No Stealing + Be Generous

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at Christchurcheastbay.org. Good morning.
I'm Melissa Arseniega, and I'm part of the Burke Community Group. Today's scripture reading is from Exodus chapter 20, Deuteronomy chapter 6, and 1 Corinthians chapter 4, as printed in your liturgy.
Exodus. And God spoke all these words. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.
You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
[1:14] Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear.
They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.
Deuteronomy. When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you a land with large flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant.
[2:34] Then, when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 1 Corinthians.

For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?
The grass withers and the flowers fall. The Lord our God is in the sky. Thank you, Adeline, for telling me to turn my microphone on.
Very important. Appreciate that. Let's go to the Lord in prayer as we look to what he has to say to us. Father, we want to hear from you this morning.
If you are not here with us, if your presence is not here, then we do not want to be here. But Lord, you have promised your presence to us in your word.
[3:31] So we want to experience all of who you are. Your love, your grace, your holiness, and all the things, Lord, that you would speak to us this morning.

So be present to us. Use your word in the way that you do. And we pray this in your son's name. Amen. Amen. So you know, this sermon cost me 850 bucks.
All right. And after last time I preached about my parking ticket, I'm down a thousand bucks in this sermon series. But this, again, this sermon cost me 850 bucks. We're talking about thou shalt not steal today.
What happened was on Wednesday, okay, I opened up my computer. It's time to get started on the sermon. And, you know, I'd done my studying.

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I'd done my reflecting. But as soon as I asked God, like I often do, God, please do your work through your word on your people and start with me. And opened my eyes, looked up at that blank screen.
[4:34] I couldn't. I couldn't start writing this sermon on thou shalt not steal. Which, by the way, it's the eighth commandment, thou shalt not steal. All right. Because there was something in my life that I hadn't dealt with.

See, last spring, my family of four, we went skiing. Me and the girls are learning how to ski. But before we even headed out to Tahoe, we'd recently made friends with this other family of four. And this family had these things called icon passes. Basically, season passes to ski unlimited. And because there wasn't much snow last year, and because they hadn't been able to use their passes as much as they'd liked, and because, you know, we're a Chinese family like them, and they have two girls just like us, and because the high schoolers running the ski lift, never check photo IDs, could care less really who they're scanning through, this other family insisted that we should take their passes and get some extra value out of them.
It felt like a win-win for everybody. So we went, and we skied for free, and it was awesome, all right? And, you know, I've been living guilt-free, happily ever since until, unthinkingly, I volunteered, yo, Jonathan, I'll preach the Eighth Commandment.
Not a good idea. Thou shalt not steal. And so as I studied and reflected this week, as God's law did what it's supposed to do, it pierced me, it examined me, it convicted me, it searched me, I realized I had a choice.
[6:04] I could either preach this like a hypocrite, or I could do the right thing. So before I started writing the sermon, I went and calculated, okay, how much, like, would it have cost me at that resort?

And then in the spirit of Moses' law, you know, Leviticus chapter 6 verse 5 says that even if you're repenting of something that you've stolen from someone, you've got to add a fifth to that and give, you know, the whole thing plus a fifth to the owner.
So that's what I did. I added that painful 20%. I sent the money. I moped about it to Chelsea through text. And then I got started writing this sermon, all right?
And I don't share this with you just to get a laugh. Seriously, what I did was wrong. We shouldn't downplay, minimize the breaking of God's law. And I also don't share this with you as if the point of this sermon or the point of the Eighth Commandment is for all of us to do, like, a scrupulous, exhaustive audit of our lives.
And I share this with you because thou shalt not steal. You know, it sounds like one of the simplest, like, kindergarten commands to understand and live by, right? And yet, isn't it remarkable how easy it is to justify and downplay breaking it when we take a real honest look at our own lives?
[7:14] And in case you're unconvinced that you have a problem with this, we're going to dive deeper to understand what God really intended in giving us this command. If you think the Eighth Commandment is simply about not taking what doesn't belong to you, you've really only begun to understand it.

See, the Eighth Commandment, it reveals so much more about God's heart for our neighbors, about justice and generosity, about how we're supposed to relate to our possessions and our neighbor's possessions.
And ultimately, like we've been seeing throughout all these commandments, this is a commandment that reveals to us something extraordinary about God himself. So, what did God mean when he told his people at Mount Sinai, thou shalt not steal?
Well, let's start with the obvious. It means no robbing, no burglary, no shoplifting, petty theft. Basically, don't take things that don't belong to you. No fraud, no cheating people. It means that Snickers bar that you stole as a child from the grocery store, that was wrong.
It means that that Boyz II Men album that you downloaded illegally off of Napster and then burned a CD to give to your high school crush, that was wrong. It means quiet quitting, being dishonest about how much you're working, claiming company time as work time when you know you're not working, that's wrong.
[8:29] The list goes on. According to the official doctrinal statement of our church, the Westminster Larger Catechism, it mentions things like oppression, extortion, bribery, usury, and quote, all other unjust or sinful ways of taking.

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So, here's the basic principle. We mustn't take what isn't ours because our neighbors have a right to their own possessions. And God, he expects us to respect what's rightfully theirs.
Simple principle, right? But then why, you know, where does it come from? Why does God care so much about protecting people's possessions? Well, think about it. Imagine someone stealing a package right off your front porch.
And honestly, under normal circumstances, you wouldn't care so much if you lost a cheap pair of socks from Amazon, right? Or like a little package of hair ties from Timu, right? But let's say your ring doorbell captures the moment that this package was stolen.
And no matter how little value that package contains, it's still infuriating, right? Why? Because it's not about the money you lost so much as how disrespected, how violated you feel.
[9:36] Because while you spent your own time, your own money, ordering this thing, reasonably expecting it to finally arrive safely at your doorstep, to be brought into your house at your own convenience, someone else came along, took advantage of that trust, and didn't give a second thought to you or what their actions might cost you in time, money, and trouble.

See, stealing isn't just about disregarding someone's possessions. It's about disregarding the person those possessions belong to. And once you understand that, you begin to realize that the Eighth Commandment is about so much more than simply not taking things from people.
In the Eighth Commandment, God's not just saying, keep your hands to yourself and leave other people's stuff alone. No, he's shaping our hearts and lives after his heart, calling us to actively seek our neighbor's good, whether concerning their possessions or even our own.
And again, I love how our church's Westminster Larger Catechism puts this. It starts by saying, the Eighth Commandment requires us to act truthfully, faithfully, and justly with our fellow human beings so that we give to all what they deserve.
And then it wraps up by saying, we must do our best by all just and lawful means to acquire, preserve, and increase our own and others' money and possessions.
[11:00] Did you catch that? Not just our own, but others'. In other words, it's not enough for me to say, well, at least I haven't taken anything from you. No, God actually calls me to care about your material well-being and to do what I reasonably can with my material well-being to protect and promote both of ours.

And you see this all throughout the law that God gives to his people Israel. For example, Deuteronomy 22, Exodus 23, Moses' law commanded that if the people ever saw their neighbors, even their enemies, ox, donkey, a sheep going astray, falling over in need of rescue, maybe they're caught in a pit, maybe they're caught tangled in some branches.
These people were obligated to return the animal to their owners. We're to honor, care for, and protect our neighbor's property, even our enemies. So, like, not just not taking your neighbor's package from their front porch, but maybe holding onto it until they get home to keep it safe for them, maybe making it less visible than that Amazon worker who left it way out wide in the open, right?
That's what's implied here in the Eighth Commandment. But listen, it goes far, it goes a lot further, all right? In Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 24, God, what he does is he forbids withholding a worker's wages, taking advantage of vulnerable laborers.
He says, this too, excuse me, this too is breaking the Eighth Commandment. You don't have to physically take someone's possessions to steal from them, God's saying here. You can also use your power, your position, or your business practices to enrich yourself at their expense, then you're guilty.
[12:34] For me, this has meant humanizing my gardener, our cleaners, my barber, increasing the tip, right? Giving my gardener, our cleaners, raises without them asking. Basically, not just asking how cheaply can I get their services, but whether I'm treating them fairly and generously.

Or if you're an employer and you have, you know, great influence over other people's wages and livelihoods, have you considered what the Eighth Commandment has to say to you about that? Or are you like Pharaoh, right?
Always looking to squeeze as many bricks as you can out of your staff without giving them straw? How do you conduct your business practices, your financial affairs?
Are you honest? Are you slow or negligent to repay what you've borrowed and still owe? Deuteronomy 25 calls all dishonest financial dealings an abomination to the Lord.

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Are our financial practices, our investments, are they humanizing? Are they worthy of the kingdom of God? Or are they manipulative and seeking unjust gain at the expense of others?
[13:37] I have another confession. You know, a little over eight years ago, I was starting to do a little bit more investing of my own, looking for good companies to grow my brokerage account, right?

And I initially invested in Philip Morris, all right? Big tobacco. I felt like the valuation was good. The dividend was juicy. And based on my international travels, I've been, man, people, a lot of people still smoke.
It's probably a hard habit to kick. Good recurring revenue. But shortly after I made that investment, it occurred to me that the goal of investing can't simply be just number go up, right?
So I sold my shares because I realized that I'd been investing in a business that was profiting, not off of human flourishing, right? But off of human vice and addiction. Now, I hope you're starting to catch the breadth and depth of the Eighth Commandment.
And perhaps you've begun to recognize ways that you've failed to love your neighbor as well, failed to honor what they were owed, failed to honor what rightfully belonged to them. But another thing you need to understand is that the Eighth Commandment also calls us to right our wrongs, talking about restitution here, to restore what we've wrongfully taken, to repair the harm we've caused, to make genuine restitution.
[14:51] In Exodus 22, God commanded that if you stole a sheep and sold it, you owe that person four. Five if you stole an ox. Because repentance isn't just a cheap apology and a promise not to do it again.

It's taking responsibility for what our neighbor has lost. You see this in Zacchaeus, right? The wealthy tax collector in the Gospel of Luke chapter 19. After encountering Jesus, Zacchaeus promises to repay four times whatever he defrauded people of.
Now again, I'm not telling you to go home and pull out your calculator, start applying ancient Israel's restitution laws word for word. But I do want us to recognize how seriously God takes our responsibility to make things right.
And listen, this isn't just about individual personal wrongdoing either. This has major implications for social justice in our communities, in our nation. Like right here in the Bay Area where many of us own homes, think about the Ohlone peoples whose ancestral lands were taken from them.
Think about our nation's history of slavery, how so much of America's agricultural economic prosperity was built through the unpaid labor of enslaved African Americans and how the injustices didn't simply end when slavery was abolished.
[16:10] We corporately, not just as individuals, need to consider what would meaningful restitution, meaningful reparations, meaningful justice look like today.

We need to be willing to have those kinds of uncomfortable and complicated, admittedly complicated conversations. Even if, you know, we weren't personally responsible for those injustices, many of us live, right, with the benefits that have come, at least in part, through the suffering and losses of others.
So at the very least, shouldn't we be willing to listen and expose ourselves to the gravity of these, like, incalculable losses? And listen, I'm not pretending to have all the answers.
Many of us would probably disagree about what policies are wise or what the next concrete steps ought to be toward justice. But we can't simply dismiss these questions just because they seem too impossible to answer or because the math is too difficult or because we'll never be able to deliver complete and perfect justice.
The point of restitution is not to arrive at some perfectly calculated repayment that will forever silence all the grievances of the Ohlone people or our African American neighbors.
[17:24] The truth is, restitution can never fully make the past unhappen, right? Even when we calculate what was taken, we can't calculate everything that was lost, the generational trauma, the internalized racism, and all the immeasurable opportunity costs, right?

Even when there's genuine repentance, even when there's forgiveness, the painful cost of injustice doesn't just vanish into thin air. Someone has borne that cost. Someone has suffered that loss. Many of them long gone. And no amount of money or policy can turn back the clock and make it all unhappen. But here's the thing. Just because we can't make everything right doesn't mean we shouldn't seek to make anything right.

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Imperfect justice isn't meaningless justice. And that's why, again, restitution isn't merely about calculating what we owe. It's about conviction and confession, taking responsibility and learning to love our neighbors enough to take their losses seriously.
Even when we cannot fully restore what was lost. And listen, in case you thought, okay, we've now exhausted the implications of the Eighth Commandment, there's still more.
[18:37] God doesn't merely call us to justice, but to generosity. To use what rightfully belongs to us for the good of others. Leviticus chapter 19, God commands His people that when they harvest their fields, they're not to harvest all the way out to the edges or go back and pick up every bit of grain that they left behind.

They're to leave some for the poor and for the foreigners living among them, like Ruth. And think about that. It's their land. It's their crops. They worked for it. But God says, it's not all yours to keep. It's not all yours to keep. In fact, we're supposed to work for the good of others. In Ephesians chapter 4, Paul says, let the thief no longer steal, but rather let them labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.
Do you hear that? So that he may have something to share with anyone in need. He's not merely trying to turn thieves into people who no longer steal. No, he's far more interested in transforming takers into givers.
And that's the full vision of the Eighth Commandment. It's not merely about protecting our possessions from our neighbors. It's about using our possessions to love them.
[19:47] Because sure, while there is a sense in which the Eighth Commandment recognizes and upholds the concept of personal and private property, in another real and more central sense, the Eighth Commandment, similar to the Second Commandment that said, God's not yours to be wielded however you want.

And similar to the Fourth and Six Commandments, your time is not your own. Your life, your neighbor's lives are not your own, but God's. The Eighth Commandment teaches us that our stuff is not our own, but God's.
So while we can genuinely, truly talk about property rights, your house, your money, your car are truly yours, but never in an absolute sense. Because, to quote the psalmist, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.
And honestly, to quote Apostle Paul, what do you have that you have not received? Your life? Did you conceive yourself, give birth to yourself, your abilities and talents?
Did you endow yourself with these gifts? Was it just by hard work and good luck that you received the opportunities that you did? And even if you insist that it was by hard work, it's not even your work ethic, your diligence, your grit, the way you're wired and conditioned, how you've been taught to challenge yourself and to be resilient.
[21:00] Are those not also gifts from God, the God who wired you, gifts from the God who put you in that family, put you in that culture to shape you? Even while acknowledging personal responsibility and agency and human will and effort, the fact is that God is sovereign.

And the fact that none of us is self-made nor self-sufficient should give us pause when we're tempted to treat all that we have as simply our own and not God's for us to manage and to steward appropriately and for his purposes above our own purposes.
That God is God and we are not relativizes any sense of ownership that we can claim. And God impressed this into the conscience of his people throughout his law, throughout the law that he gave them as they were entering into the promised land.
In Leviticus chapter 25, God forbids that any of their land be permanently sold because ultimately, quote, the land is mine. He says to them, the land is mine.
In Deuteronomy 6, we heard Melissa read that earlier. He reminds them again that everything they are about to have in the promised land is a gift they've not earned, but they've received from him. It says again, when the Lord your God brings you into the land, he swore to your fathers to give you a land with large flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant.
[22:28] Then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Two chapters later, Deuteronomy 8, he says again, when you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

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Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, led you through the dreadful wilderness, brought you water out of hard rock and gave you manna.
You may say to yourself, my power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me, but remember the Lord your God for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.
In order for us to understand and honor the Eighth Commandment, we have to get it through our heads and our hearts that our stuff is not our own, that everything we have, we've received as a gift from God.
And this is essential because as Harvard political philosopher Michael Sendell writes in his book, The Tyranny of Merit, he writes, the more we think of ourselves as self-made and self-sufficient, the harder it is to learn gratitude and humility and to care for the common good.
[23:54] See, from the very beginning, we were made not to see ourselves as self-made, we were made in God's image, creatures created by a creator. Our very existence and our every accomplishment always at bottom a gift, always contingent, always derivative.

We were made to depend. We were made to ask and to receive and not to take and seize. We were made for gratitude, not grasping. There's this pastor that I follow.
I read his substack. He's out in Oakland. His name's Kyle Brooks. He was actually the first pastoral resident here at Christ Church. Our church has supported them. We're good friends with them. And Kyle's been writing this substack on the Lord's Prayer recently.
And something he said about this line, give us this day our daily bread, has really stuck with me. He was reflecting on fatherhood and his toddlers and how he's finding himself again and again teaching his toddlers, we don't take, we ask.
We do not take, we ask and receive. And isn't that precisely the posture Jesus is commending to us when he's teaching us to pray, give us this day our daily bread.
[25:04] And in fact, isn't that how God created us to live from the very beginning? Think about Adam and Eve. God had given them everything they needed. An entire garden full of good gifts to enjoy.

They didn't need to take what God had forbidden them. They could simply receive and enjoy what he had generously provided. And yet, what did they do? They took, they reached, they grasped for the one thing God hadn't given them.
The one thing that was not theirs to take. And look where that's gotten us. Because, isn't that what we're all still doing? Even though God's given us all so much, we're still always grasping for more. Why? Because we're not just after more stuff. We're after the things we think this stuff will deliver us, right? Security, independence, control, the assurance that we're gonna be okay, that we're not gonna miss out, that we're gonna have enough, be enough.
And those aren't necessarily bad things to want. But when these good things become things we feel we must or that we deserve to have, it's amazing, right, how easily we can justify taking advantage of others to seize them.
[26:20] Again, take that icon pass story for example. Man, the justifications I could make for why using those ski passes was actually a good thing are endless, all right? Again, our friends insisted we could use their passes.

They already paid for them. It was for unlimited skiing anyways. They could have used them every single day of the season, right? So what was the difference for us going some of those days? And it was a lousy snow season.
Those passes weren't going to waste. And then also, you know, this ski resort was not one we'd ordinarily be able to afford and pay for. So what an opportunity for our girls to experience something, right?
And man, skiing is ridiculously expensive these days. Why should skiing be reserved only for people who can afford these outrageous prices? And besides, the employees, they barely checked. If they weren't going to enforce their own rules, isn't that on them? And honestly, the slopes, I got more, I got more. Honestly, the slopes were practically empty, okay? Our presence there wasn't adding to a super long line or anything.
[27:18] What was the harm? Actually, we bought food when we were there. So they were net positive. And we brought friends too and they bought food and gear too. So you could argue that

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the resort made money because we stole from them.

Maybe I should go get my $850 back. But you hear what's happening. I wanted to come out ahead. I wanted to get the most out of an opportunity and the more I wanted that, the more persuasive all my reasons started sounding.
And it's not just skiing. An employee fudges their hours and thinks, they underpay me anyway. An employer withholds wages and thinks, costs are through the roof. I got to keep this business afloat for everybody.
A customer takes advantage of a business and thinks, man, these guys practically have a monopoly, right? They're charging an arm and a leg. And they're such a huge corporation, this is a drop in the bucket. They won't miss it.
And sometimes, oftentimes, these complaints have a ton of truth to them. But a real grievance doesn't automatically justify wronging someone else.
[28:28] Our ability to explain our behavior is not the same as our ability to justify it. And notice, whose perspective is missing from all these explanations?

Our neighbors. See, when we're determined to get more for ourselves, the interests of others have a way of just disappearing from view. And it's not just that we have a diminished view of our neighbor, but also of God.
We don't trust that what God has given us is enough. The Bible scholar Tim Mackey makes this observation. He said, when we take something God's given to somebody else, we are essentially saying, God, you gave that to the wrong person.
You should have given that to me. Now think about what that implies. When we take, when we grasp for what's not ours, we're acting as though we know better than God.
We know better than you what we need, what we deserve. And this is living not in faith, but in fear. We're afraid we'll miss an opportunity. We're afraid we'll fall behind.
[29:34] We're afraid we'll be deprived of something we think we need or deserve. So the question is, can we actually trust this God of the Eighth Commandment? Do we trust Him?

Will we trust Him? The one who said, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Now, for most of these sermons, we've been emphasizing this prologue to the Decalogue. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery, out of the land of Egypt. And we've been saying, God delivered you, God ransomed you, God saved you, therefore you belong to Him. Therefore, have no other gods before Him.
Don't make any images, respect His name, remember the Sabbath, honor your parents, don't kill, don't commit adultery, and don't steal. And in a perfect world, those prohibitions should have been enough for all of us to live justly and righteously and ethically.
But it's still hard, isn't it? We still fall short, don't we? Even when we know and confess that we are not our own and our stuff is not our own, nor our neighbor's stuff our own, why?
[30:39] You know what I've realized as I was reflecting on the Eighth Commandment this week? There's another side to that coin, to the you are not your own coin. See, the reason the Hebrews were to obey the Eighth Commandment wasn't just because they were not their own and belonged to God, but also, and perhaps more importantly, because God belonged to them.

I am, he says, the Lord, your God. It's incredible. This is the heart of the covenant, that we are his and that he is ours, that the eternally free, the rich one, the holy, holy God of the universe, whom the heavens cannot contain, who is himself life abundant, has given himself to his people, to us. And this should blow our minds, especially when you factor in who we are and what we've done. Because think about what we've done with everything he's given us. In our sinful waywardness, like prodigal children, we've taken his gifts, our lives, our talents, our time, our possessions into our own hands, and we've treated them as though they were entirely our own, as though we could take what he's given us and use it however we wanted, for our own purposes, with little regard for him or our neighbors.
And when you think about all that we've taken, all we've withheld, all the people we've wronged, how could we possibly make it right? Remember what we said about restitution earlier, the cost of wrongdoing doesn't just disappear, someone bears the cost.
But see, the good news of the gospel is that when we had broken God's law, when we had taken his gifts and squandered them, when we owed a debt we could never repay, God gave again.

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[32:31] But this time, he gave himself. He gave us his only son to pay the debt we owed, to die the death of a thief on a cross, crucified between two thieves.

The one who had never stolen a thing, who had never wronged a neighbor, who had perfectly loved God and neighbor, the one to whom everything belonged, he emptied himself.
He gave it all. So, do you realize what this means for those of us who belong to the crucified and now risen Christ? We're rich.
He's given us everything by giving us himself. As Paul says in Romans 8, he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?
He is our shepherd, we shall not want. The shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep, who poured out his blood so that our cups could overflow. And this should change everything about how a Christian lives.
[33:38] You know, recently someone in my life sat down with their parents and their financial advisor. And he came away realizing that his parents were in a much stronger financial position than he'd ever imagined and that the inheritance that he and his siblings might one day receive was far more substantial than he'd expected.

And what's been fascinating to me is just how just knowing that has begun to change the way he thinks about money. See, for a long time, as long as I've known him, he's been really interested in personal finance and saving and investing and maximizing every dollar, every financial advantage he could possibly find.
But now his questions have begun to change. It's no longer just how can I reduce my spending, how can I save more, how can I accelerate accumulation, how can I invest wisely to grow my nest egg, but how should I steward everything that's been and that's going to be entrusted to me?
Who can I bless? How can I give more? How can I teach my children to be generous with what we've been given and how can I maximize the impact of my generosity? And so there's now a greater sense of responsibility, but it's a joyful responsibility.
There's a new freedom, even an excitement in him about all the good that might be done with what he's been given and what's coming to him. Here's the thing, he hasn't even received that inheritance yet and who knows what the future holds, but just the prospect of that inheritance has begun to loosen his grip on what he already owns.
[35:10] So man, how much more should knowing what we have in the risen, death-defeating Christ change the way we all live? Because in Christ, we have something infinitely greater than financial security.

We have God ourself. We can sing with the psalmist, whom have I in heaven but you? And on earth there's nothing I desire besides you. My heart and my flesh may fail, but the Lord is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
Is God your portion? Is God your forever portion? the treasure that neither death nor anything in all creation could take away from you. See, we don't have to live grasping, seizing, stealing, desperately flailing around afraid that we're not going to have enough or be enough.
We can work honestly. We can make things right when we've wronged people. We can care about our neighbor's well-being as much as our own. We can open our hands and give because of Jesus. Freely, joyfully, generously.
Not because generosity won't cost us anything, but because generosity can never cost us our greatest treasure in Christ. So like, what if the people of God actually lived as if this were true?
[36:30] Like people who know how rich we are. Receiving with gratitude, giving with joy, using what God has entrusted to us to love our neighbors.

because the God who commands us not to take has liberated us to receive instead and he's already given us himself in Christ.
Let's pray. Lord, would you pierce our hearts with the eighth commandment, the ways that we have fallen short, with our selfishness, our greed, our insecurity, our lack of faith and trust in you.
And would you lift our eyes to Jesus? God giving himself to us. Lord, blow our minds with that reality and change the way we live because of the generous God who's given himself to us in Christ.
Christ, in Jesus' name, amen.

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