to buy things we don't need, to keep up with people we don't even like.'* Sound familiar? Is that your American Dream?

I appreciate our country. Even at our worst we may be the greatest country in history. However while I am thankful for the possibilities our great country provides for every American I want to tell you that according to what I understand Jesus didn't have anything positive to say about that part of The American Dream.

He did however have quite a bit to say about how we handle the by product of The American Dream: our possessions, our money, our wealth.

The mishandling of the by-product of The American Dream has crept into the American Church. We have difficulty realizing just how rich we are and how truly good god has been to us.

Do you know how as many as 1 billion people in the world live at this moment? Try this little mental exercise suggested by Robert Heilbroner. Imagine doing the following and try to feel what daily life is for much of the world:

1. Take out all the furniture in your home except for one table and a couple of chairs. Use blanket and pads for beds. [Gypsie pastor's house]
2. Take away all of your clothing except for your oldest dress or suit, shirt or blouse. Leave only one pair of shoes.
3. Empty the pantry and the refrigerator except for a small bag of flour, some sugar and salt, a few potatoes, some onions, and a dish of dried beans. [Haiti: dirt cookies]
4. Dismantle the bathroom, shut off the running water, and remove all the electrical wiring in your house.
5. Take away the house itself and move the family into the tool shed.
6. Place your "shed" in a shantytown by the town dump.

7. Cancel all subscriptions to newspapers, magazines, and book clubs. This is no great loss because now none of you can read anyway.
8. Leave only one radio for the whole shantytown.
9. Move the nearest hospital or clinic ten miles away and put a midwife in charge instead of a doctor.
10. Throw away your bankbooks, stock certificates, pension plans, and insurance policies. Leave the family a cash hoard of ten dollars.
11. Give the head of the family a few acres to cultivate on which he can raise a few hundred dollars of cash crops, of which one third will go to the landlord and one tenth to the money lenders.
12. Lop off twenty-five or more years in life expectancy.

By comparison how rich we really are! And with our wealth comes responsibility to use it wisely, not to be wasteful, and to help others.

This is what true disciples of Jesus Christ do!

So 'What Else Did Jesus Have to Say About Giving?'

Matthew 6:19-21 NIV

19"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

So where is your treasure? If you find your treasure you'll find your heart according to Jesus.

'What Else Did Jesus Have to Say About Giving?'

Matthew 16:24-26 NLT

'24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. 25 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 26 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?'

Jesus said 'Give up your life for My sake! Let it go!'

Corrie Ten Boon once said *'I've learned that we must hold everything loosely, because when I grip it tightly, it hurts when the Father pries my fingers loose and takes it from me!'*

There is so much more Jesus had to say about money, possessions, and giving. Remember, 2/3 of His parables dealt with the subject in some form or fashion. That's why next week we are going to cover giving, the principle of tithing and offerings.

However I want to leave us with one more scripture to think about this week and one more story.

The Apostle Paul had much to say about giving by inspiration of the Holy Spirit as well. As he was saying farewell to the Ephesian Church's eldership team tears were flowing, necks were hugged, and powerful last words were being delivered. These are his last recorded words to them before he knelt and prayed over them:

Acts 20:35 NLT

'You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

It is so apparent that in order to be disciples of Jesus Christ He wants all of us isn't it? And we are so accustomed to holding part of ourselves back.

Ivan the Great was the tsar of all of Russia during the Fifteenth Century. He brought together the warring tribes into one vast empire. He drove out the Tartars and established peace across the nation.

However, Ivan was so busy waging his campaigns that he did not have a family and to die without an heir would be to leave the empire in chaos. The busy soldier statesman did not have the time to search for a bride, but if a suitable one was found, he would marry her. One was found, the beautiful dark-eyed daughter of the King of Greece. She was young, brilliant, and charming. He agreed to marry her sight unseen.

The King of Greece was delighted. It would align Greece in a favorable way with the emerging giant of the north. But there had to be one condition, "He cannot marry my daughter unless he becomes a member of the Greek Orthodox Church." A priest was dispatched to Moscow to instruct Ivan in Orthodox doctrine. Ivan quickly completed the necessary education. Arrangements were concluded, and the tsar made his way to Athens accompanied by 500 of his crack troops-his personal palace guard. He was to be baptized into the Orthodox Church by immersion, as was the custom of the Eastern Church. His soldiers, ever loyal, asked to be baptized also. The Patriarch of the Church assigned 500 priests to give the soldiers a one-on-one catechism crash course. The soldiers, all 500 of them, were to be immersed in one mass baptism. Crowds gathered from all over Greece.

However, another problem was realized. The Church prohibited professional soldiers from being members; they would have to give up their commitment to bloodshed. They could not be killers and church members too.

After a hasty round of diplomacy, the problem was solved quite simply. As the words were spoken and the priests began to baptize them, each soldier reached to his side and withdrew his sword. Lifting it high overhead, every soldier was totally immersed, everything baptized except his fighting arm and sword.

I think oftentimes this is us. We give our lives to the Lord and follow Him wholeheartedly all the way... except our hand, clutching to our money or possessions, we hold up high as the exception.

Jesus wants us all, all of us completely.

Jesus didn't go to the cross holding anything back and we shouldn't come to the cross holding anything back either.

When you give Him your heart we are called to surrender your pocketbook to Him as well!

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray my Cuisinart to keep
I pray my stocks are on the rise
And that my analyst is wise
That all the wine I sip is white
And that my hot tub's watertight
That racquetball won't get too tough
That all my sushi's fresh enough
I pray my cordless phone still works
That my career won't lose its perks
My microwave won't radiate
My condo won't depreciate
I pray my health club doesn't close
And that my money market grows
If I go broke before I wake
I pray my Volvo they won't take.
[Matt Williams]