

Autonomy and Money

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[0 : 00] Father, once again, as we continue to be in your presence, we acknowledge that we are way better at seeing sins in other people's lives than recognizing very obvious sins in our own lives.

And we confess before you, Father, that often we think we're smarter than your word, and it never dawns on us, Father, that actually your word is very wise and that our problems with it is its deep truthfulness and reality and wisdom.

So, Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would do a gentle but powerful work in our lives this morning, that you would so tune our hearts and open our hearts that we might be responsive and open to what you want to teach us through your word.

And so, Father, we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. You're supposed to begin a sermon with something catchy to get your attention, and that's very easy this morning because I'm going to talk about money.

And just if you're wondering why I'm going to talk about money, it's not because I was looking at the church finances and I thought it was time for me to give you a talk on that. It's not because I'd like a raise, although I'm not opposed to a raise.

[1 : 23] It has nothing to do with this. One of the things we do at Church of the Messiah is that it is our hope and belief, our hope that God's word will set the agenda for the sermon, and that really all I'm supposed to do is just try to make clear to you as God's herald what God's word says.

And the Bible, we preach through books of the Bible, which is how, you know, the Bible is written as books, and we preach through books of the Bible. And today the text talks about money. In fact, I have to confess, when I was first picking the book of Philippians, which I thought would be a good book to study while we were in lockdown, I'd completely and utterly forgotten that part of the book of Philippians talked about money.

But it ends by talking about money. So we're going to talk about money in terms of what the Bible says to us. Now, if you are here, and I have to also be conscious that people listen to this sermon through our webpage afterwards, the audio is recorded, and you can get it as a podcast.

I tell my non-Christian friends when they're curious, I say, if you're having trouble falling asleep, you can just put me on. I've had decades of experience of putting people to sleep, and I'm sure it will work with you.

But you can, for those listening online, if you are a seeker, you're trying to figure out what the Christian faith is, and you've come to this service with a friend, or you're listening online, we want you to know that we don't want you to give us any money.

[2 : 41] Like, in fact, actually, it would make us happy if you don't give us money. We would like to serve you. If during the lockdown there's anything you need that we can try to help you with, we'll try to help you. And once the lockdown's over, and we can once again have coffee and cookies after the service, we hope you stay and you have lots of cookies and lots of coffee and lots of tea, but we don't want your money.

Because the fact of the matter is, is that what we really want is for you to know Jesus. And I can tell you, no big surprise, that once you come to know Jesus, he's going to start to talk about every area of your life.

He's going to talk about your time and your peace and your anxiety and also talk about money. But what we really want is for you to know Jesus. So don't give us any money. No pressure at all, no obligation.

So money. We all know, because it's constantly in the advertisements, we all know that money has lots of power. It's one of the reasons that we like money, because it has lots and lots of power.

So the advertisements are about, you win the lottery, just think of all the things you can do, all the fun things you do. You'll only have friends, you'll only be happy, you'll only smile. We all know about the power of money. Whenever I think about the power of money at a personal level, I think about my friend Tom, who's now gone to be with the Lord.

[3 : 54] Tom was the wealthiest man that I've ever known, or at least, I mean, maybe I've known somebody who's wealthy or just didn't realize they were wealthy. But you counted his money in the tens of millions, okay?

Not millions or thousands, but the tens of millions. And back when he was still alive, there was a restaurant called High's, which is where a lot of powerful people went.

It was a very expensive steakhouse. And he liked to take me there for lunch occasionally. So there's all these deputy ministers, very rich people, Tom and me, as the exception, because I wasn't rich.

Still I'm not. Anyway, whenever we went into the restaurant, it was so funny. Every time we went, he always said, George, you're not allowed to order the cheapest thing on the menu. If you order the cheapest thing on the menu, I'm going to tell the waitress not to give it to you, and I'm going to order you something more expensive.

He always said that at the beginning. He was the type of guy he was. But this is where I noticed the power of money. He'd get the menu, not every time, he'd look through it. And then the waitress would come and he'd close and say, I don't like anything in the menu.

[4 : 57] Here's what I'd like. I'm not making it up. Here's what I like. And he said, for an appetizer, I'd like this and this. And I don't want just three or four of them. I'm really hungry for it. I'd like a big pile of it.

And then for my main course, I'd like this. And he described exactly what he wanted. And I would never in a million years think that that's what you say to a waitress, especially in an expensive restaurant. But they always just said, thank you, Tom.

And we'll make it happen because that's the power of money. So here's the thing. We all know the power of money. And if I tell you that one of the things that we're not as conscious of is the power of money in us or the power of money, like the power of money in you or the power of money over you, the fact of the matter is, is that if I say that, we can all start to think of people we know, whether it's through the media or even people in our own lives, that money has a grip on them and it's not very pretty.

It's not very good. It's a bad thing. But nothing in the Bible text this morning is going to make any sense to you unless you realize that the Bible comes with a particular assumption, not an assumption, a knowledge that money has a great power in you and in me and over you and over me.

Whenever I say you, I'm always thinking of myself as well. I'm not going to keep saying me. The Bible knows that money has a profound power in you and over you.

[6 : 23] And I'm going to give you a simple thought experiment because most people don't realize the power of money. I'll give you a simple thought experiment for you to realize the power of money has in you. Let's say right now, all of a sudden, your eyes start to glaze over a little bit and I think, of course, I'm starting to put you asleep.

But actually, God is coming to you and giving you a very direct message. And he says to you this, the next 12 months, you're going to give away \$10,000. \$10,000.

And then you say, well, you know, God, I only make \$40,000. Okay, that's fine. \$4,000. The next 12 months, you're going to give away \$4,000. Let's say it was that God left the building and as people walk by, all of a sudden, he encounters them and says, I want to show you the power of money in your life.

And so, your next 12 months, you have to give \$10,000 away. No options, no way to get out of it. \$10,000. Now, instantly, most people will start, if you actually think it's not a joke, most of you will start to feel a bit sick, a bit panicky.

And most of us will start to think of all the different reasons why this is completely and utterly impossible. My life would be over if I had to give away \$10,000 within the next 12 months.

[7 : 39] We, in a sense, it would be something very, very traumatic. We would feel sick. We would feel ruin. We would feel anger if we had to give away \$10,000.

So, that begins to give you a bit of, and we'd have all these excuses as to why it was completely and utterly impossible. But what all that is doing, you see, it's only when you give money away with no reward that you start to understand the power that money has over you and in you.

So, in light of that, listen again to the text. If you turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4, and we'll start reading at verse 10. I'm not going to read all the text today. It's been read, but I'm going to focus on particular things.

Just to be very, very clear, what's happened in the text is this. Remember, as the letter's coming to an end, Paul is in chains. He's under, in a sense, there's no room in the dungeon, so he's under a house arrest, but it's real arrest.

He's in chains, and he has guards with him all of the time. And back in the Roman world at that time, if you'd had to go do hard time, they didn't pay for you to do hard time.

[8 : 48] They didn't pay for your meals. He still has to pay for his meals. So, he's been going through a very, very hard time financially. And he's thanking the Philippians, and he's saying to the Philippians, you know, one of the things I love about you, the church in Philippi, is that right from the beginning, you were in both a prayer and financial partnership with me, and your finances helped me time and time and time again.

And he's not trying to give them any, he says, I understand that for, and we, he knows, and they know, but the text doesn't tell us why. But for some reason, they weren't able to give him money for a period of time, but they have now given him a substantial financial gift to relieve his great need. And so he's talking about money. So listen to how it begins here. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

So for whatever reason, we don't know. It doesn't matter why they weren't able to give money to him for a period of time, but now they've given him a gift. Verse 11, not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

[10 : 08] Now, I don't know if you notice that there's something in this text which is more than a little bit odd. We all understand that we would need help from God to handle hunger, and we'd need help from God to handle poverty.

But notice what happens in the text. Paul doesn't just say you need help from God to handle poverty. You need help from God to handle plenty and abundance. Look at it again.

Verse 12, I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

So the first point is this. It's a very, very surprising point. You need the Lord's strength to handle plenty and abundance. You need the Lord's strength to handle plenty and abundance.

And just by the way, I mean, I know that in Canada there's poor and there's rich, and obviously, and those differences matter, by the way. I mean, one of the things which is very, very, increasingly our society is becoming callous to the very bottom end of the spectrum.

[11 : 19] But that's a whole other topic of conversation. But from a world perspective, we're rich. And from an historical perspective, we're very rich.

And so many of us could really be described as plenty. In fact, probably for most of us in this room, unless you've chosen to fast, you've never had to miss a meal or go a day without food.

Not everybody here in this room. I know for a fact that wouldn't be true of everybody in the room.

But for most of us, we've never had to miss it unless we've chosen to fast. We haven't been, had no food at all in the house and no money to buy any food or be in a country where there's famine and there's no food to be had.

We have plenty. And so the text is saying something which is very, very surprising. You need the Lord's strength to handle plenty and abundance. Now, if you think about it for a second, this fits in with another problem that we human beings have that we rarely think about, especially Canadians. If you were to go once, you can finally go to, well, you go to a patio and you have a beer this afternoon and you get into a conversation, appropriately socially distanced with the tables around you. And you've been having a really, really, really hard time.

[12:32] You're financially, you don't qualify for the government money and you're just in a very, very, very hard time financially. And if you were to share over the beer, why is God doing this to me?

Like I'm a good person. Why is God doing this to me that I'm having this problem financially? Like everybody at the other table would go, that's like, that's a good question. Like that's the type of question you talk about like over a beer, over a coffee or around the barbecue.

It's a question that every Canadian understands. Why is it that God, why is God doing this to me? Why is it that I'm financially strapped or I'm in the midst of financial ruin?

But here's the interesting thing. Why is it that we ask this question, why am I financially strapped? But why is it that no Canadian ever asks themselves, why is God blessing me with so much money?

Like why is it that we only ask one question and not the other? In fact, if you were to say at the same bar a week later, I don't know why God is blessing me with these tens of thousands of dollars.

[13:39] Like I just don't understand it. Like nobody would understand that question. They wouldn't even know how to start to respond to it. You see, one of the things it reveals is that most human beings, in fact, I would say all human beings, whether we're conscious of it or not, walk around with one particular sentence rooted deep in our soul.

I am owed. I am owed. So if I'm not having the money that I think I need, it's a problem.

Why? Because I am owed. And if I'm having lots of finance, if I'm having financial plenty, I don't think anything at all about it. Why? I am owed.

Now, part of the human dilemma is this, that as we all know, people who very clearly act out of a belief of I am owed are completely and utterly miserable to be around.

It ruins relationships. But the fact of the matter is, is what's ruined the relationship is somebody being, in a sense, far more public or up front with an attitude that human beings have.

[14:56] It's a human problem. Now, this is connected to another interesting thing about the text. And one of the things I'm going to tell you is that there's this text is mistranslated.

And it's mistranslated because even in the original language, it seems to say nonsense. And so what the translators do is, and it's completely reasonable because they basically, when they're translating the Bible into English, they can't assume that you have somebody who knows the original language who can make things clear to you as to why it says the particular thing it says. So it changes a word. And I'm going to read this. If you go back and read verse 11, I'll translate accurately one of the words in there. And then you'll see the problem it would have if they translated it accurately.

It goes like this. Verse 11. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am how to be autonomous. What?

I have learned in whatever situation I am to be autonomous. I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound.

[16:07] In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of being autonomous in the facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. So what's the secret? How has he learned to be autonomous?

Verse 13. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. You go, what? That's not what autonomy means. You can't be autonomous if you're getting your autonomy from God giving you strength.

It doesn't make any sense. If you were to see my sermon notes, it's very interesting because, in fact, actually, the word that Paul uses here, you sort of have to wonder if you could go back in a time machine and he's dictating this letter to somebody writing it down.

And I haven't talked about it in different weeks, but, you know, there's lots of different times in this. Because he's dictating the letter to somebody who's writing it down, there's lots of different times where the grammar is atrocious.

It's terrible. Because what obviously has happened to Paul is he's gotten excited or he's gotten emotionally moved. And just like us, when we're emotionally moved or excited, our sentences don't often make – they get all broken and our grammar is bad.

[17:20] It's often reflected in the text and they smooth it over. And I haven't talked about it very much, but it's there. But in this case, you have to wonder, he's in Caesar's household. He's chained between Roman guards.

And this word autonomy was a technical word that was used in a very popular philosophy at the day. And you have to wonder if maybe the person who'd been having arguments about it and they'd been upholding this doctrine of autonomy, if they were in the other room while Paul's dictating it. And so just to mess with their heads, he said, I've learned the secret of autonomy and it's depending upon the strength that God gives. Like, I'm just guessing. But here's the thing. If you were to look at my sermon notes, one of the things that you would see in all of my sermon prep notes is at some point in time you would see a capital letter A and above it a little tiny four, as if I'm talking about A to the fourth power.

And what that is, it's a reminder for me to try to ask the question, how does the text connect to how most Canadians think? And here's how most Canadians think. It's a very similar idea to what was very prevalent to Paul in the exact same time.

[18:25] And how Canadians think generally is this. The most important thing is for them to be who they really are and who they were meant to be, to be authentic. And not only is it important for people to be authentic, they have to be authentic in a way which shows autonomy.

And we all know what this is. It's the very thing. Like, nobody can tell me how I should be happy, how I will be happy. Nobody can, only I know the real me deep within. Only I know the me that wants to come out. Only I know what I need to do to be happy, to be whole, to be complete, to be fulfilled, to be the person that I was meant to be.

Only I know that. And nobody can tell me, my boss, my husband, my wife, my mom, my dad, my kids, my neighbors, definitely not the Bible. Good grief, gag.

Like, definitely not. Only I know who I really am and what I need to be who I am. And I have to do it on my terms, not your terms, my terms.

[19:32] And when this is said in Hollywood and in the academia and in media and at the Tim Hortons and at the Starbucks, at the bar, at the shopping center, everybody, as this is being said, everybody just nods their head because we understand this is wisdom.

And so the first A is authenticity. The second A is autonomy. And the third A is actualization because we say that I need to pursue this. I need to pursue this.

It's right that I pursue this to become autonomous, to become authentic on my terms, not yours.

And the fourth A is this, because what we expect in this project is approval.

Approval. Applause would be even better. But approval and acclaim. What we expect when we say this is, way to go, girl. Way to go, guy. Two thumbs up.

Way to go. And in fact, one of the reasons you know that this is so important is because in Canadian society right now, one of the ways to create a deep rift in a family, a deep rift in friends, maybe a rift which will continue not just for a day or a week or months, but maybe even years, is if you, in your autonomy and authenticity project, and you're trying to actualize that, make it actually happen.

[20:52] And I don't know what it is. Maybe it's that you're spending too much or you go on a trip or you quit your job or you feel that, you know, you need to let the inner you be out and be sexually free. So you need to have, you know, sexual relations with different people or, you know, whatever.

And if one of your friends says, I don't know if what you're doing is right. How dare you? How dare you?

How dare you? Actually think that what I'm doing to be the me that I am meant to be is, how dare you?

And in fact, if that, if you go and then tell your friends, I'm doing this and I, you know, I have to be me and I'm starting to work on it. I'm, I'm overcoming things and I'm doing this and that.

And they don't approve. And every one of your friends will go, oh, they don't approve. How dare they not approve? How dare they not approve?

[22:01] So here we have this very, very funny text. I know the secret of autonomy and it comes in God's strength. Now, I don't know if you noticed as I tell you this.

By the way, I'm not going to go. You see, it's very interesting here because this is now where I, if I was a certain type of pastor, I'd thunder against this autonomy project and say how bad and terrible it is.

But the word of God constrains us. Right? Because what does the word of God say? I've learned the secret to autonomy. I've learned the secret to autonomy.

So it means we have to take a pause a little bit about what's going on in our culture. Because you see, it's not all bad. But the fact of the matter is, is that our cultural autonomy and authenticity project, the problem with it is, not just that many people can't do it, and lots of sorrow in our society is that people feeling trapped.

They're trapped. They have this sense of the autonomy, the authenticity, but they're trapped. They're trapped by finances. They're just trapped. They're trapped by a relationship or an obligation. They're just trapped, and it creates sorrow.

[23 : 08] But that's not the tragedy of the autonomy project. The tragedy of the autonomy project is, if you think about it for a second, it can never happen because it's contradictory. But because everybody in Canada believes it, nobody actually notices the contradiction.

What's the contradiction? How can I be autonomous if I need your approval? How can I be autonomous if I need your applause?

And if I have sorrow and anger because you don't give me applause, how can what possibly I am seeking be autonomy? It's inherently frustrating and inherently won't work.

And we Canadians are caught in an even bigger dilemma. What's the bigger dilemma? What do Canadians think about people who don't give a hoot about what they think? We don't want to be that person. We call them A begins with J.

A. You can figure out what the next three letters are. We call them A, something that begins with A, and anyway, I won't say the rest of it. Right? So the fact of the matter is, is our autonomy project can't possibly work because it's not actually autonomy.

[24 : 29] The approval is an absolutely essential part of that project. And yet at the same time, if we say, okay, well, we're just going to have A3. We're just going to have authenticity, autonomy, and actualization.

And we're not going to care. But the fact of the matter is, is that we Canadians look at people who never at all care, even remotely, about what anybody thinks. Nobody wants to be that person. And so we're trapped.

Here's what the Bible is telling us. Your true autonomy project, in quotes, is only found in Jesus, in his saving work, in his grace, and in his strength.

Right? I can do all things through him who strengthens me. The thing which is so amazing, then, about this text is this.

If you just think about it for a second. One of the things which is so remarkable and wonderful about the Christian faith, and that Canadians actually are often embarrassed about the thing which is one of the most wonderful things about the Christian faith.

[25 : 48] And part of the reason that we're uncomfortable with it is that we don't think we can perfectly describe it. But you don't need to perfectly describe it. You need to live it and appreciate the beauty of it.

Even if it means that you need to just trust that people who have IQs beyond the stratosphere, like a Calvin or Aquinas, they had at least a bit of a sense about this mystery.

But one of the wonderful things about the Christian faith is its understanding through Jesus that the true God and living God that actually exists is the triune God.

You see, only the triune God, it's only if there's a triune God that there, in fact, can be uniqueness and that there, in fact, can be generosity.

You see, the fact of the matter is that Canadians, at a deep level, value generosity, even if we don't practice it. How do we know this? Just imagine now for a moment you're walking down the street and there's a patio out there.

[26 : 45] And as you come up to the patio and you can hear your friends talking because you recognize their voice and you hear them talking about you and you just pause for a second because they're talking about you. And if one of them says, you know the problem with Bob?

He's so cheap. Look, I've never met a more miserly person. And they can give you some very colorful language. And all the other friends say, yeah, you know that's the problem with Bob. He's so cheap. Almost every Canadian would be deeply mortified.

Because in our heart of hearts, we know that generosity is a good thing. But consider the problem. If the only God that exists is Allah, well, how can Allah be generous?

In fact, how can he really value uniqueness and difference? Like, why would he even create anything? Think about the fact of the matter of, think about most Eastern religions. That the fact of

the matter is in Eastern religions, the existence of difference isn't something to be celebrated, but a problem to be overcome.

Because originally everything was one and there was some cosmic tragedy by which the one became many. And we have to get away from the many and back to the one. But think of the triune God.

[27 : 56] From all eternity, there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. From all eternity, the Father is the Father, the Son is the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit. And from all eternity, there is love and reciprocity.

There is generosity of giving and generosity and receiving of generosity. There is affirmation and praise and glory and delight from all eternity with no sense that at some point in time, the Father is going to think that this is a problem and he has to squash the Son or remove the Holy Spirit. But from all eternity, there is the Father loving the Son and the Holy Spirit. And from all eternity and out of the overflowing of their unity and their difference and out of the overflowing of their generosity, they create all things.

And human beings are made in the image of the triune God. And from all eternity, even today, even after evil and rebellion, the triune God is the one who maintains us in existence.

And how has the triune God created us? The triune God has created us so that every fingerprint is so unique it can be used to convict you of a crime and that your DNA is so unique it can be used to convict you of a crime.

[29 : 05] And the same God who's made you completely and utterly unique out of the overflow of his generosity and of his uniqueness and of his difference and of his conversation. And he creates you and sustains you.

It is only this God that redeems you. And will glorify you. The overflowing and unending generosity is the very nature of the triune God who created you, sustains you, and who alone can redeem and glorify you.

And how does the Bible describe what Jesus does for us? In Philippians, it's very interesting that they talk about money here. But earlier on in the letter, what is it they describe? They describe how God, the Son of God, sets aside his glory and prerogatives and the riches of heaven and the riches of his praise, sets it all aside but maintaining fully God.

He empties himself. In other words, he becomes poor. And he becomes poor and empties himself and has less and less and less and less so that he can walk among us and suffer all the trials and temptations we do without sin and all the shame that we do only without sin.

And he continues to not only empty himself but take upon himself our debt that when he dies upon the cross, he dies bearing our debt and our curse and our shame.

[30 : 21] And he descends even into the depths of death. And then he rises from the dead and he does it all for you and me in the uniqueness of who we are. How does 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 9 describe it?

He, though he was rich, he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich. That is how the gospel is described.

You see, only the gospel answers the true longing in your heart to be you, to be free, to be loved, and to hear, well done, my child.

You see, that aspect of our autonomy, which is really our autonomy project, which is real and true, is that we have this sense that we need to be unique and that being unique isn't a problem to be solved, but should be part of love and should be part of friendship and should be part of marriage and should be part of the state, that our uniqueness is not a problem to be solved.

And that to be appreciated for others, by others for your uniqueness is a true and good longing. And to hear that well done is a true and good longing.

[31 : 40] And the problem is, is that our autonomy project keeps us far from the true and living God and the true Savior that is provided by the triune God. God, because at the end of the day, the triune God who creates you unique, sustains you unique, redeems you, not so you will all have the same fingerprints and all have the same DNA.

And in heaven, you will not all have the same fingerprints and the same DNA. He restores you to humanity. And the true longing of our heart to be you, to be free, to be loved, to be generous, and to hear well done, my child is only found in the gospel.

How does this relate just wrapping it up to the power of money over our lives? Look at that game, what it says here in verse 13. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. So what is the very nature of the strength that will come from Jesus?

Well, think about it. What did Jesus do? Though he was rich, he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich. The Lord's strength is his generous gift to you, and his strength is the strength to become generous and free.

The Lord's strength is his generous gift to you, and his strength is the strength to become generous and free. It's not the strength to become rich. It's not the strength to become poor. See, that's one of the things which is so wonderful about the gospel.

[33 : 06] The gospel doesn't say if you're really holy, You'll sell everything you have and live a very poor and simple life. And the gospel doesn't say, if you want to know who the really holy people are, it's the very, very rich people.

It's the people who count their wealth in tens of millions or hundreds of millions or in tens of billions, and they're the really holy people. And the Bible says, no, the Bible is completely irrelevant to that. I mean, this is such a wonderful thing which is freeing about it. If you're a young person, you're trying to provide for your family, the Bible doesn't say that it's wrong to have ambition to get promotions to be able to provide for your family.

If you're thinking of coming up with an artistic process and it ends up making you very, very wealthy, you write the theme song for the next Friends and you can retire for the rest of your life on one song. It doesn't say that that's wrong.

If you come up with a business idea, if you get promotions in the government and you end up making more money, the Bible doesn't say that that's wrong. If you choose to become very, to be a low-income worker, to serve others or to do something for ministry, the Bible doesn't say that that's either wrong or good.

[34 : 09] What the Bible says is that money has power over you and in you and you need the Lord's strength to handle poverty and you need the Lord's strength to handle prosperity. And what type of strength will he give you?

He will not give you the strength just to become rich. But what the strength is, is the strength is that which is in keeping with who he is in the gospel. The strength is his generous gift to you and his strength is the strength to become generous and free.

Just wrap it up now. I don't know where any of you are here in the room and I don't know those who might listen to this online. There's no better time now than to give your life to Jesus.

You all know how I am owed just ruined your life. You all know that your autonomy project is doomed. But what you really long for can only be found in Jesus.

There's no better time now than to give your life to Jesus. And I've just put a prayer up here. You can go online later on and see it for yourself. And if you have never given your life to Jesus, I suggest you pray a prayer like this.

[35 : 13] At the end of the day, if all you say, Jesus, be my Savior and Lord, that's all that's needed. It's not magic. Lord Jesus Christ, I reject my autonomy project. I reject my belief that I am owed.

Thank you that you died upon the cross for me and the saving grace that you offer. Jesus, please come into my life and be my Savior and Lord. I hold nothing back. Thank you that you will never let me go or leave me.

Help me to stay close to you every day. Fill me with the Holy Spirit. Amen. Just in closing, for those of us here, who are Christians, the Lord challenges us to be generous.

The closer we are to Jesus, the more the Holy Spirit has his role in our lives, the more generosity is obvious. Back at the last summer job that I ever had, I worked with a contractor, and mainly he hired me because I could dig ditches and lug things and stuff.

But he asked me to help him do some hammering with a deck. And he said, George, just place the boards slightly closer than usual apart. And I said, what's that?

[36 : 28] And then he went off, and I went back to him and I said, Rex, I have no idea what that instruction means. He said, what do you mean? Just a little bit less, like a little bit closer than usual. I said, I have no idea what usual is.

Is it supposed to be like this? Is it supposed to be like this? Like, I have no idea. I had no idea. So he nailed a couple for me so I could figure out what it was. And that's what tithing is. Okay, there's a

general, God is going to make you more generous.

You're going to start to have less, money will have less power over you and in your life. You'll get the strength that comes from Jesus as you're put by the gospel. Like, what does generous mean? Like \$2? 10%.

Rough rule of thumb. Rough rule of thumb. And if you wait until you have enough money to be generous, you'll never be generous. Never. Never happen.

It's a decision. I invite you to stand. I'm going to say this. You don't have to pray it with me. But I'm going to invite you to pray it with me as a closing prayer to sum up what we've talked about here in the sermon.

[37 : 33] If the Lord is, it's not a sign of your holiness if you pray it out loud with me and it's not a sign of your complete and utter rejection of Jesus if you don't pray it out with me. It's a matter of freedom. But if the Lord has put it upon you, I think the fact of the matter is is that every single one of us would like to die to the belief that I am owed.

And every one of us would like to die to be free and not have money have power over us or in us. Free to have very little money or free to have more money and be able to handle it well in a way that is generous and free and meets the needs of the church and the needs of God's people.

And so if he has put it on your heart, if you would join with me in praying this prayer in closing. Lord, please grip me with the gospel and fill me with your strength. Please help me to put money's power in my life to death and grow in me a great generosity for the gospel ministry of my church and your people.

All for God's glory. Amen. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us with might and power and deep conviction that we might grow into the people that you are preparing us to be for all eternity.

And we long and yearn to see Jesus face to face and hear his well done. And all God's people said, Amen.