

Living for Giving: Introduction

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Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0 : 0 0] Well good morning and welcome to our online service for Sunday June 7th. Good morning to everyone. If you're here where we're located in Edmonton Alberta Canada it is very wet and rainy outside and it's forecast to be raining all day so stay indoors. I just have an echo there that I'm going to deal with. There we go. So stay indoors enjoy the service this morning and enjoy our fellowship this morning as we spend time together in God's word. My name is Kent Dixon and I'm the lead pastor of Braemar Baptist Church in Edmonton Alberta Canada and it's nice to be back with you this morning. I've talked to a few of you online and on phone calls and so on and so it's nice to be back in this way at least at least connecting with you in a personal way and so I want to thank my friend Dr. Randall Rauser who led us in a two-part series over the past two Sundays on

Christian apologetics. He led us in that over the past two weeks and I got a lot of feedback from people who were challenged and engaged by that and so I hope that you were encouraged. I hope that you learned something and I hope that you're able to have good conversation with people about it and I trust that through Randall's sermons you've gained a new perspective on how Christians can hold to both reason and facts but also to a sense of faith when we relate to others. Faith and facts or reason are not mutually exclusive and Randall taught us how they're actually very compatible and Jesus himself taught using reason, facts and emphasizing faith as well. So welcome to this welcome this morning to people from our church who are tuning in and I want to also welcome others who are watching or listening for the first time or have been listening since we've been live streaming during the pandemic week after week. So welcome to everyone this morning. I'll be leading us in celebrating communion this morning so as if you've participated online with that before here's some quick instructions gather what you have handy. So gather a glass of juice or water or a cracker or a small piece of bread or something like that and have those handy because we'll use them later on. Please check out the summary information for this video because it includes some helpful links and other information to help you connect with our church. And now this morning you don't know this because this is happening behind the scenes but I'm using a new software program that should allow us to try some new things this morning. So if you tuned in this morning you probably saw the intro screen that said we'll be live streaming shortly welcome with the logo and things like that. Now you're seeing me and throughout the service you'll see a few other things. So bear with me if there are any technical glitches because this is a brand new software program for me and you're looking at the technical guy. So your preacher this morning is also doing all sorts of stuff behind the scenes that you're not aware of. So if you hear clicks and things of mouse buttons you're just going to have to live with it. So one of the things that we're going to be able to do this morning that I'm looking forward to and my mother-in-law in particular has been giving me a hard time about for weeks watching online is singing. That's right. So this morning we're going to sing

All Creatures of Our God and King and I Stand Amazed. And these are two songs that are very familiar to most of us but you'll also be able to follow along with the lyrics as they appear on the screen. So let's praise God through singing this morning.

All Creatures of Our God and King Lift up your voice and with us sing Oh, praise Him Alleluia Thou burning sun and golden beam Thou still the moon is soft to gleam Oh, praise Him Oh, praise Him Oh, praise Him Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Thou rushing wind that art so strong Ye clouds assail in heaven along Oh, praise Him

Oh, praise Him Oh, praise Him Alleluia Oh, praise Him Alleluia Thou rising born in praise rejoice Thou rising born in praise rejoice Ye lights of evening find a voice Oh, praise Him Oh, praise Him Praise Him Let all things their Creator bless And worship Him in humbleness

[6 : 44] O Christ, alleluia Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son And praise the Spirit, three in one Oh, praise Him Oh, praise Him Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia I stand amazed

In the presence of Jesus the Nazarene And wonder how He could love me A sinner condemned unclean Singing Singing How marvelous How wonderful And my song Shall ever be How marvelous How wonderful Is my Savior And my Savior Is my Savior For me For me For me It was In the garden He prayed He prayed But thine But thine He had No Tears Tears For me For me He Am And 365 How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me. He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own. He bore the burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone.

[10 : 15] Singing how marvelous, how wonderful is my song shall ever be.

How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me.

Singing how marvelous, how wonderful is my song shall ever be.

How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me.

So this morning we're beginning a new series that I've titled Living Forgiving, Perspectives on Christian Stewardship. And that will take us through June. So each week we'll be looking at a different aspect of the idea of stewardship.

[11 : 37] Beginning this week with an introduction. And then in coming weeks we'll be looking at stewardship of our time, our talents, and our treasure.

Our money and our belongings. So stewardship is an interesting word, isn't it? For the average person on the street, they may equate the word stewardship with the environment.

With responsible use of natural resources. With recycling perhaps. Or other ideas along those lines. And just to back up again, I hope you enjoyed the songs this morning.

I muted my microphone so that you didn't have to hear me singing, which is not marvelous. And then I forgot to unmute it.

So apologies for that little technical glitch. And thank you to Pastor Luang for contacting me and saying, we can't hear you. So again, for the average person on the street, stewardship might have one meaning.

[12 : 40] And then for Christians, for us, I believe the word stewardship can make people really uncomfortable. Or it certainly has the potential to make them feel uncomfortable.

Especially if your first reaction is to think about money. For many people, and this is not just Christians, for many people they would rather talk about sex.

They would rather talk about politics. They would rather talk about the top news items of the day.

Than talk about their wallet. Talk about how they spend their money.

What they do with their money. How much money they have. How much money they earn. That's taboo for most of us. So for Christians, the word stewardship may also evoke the idea of that one Sunday a year.

And this is not it, by the way. That one Sunday a year when the pastor gets up and asks you to dig a little deeper. And drop more into the offering plate.

[13 : 47] And that's part of it. But it's not all of it. Because yes, stewardship does relate to money. But it also relates to much more than that.

And that's what we're going to look at over the course of this series. And the concept of stewardship is one of the predominant themes of the Bible. It's a foundational principle and value that should shape every aspect of our lives.

Now the New Testament word for stewardship is the Greek word oikonomia. And everybody that knows me knows that I like language. I like words.

And this is the point where if we were meeting together in the same space, I would say to you, Where do you think... What English word do you think we get from the Greek origin oikonomia? And I listen. And people say. And we talk about it. But the word we get from this Greek origin in English is the word economy.

[14 : 52] Not too surprising. And one of the words that economy can be defined is the management of a household. And it refers to the responsibility that's entrusted to a manager.

So this morning as we begin this series, I want us to first consider some of the things that... Hear me on this. Stewardship is not.

I'm going to deal with some preconceptions that we probably all have. First, as I kind of touched on, Stewardship is not just about money.

As I mentioned earlier, Stewardship encompasses everything that God gives us. And so that's why we'll be looking at how we are called to be good stewards, good managers of our time and our talents, as well as our money and our finances.

Second, Stewardship is not about guilt. I'm not throughout this series going to make you feel guilty. That's not my goal.

[16:02] My goal is not to make you feel guilty and somehow inadequate about how you feel you've been managing what God has given you in your life so far.

I think we tend to be hard on ourselves. We tend to have high expectations for ourselves. And I've said in, as I've said in previous sermons, since I've been at Braemar, we set a bar for ourselves and we tend to raise that bar incrementally.

So it's constantly unattainable. We maintain an unattainable standard for ourselves. And let me just take a sidetrack for one second, because in response to that, I reminded all of us that for us, God has no bar.

God has no expectations of us. He wants relationship with us. And so following God's commandments comes out of a relationship with God, where we love God, and that's why we do what he asks us to do.

Often children will respond to their parents, in their parents' requests for them, just because, just because they think they'll get in trouble. And I think many people who perceive Christianity a certain way, see that as well.

[17:27] That Christians follow rules, so we don't get in trouble. But that's not it at all. We follow rules. We follow God's commandments for us, God's desires for us, because we love him.

And we know that he loves us and cares for us. It's about relationship. So my goal in this series, is to help us to gain a biblical perspective on stewardship, and perhaps to see some of the truths of the concept more clearly.

And not surprisingly, as I mentioned, stewardship is one of the core topics in the Bible. You find it everywhere. And so, I'll barely scratch the surface over four weeks, believe it or not.

But we're going to put a dent in it. So that will, I hope that will help. And ultimately, I want to encourage you to lean in to what God is asking of you.

Now, third, in case you lost track of my points, first, stewardship is not just about money. Second, stewardship is not about guilt. Third, stewardship, stewardship is not about what you're giving up.

[18:38] Not about what you're letting go of, or losing out on. I think we have that perception. A healthy perspective on stewardship can actually free us to be more joyfully and intentionally engaged, and participating in God's plans for our lives, for the world, and for eternity.

And so, as you can tell, maybe you can't, but now you can, I'm a bad news first kind of person. So, I will eat the veggies, so that I can have the steak, or have the pie.

So, I've given you the nots, and now I'm going to give you the ises. So, now knowing the things that stewardship is not, what are the things that it actually is?

Well, first, stewardship is about having the proper perspective. Three words. It's not ours.

That is the correct perspective on stewardship. Human nature and human pride lead us to the conclusion that everything we are, everything we have, everything we own, is completely a result of our achievements.

[20:00] Would you agree with that statement? That human nature, human pride, leads us to the conclusion that everything we are, everything we have, everything we own, is completely a result of our achievements.

I think that's our default perspective. But as Christians, we must recognize that God is the creator, and therefore the ultimate owner of all things.

The teaching of God's creation and ownership of all things is absolutely clear in scripture. And so, we're going to look at a few verses. The Bible says in Psalm 24, verse 1, the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

That's pretty inclusive language, isn't it? So, it's pretty clear there that everything belongs to God. He owns it. The Bible says in Psalm 50, 5-0, verse 10, God is speaking here, For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.

As one commentator I read this week says, in this statement, God defines the notion that what people give him is theirs.

[21 : 25] He defies this notion, not defines. He defies the notion that what people give him is theirs, so what I give to God is mine. And that they are being magnanimous somehow, in parting with their property for God's sake.

He continues, many people today harbor the false perception that they own stuff, and then give some of it to God. Does that make sense?

Many people today harbor the false perception that they own stuff. I own it. It's mine. And then give some of it to God. I'm going to give God a little bit.

The Bible says in 1 Chronicles 29, verse 12, The Bible says in Haggai, chapter 2, verse 8, Acts 17, verse 25, Acts 17, verse 25, reminds us, And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything.

Rather, he himself gives everyone life, and breath, and everything else. But not only does God own everything, and need nothing from us, he freely provides for our needs, as we read in James 1, verse 17, Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

[23 : 25] So a correct view of stewardship also recognizes that God, not only does God create, not only does he own and provide all things, God is also sovereign, and the ruler over all authority.

When Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission, to preach the gospel, he very clearly declared that all power was his.

In Chronicles 29, 11 and 12, 1 Chronicles, they extol God's greatness, reminding us that all that is in heaven and earth is his, and that he reigns and has power over all creation.

And Revelation reminds us that ultimately, Jesus is the King of Kings, the King above all kings, and the Lord of Lords above all lords, ruling over all creation, and all earthly authority.

That's the end of the story. So finally then, a correct view of biblical stewardship recognizes that God delegates authority.

[24 : 47] He delegates authority to us, and we're to manage the resources he's given. Throughout scripture, we can clearly see places where God has delegated authority to humans.

He delegated to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1, 28 to 30, where he hands over the keys of creation to Adam and Eve to manage, to steward on his behalf.

God delegates authority to Noah in Genesis 9, verses 1 to 7, where we see God again delegates authority to humanity to manage or steward creation after the flood.

And through Jesus' parables in Matthew and Luke, he reinforces our responsibility to steward or manage God's resources for his glory, not ours.

It's not about me. It's not about you. It's not about how much you make. It's about what you do with it, how you manage, how you steward what God has given you.

[26 : 04] And ultimately, again, that process is for his glory, not ours. In his book called The Treasure Principle, Randy Alcorn makes a great statement about the concept of stewardship.

Alcorn says, a steward manages assets for the owner's benefit. The steward carries no sense of entitlement to the assets he manages.

It's his job to find out what the owner wants done with his assets, then carry out his will, carry out the owner's will.

And Alcorn says, whenever we think like owners, it's a red flag. We should be thinking like stewards, like investment managers, always looking for the best way to invest what the owner, God, has given to us.

So over the next few weeks, as we explore this concept of stewardship in the various areas of our lives, it's my hope that you'll develop a new perspective.

[27 : 20] A new take on the concept of what's yours is not actually yours, but God's. And I want you to ask God to reveal his will to you personally as the steward of what he has given you.

Do you recognize something about how God has delegated authority to humanity over time? I found it fascinating when I began to think about this and consider it, that delegation of authority, that passing the torch of stewardship, happened through covenants.

It happened through covenants with Adam and Eve, with Noah, and then ultimately through the messianic covenant that came with Jesus.

As Christians, we recognize that God's covenant through Jesus came at a great price. A debt paid that we owed but could never hope to repay.

The debt of our own sin. And this morning, as we reflect on Jesus and his sacrifice, we're celebrating communion together.

[28 : 40] And as I speak about that, just a reminder to get a small glass of whatever liquid you might have available where you are, juice or water, and get a small cracker or a piece of bread, whatever you have available, so that we can celebrate communion together this morning in this unique and special way.

Virtual communion. And remember, it's not about what you have available to eat and drink right now. Those things are not important. But what is important is what this represents to us.

So don't panic if you don't have Welch's grape juice kicking around. Everything, I promise, will be alright. I know people who have used grape crush pop, which is my favorite pop, by the way.

So, I'm not using grape, I am using grape juice. So I'm going to share some words of gathering for us as we prepare our hearts for communion this morning.

So I just encourage you to listen. Gather us in the lost and the lonely, the broken and breaking, the tired and the aching, who long for the nourishment found at your feast.

[29 : 56] Gather us in the done and the doubting, the wishing and wondering, the puzzled and pondering, who long for the company found at your feast.

Gather us in the proud and pretentious, the sure and superior, the never inferior, who long for the leveling found at your feast.

Gather us in the bright and the bustling, the stirrers, the shakers, the kind laughter makers, who long for the deeper joys found at your feast.

Gather us in from corner or limelight, from mansion or campsite, from fears and obsession, from tears and depression, from untold excesses, from treasured successes.

To meet, to eat, to be given a seat, be joined to the vine, be offered new wine.

[31 : 04] become like the least, be found at the feast. Gather us in. This is the table, not of Bramar Baptist Church, or any church for that matter, but this is the table of the Lord.

It's to be made ready for those who love him and for those who want to love him more. So come, if you have much faith and if you have little.

If you've come here often or if you've not been for a long time. If you've tried to follow and if you have failed.

Come, not because it is I who invite you. It is our Lord. It's here that we find that his will for those that want him can and should meet him here.

On the night when Jesus was betrayed, he sat at supper with his disciples while they were eating. He took a piece of bread, said a blessing, broke it, and gave it to them with the words, This is my body.

[32 : 30] It is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. My friends, the body of Christ broken for you.

Let's eat together and remember. Later, he took a cup of wine, saying, This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood.

Drink from it, all of you. to remember me. The blood of Christ poured out for you.

Let's drink together and remember. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus Christ, you've put your life in our hands.

[33 : 48] Now we put our lives into yours. Take us, renew, and remake us. What we have been is past.

What we shall be through you still awaits us. Lead us on. Take us with you. Amen.

Amen. On Communion Sundays at our church, we receive a benevolent offering that's used to help folks in our community who need a helping hand. And so the reality of that looks different right now. But I encourage you to continue to send offerings to the church. designate them for whatever you choose as you manage and steward God's resources that he's given you.

And I also encourage you to look for opportunities to show kindness and mercy to other people during this challenging time. Even socially distanced, we can care for one another.

[34 : 54] And I encourage you to look for those opportunities. Pray for God to put opportunities in front of you and to open your eyes and your ears to recognize them. Our benediction this morning comes from Hebrews chapter 13 verses 20 and 21.

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep.
May he equip you with everything good for doing his will. And may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.
Amen. My friends, go in peace knowing that the God who created all things has called you to be the steward and manager of what he has given you, the unique gifts that he's given to you.
May you be the steward and manager of those gifts according to the glory of his kingdom. Be blessed and have a great week.
[36 : 12] Have a great week. Have a great week.