

United In Our Giving Part 1: Why We Give

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[0 : 00] Let me just let you know, the first Sunday of the year, I preached a sermon on United in our mission, and so our great God is at work making disciples of all nations for His name's sake, and we get to join Him in that.

Last week, I preached a sermon on United in our gathering from Hebrews 10 of why we need to gather together every Sunday after Sunday, and for the next two Sundays, I'm going to be preaching on United in our generosity, two sermons on giving, and I want to up front make this shameless plug for this great book, The Treasure Principle.

It's by Randy Alcorn. We have 10 of these available to you out at the Connect desk. Kelly is going to be sending out in Tuesday's update a link to how you can get this book to.

It's 10 bucks, and it's going to be some of the best \$10 you spend when it comes to stewarding the resources that God has entrusted to you. So today, I get to preach on why we give, what's at the heart of Christian generosity, and I want to start by reminding you of this guy named Smeagol. Smeagol was a happy-go-lucky hobbit of the river folk. Do you remember him? And everything changed when he discovered the ring of power.

[1 : 34] Smeagol was gradually transformed into Gollum. Can you see Gollum in your mind's eye?

In the depths of darkness, not in the light on a river, in the depths of the darkness in a cave, squatting on his haunches, his left hand open.

In his left hand is the ring of power. And you remember what he's doing with his right hand?

Caressing that ring. You know what he says. My precious.

It's a really powerful picture of what happens when we worship false gods. We're transformed into something we don't want to be.

What the ring of power was to Gollum, the love of money is to us.

[2 : 38] It's a my precious. And it can unform us. According to our Bibles, it's not money, but it's the love of money.

That's the root of all evils. Let's call it the Gollum effect. That the love of money dulls your spiritual senses.

It diminishes your outlook. And here's what I mean by that. Do you remember the dot and the line?

The line is eternity. And we are a 70 to 80 year dot on the line of eternity.

And here's what the love of money does. It makes you myopic. It's spiritual myopia. It's where you think that all that there is is a 70 to 80 years.

Eat, drink, and be merry. The love of money distracts us from the riches of God's grace.

[3 : 43] The love of money deadens us to the needs of others. The love of money denies that Jesus is the greatest treasure of all.

It usurps his place. The unchecked love of money will result in spiritual drift in even potential apostasy.

We'll see that in just a second. And what we all know living in this culture is that the love of money, greed, is a temptation common to man.

Being a 21st century American, this is so common. It's the air that we breathe. It's in all the commercials we tend to see. Gordon Gekko in the 1987 movie, Wall Street, said it this way.

Greed is good. But God doesn't say greed is good. The God of the Bible says that the love of money is evil and destructive.

[4 : 48] So at the outset of the sermon, I need to help you to see that. Let me just give you some choice passages from the New Testament that speak of the love of money.

In Hebrews 13.5, this is on page 1197 of your pew Bible, we read this. Keep your life free from the love of money and be content with what you have. 2 Timothy chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, 1182 of

your pew Bible.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of themselves and lovers of money. On and on and on. In 1 Timothy 6, we read this.

6.6. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

[6 : 11] If we go on into Luke. This is Jesus speaking. Luke 12.15.

Jesus says, Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, love of money. For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Friends. When we get into the greatest sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says this in Matthew 6, 19-21.

He says, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also on heaven or on earth. No one can serve two masters, verse 24. For either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. You cannot be a steward of both God and money. Don't let the love of money golemize you.

[7 : 21] Don't let the love of money golemize you.

Don't let the love of God golemize you. Don't let the love of God, let the love of our possessions say this is mine and it changes us to being open-handed. This is God's. It moves us from being afraid of our futures and hoarding all we can to trusting in God's promises for our future.

and where I want to help you see this from is in Proverbs chapter 3 verses 9 and 10 let me read it for you this is ancient wisdom and it is so applicable today we read this honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine so this morning I want to give you three reasons why we are to be generous I'm not telling this morning it's not how to be generous that's next week this morning is why be generous and here are three reasons the gospel's changed our hearts it's now about God's glory second reason we think about ourselves differently we have a new mindset not as owners God's stewards and finally the hope of our generosity is not all that we can accumulate it's in God's promises so the three reasons we're going to look at this morning is that the gospel has so changed us now we live out our financial stewardship for God's glory as God's stewards trusting in God's promises let's dive in the heart of generosity is centered on God's glory did you see honor the Lord with your wealth in Proverbs 3 9 it's on page 1 move forward it's on page 6 27 of your pew bible honor the Lord with your wealth the Christless Americanized version of this verse goes like this it's not honor God with your wealth it's honor yourself with your wealth give yourself the worth worship yourself with your money that word honor is the verbal form of a Hebrew word kabod and that word means to give weight to something to take something seriously it's the word we would use to say to glorify something to give glory to something it's another way of talking about worship to glorify God with your wealth to worship the Lord with your wealth in order for us to honor and glorify God with our wealth we must value God more than our wealth and the question is why why honor him above our wealth why honor him with our wealth well it's because of who he is that word Lord in verse 9 honor the Lord you'll notice it's all capitalized all the letters are capitalized that's signaling to you that underneath that word is the Hebrew name for God Yahweh Exodus chapter 3 Moses is out in the wilderness all of a sudden there is this burning bush and the bush isn't being consumed by its fire it's self perpetuating it's self sustaining it's self supportive it's independent take off your shoes you're on holy ground

[12 : 07] God then proceeds to commission Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him it's time for my people to come out and Moses says well who do I tell is sending me and God says tell them I am who I am is sending you the great I am so you can translate this glorify the great I am with your wealth and the first fruits of your produce and this great I am is the creator of all the sustainer of all the savior of all and the judge of all in fact in Psalm 24 1 we read of this great I am the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof the earth is the great I am the earth belongs to

Yahweh and everything in it don't miss the scope it all belongs to God everything is his this extraordinary claim is that everything everything belongs to God by virtue of him being the creator of all it's all his there is nothing that you have that has not come from the hand of God in some way and so the first thing that we need to understand when we are talking about God's glory in our giving this is an issue of worship this is this is theological and we are to steward our finances and our possessions in light of who he is we're to glorify him and he just doesn't own everything he's generous he causes the rain to fall on the righteous and on the unrighteous he feeds all the animals of the world

God is no golem God is no golem he is so generous that everything everything that belongs to him he gives and gives and gives everything belongs to him including everything that you have all of your finances all of your material possessions they're his there's this one passage in 1st Corinthians 6 it's having to do with sexual immorality and Paul is writing the Corinthians church and he says flee sexual immorality for you are not your own you were bought at a price so glorify God with your body and we can we can bring that to bear at our finances we can say you're not your own you were bought at a price so glorify God with all that you got it's all his this is incredibly countercultural if Psalm 24 1 is true the earth and the fullness thereof belongs to the Lord that means everything everything in your wallet is his it means your house and everything in it is his there's nothing that you have that's not his that doesn't come from him he's no golem but what about the little golem in each of us right but what about the love of money that's in us what what what about this thing in me that would rather worship created things than the creator of all things what what do we do about this heart of ours that is prone to wander Lord we know it prone to leave the Lord we love for the love of money what are we going to do about that how do we change that God has done something about that he's done something extraordinary about that this is where the gospel of

Jesus Christ makes an extraordinary difference in our day to day living the gospel is simply the fact that Jesus Christ God in the flesh the incarnate I am died in our place and was raised from the dead and it is God's power unto salvation and when you believe that you're radically changed you've been given a new affection a new heart God has caused you now to be able to live for him through the gospel of Jesus Christ he is able to deliver you from the love of money the gospel does that Christ death and resurrection empowered by the Holy Spirit bring it to bear in your life he makes you new and gives you a new relationship to money

[17 : 34] Jesus went into the tomb dead and he came out of the tomb alive so that we would treasure Jesus above all else he would be the treasure that governs all of our treasures it's this gospel that de golemizes us and makes us godly and sets God's glory as the controlling center of our lives making us more Christ like there's this story in Luke 19 1 through 10 of this wee little man named Zacchaeus he was a tax collector he loved money and Jesus comes to town he's up in this tree and Jesus says Zacchaeus

I'm coming to your house for dinner and Zacchaeus is like yes come home there were some rumblings why would he go eat with a tax collector and then Zacchaeus starts talking about how he he's trying to make all of his wrongs right financially he'll give back everything he can fourfold to those people he's wronged and you know what Jesus said to him today salvation has come to the house of Zacchaeus when God's grace comes to town it changes your relationship to money it changes takers into givers it changes closed fists into open hands it changes monies for me to monies for God and his purposes so at the heart of Christian generosity is this gospel changed heart that is wanting

God's glory above all else with everything that he's given me not just a portion of it all of it I want to steward now for his glory if you're non Christian in the room and you know what it's like to be golem Jesus can set you free from that call out to him say forgive me Lord Jesus for saying my precious and worshipping at the throne of the love of money will you deliver me give me a new heart so that I live for you amen and if you are a Christian who struggles with this and almost all of us in the room do to certain extent you know what repentance looks like it's turning from putting your trust in money and putting your trust in Jesus again and again treasuring her put your stake in the ground and say Jesus you are my greatest treasure the heart of generosity is a heart that seeks God's glory above all else and that only happens through the gospel of Jesus Christ the second reason for our generosity of why we give is a new mindset we are God's stewards we see this in the second half of 3 9 honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce the you the your in the original context is one of Solomon's sons that's who Solomon is writing these

proverbs to but how do you make sense of that your what are you investing that with are you thinking that your is a reference to private ownership that it's all yours or is this to be understood as a steward not not private ownership in the sense of it's mine and only mine but as a steward God has entrusted these things to me all of them and now I'm going to steward them for his glory it's a change of mindset it's a change of how you see your relationship to your money and your possessions and who they're for a steward manages his master her master's finances and possessions it's a stewardship it's a management role and that's what's behind Matthew 25 in the parable of the talents do you remember that a master is going on a journey he gives three of his servants three different amounts of money they're called talents they are to invest them he comes back he holds them accountable and those who make a return on the investment he says well done come on in enter the joy of master and the guy that hit it he's like you're out in Luke 16 we read this one who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much and one who is dishonest not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth who will entrust you the true riches and if you have not been faithful in that which is another's who will give you that which is your own no servant can serve two masters for either will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other you cannot serve

[23 : 27] God and money this is stewardship language this is managing other people's resources and as Christians who have been radically changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ our mindset shifts from this is all mine to this is all God's and now I need to steward it all for him the goal of a steward is to honor his master with all that's been entrusted to him or her this kind of shift do you know what it does it delivers you from the Gollum effect it rescues you from the love of money this isn't mine this is God's and so here's here's the mindset that I think we can adopt kind of four moves here you ready here's the first one it's all

God's Psalm 24 one second step it's not mine I'm just a steward of this the third move is when I see myself as a steward of what God has entrusted to me I don't hold tightly onto it as if it is mine I open my hand to it because it's God's and that leads me to the fourth point it's a question stewards ask here's the question of a steward how can I use these resources to honor my master not for me but for him how can I use all that he has entrusted to me for the greatness of his name for the glory of his name to bring glory and majesty to him how do I use this how do we use my house how do we use my cars how do we use our account bank accounts for his namesake it's all his it's not mine I open my hand and I'm like Lord show me how to use this show us how to use this and believe it or not do you know what's in that there is incredible amounts of joy living for the glory of God now you may be feeling a tug right now okay okay you're like tell me what to do how much do I give can we talk percentages can what does this look like we're going to get into that much more next week but just for the sake of time just just just to help you let's talk about the tithe the word tithe means literally 10% and in Leviticus 27 through 30 the Israel God's people are compelled to give 10% of their produce 10% of all that they've got and then that was to be given for worship when you see this in the

Old Testament it's ineffective in the Old Testament in the Old Covenant in the Old Testament is pre Jesus but in the New Testament under the New Covenant having been established by the blood of Jesus you no longer read tithe language the New Testament goes silent on tithe language and so it's kind of a challenge to make an argument one way or the other of whether or not the New Testament is upholding the what the New Testament emphasizes and we'll see this next week are more principles attitudes kind of the way we do things generosity sacrifice thoughtfulness cheerfulness others oriented in our giving we're moved into stewardship language that book I referenced the treasure principle by Randy Alcorn he talks about the tithe in a very helpful way he talks about it and I would agree with him as seeing the tithe as the 10% of your income as something to aim at and not be limited by don't feel like you can only give 10% but the tithe is something that we can aim at now in order to start giving for God's glory because we're his stewards and Lord willing someday we surpass that what I want to help you with this morning though is not so much of the how's but the whys the gospel has changed our hearts so that now we get to glorify God with our wealth and we are God's stewards all of it belongs to him therefore we are to manage what he's given to us for his name's sake

[28 : 50] I've got two questions for you before we move on to the last reason have you been managing God's resources what he's given to you all of it have you been managing God's resources under a false pretense that they're actually yours in the sense that you're the sole owner

when in fact what the Bible says is you're a steward do you need to turn from something there do you need to open your hand up the second question is this are you presently using God's resources that he has entrusted to you to glorify him with are you using his resources for things that grieve him for example on the sanctity of life

Sunday are you giving to Planned Parenthood that will grieve him are you using the resources that God has given to you to fuel some kind of chemical addiction it will golemize you there's such a proliferation of online gambling sites now the question to ask is this is your gambling the money that God has entrusted to you good stewardship in his eyes could you just think of what money can go to in advancing his glorious purposes when you're using money for pornography it is a conflict of interest with your master's intent if you are using your money just to acquire more and more possessions so that you are trying to be happy life is not in how much stuff you own are you presently using

God's resources for that which grieves God it's a really good question to ask it's kind of the other side of the stewardship question of Lord how can I honor you with all you have given to me the second reason why we give is we're God's stewards the third reason why we give has to do with hope has to do with assurance the hope of our generosity the assurance of our generosity when we give as God's stewards for the glory of God we give trusting in God's promises if you look at verse 10 of Proverbs 3 you read then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine if you honor the Lord with all of your stuff all of your possessions then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine it's essentially a promise and the question is why would

God want to make this kind of promise to us in terms of our stewardship what what what does he want us to know here it's meant to assure you this promise is an assurance because maybe maybe the thought of giving back to God 10% of what is already his and it's something you're aiming at if the thought of that starts to unsettle you the thought of that starts to make you nervous insecure you start asking questions well if I do that then what about this if I do that then what about this and then will we be in a position to be able to retire comfortably what does that mean it's into that fear that this promise tends to your heart God is assuring us he's like saying if you honor me with your wealth

I will take care of you I will meet all of your needs and then some you can trust me now if you are new to Christianity new to following Jesus and new to this giving thing or you're stale you haven't given this much thought you've been avoiding this perhaps what you need to know is that this Christian generosity this is by faith this is us trusting God did you notice that in up earlier in Proverbs 3 3 5 trust in the Lord with all your heart lean not on your own understanding in all your ways know him trust him be with him commune with him be not wise in your own wise eyes fear the Lord honor the Lord with your wealth if you honor me I will take care of you and as we trust [34 : 33] God in this act of grace 2nd Corinthians 8 we're going to experience joy transforming joy we will be de-golemized we'll become more godlike it's interesting in Matthew 6 19 through 33 Jesus is compelling his disciples to invest invest in heaven invest in eternity don't lay up treasures on earth lay up treasures in heaven no one can serve two masters you're going to either serve God or you're going to serve mammon and then he starts talking about anxiety it's like Jesus is anticipating our anxiety and fears that come along with being generous with the resources he's given us and he says don't worry do not be anxious what shall we eat what shall we drink what shall we wear for the gentiles are seeking all these things and your heavenly father knows that you need them need them all but seek first the kingdom of

God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you promise in Hebrews 13 which I started off with we read this keep your life from the love of money and be content with you have for he has said I will never leave you nor forsake you promise be generous I am with you I'm never going to bail on you I'll take care of all of your needs come join me in being generous so we give generously even sacrificially trusting that our God of grace who owns all things that if we trust him he will take care of us and there will be huge amounts of joy but let me just remind you of a couple things this is the same

God who created the world out of nothing this is the God of John 2 this this incarnate I am who made water into wine for a wedding power on display in Matthew Mark 6 he feeds 5,000 Jewish men Mark 8 feeds 4,000 Gentile men by multiplying just some fish and loaves that's what he's able to do he raises people from the dead that's what he's able to do you not think he can help you he's

got the motive unconditional love and he's got the power unlimited power and he's got the opportunity you trusting him will you trust him if Jesus was willing to die for you how much more will along with that he meet all of your needs what we're talking about when we're talking about giving and giving sacrificially and giving generously it can make you nervous about your future but can I just tell you your money isn't holding your future in its hands your God is God has your future in his hands if you think you're hearing the health and wealth gospel right now you're not I'm not saying hey give five fold to God and you'll get ten fold back the health and wealth gospel is actually the love of money dressed up with Christian talk it's wicked God is not some kind of get rich quick scheme he he is our treasure when we talk about why we give we got to hold on tightly to these wonderful promises of

God that as we give and give generously and even sacrificially that God will take care of us he's promised let's take him at his word so why do we give how do we protect ourselves from the golemizing effect of the love of money and how do we live in the goodness of what God has done through the gospel well we remember that the gospel has changed our hearts we don't live for our glory we live for him not to us Lord not to us but to your name give glory because of your steadfast love and faithfulness we have gospel changed identities now we don't think of ourselves as everything that is mine we see ourselves as being God's stewards over everything that he's entrusted to us it opens your hands and this same gospel changes our hopes it moves our hope of a future off the shifting sands of money and onto the solid ground of

[40 : 04] God and his promises he will take care of us we're in his hands these are the reasons why we give God's glory we're God's stewards trusting in God's promises and when we do this together it unites us as a church glorifying God together stewards God's resources together trusting in God's promises together and experiencing the joy that comes with that together the gospel has radically changed us Martin Luther put it this way when someone comes to Christ there are two conversions first the conversion of their heart and then the conversion of their wallet let's pray together drink and do other locking moments and hearing nothing vontade of her at br if you enter what everything you pump and to