

The heart of Giving

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[0 : 01] Good morning. Welcome here this morning as we've gathered to continue to fellowship and to worship in the name of Jesus.

I was really blessed in our Sunday school this morning by some of God's promises. And we were in Ephesians 1 and I thought I'd share a verse or maybe two verses here.

But Paul's prayer for the church in Ephesus for standing in God may grow. And I'll read verse 17 and 18 just as a word of encouragement.

And here's his prayer. May give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened. That you may know what is the hope of his calling. And what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance to the saints.

[1 : 09] And so Paul's prayer is that our understanding of the depth of God would increase.

The hope of our calling and furthermore the greatness of our inheritance. Does that encourage us?

To think that the depth, the hope that we have because God is faithful. And the greatness of the inheritance awaiting us on the other side of life here on earth.

And we have everything to wait for. And as we continue on in this life, day by day, we need to focus on the eternal and what's waiting for us.

And it's that that pulls us through. And as we learn to taste God and to experience him, our faith increases. Our knowledge, our understanding from the heart grows as we see God played out in real life.

[2 : 31] The scriptures matching real life. So may God bless us with that. Before we go into the message, just on a different note, we've been discussing to put up a Bible verse up front here behind the screen.

And it being a Bible verse that would show the vision for the church or the theme. What do we stand for?

And there's numerous verses that would be quite applicable. But I would like to turn to you and ask for input.

And as you think about this, what would be a verse that would depict what is our purpose as Mountview?

And maybe submit it to us, to one of the ministerial, and we'll go through them. And by God's grace, we'll choose what is the most fitting.

[3 : 44] So this is open to children, to youth, to parents, and grandparents, and great-grandpa as well.

So yeah, feel free to give that some thought. I think it would be good to have a reminder up there. Why are we here? All right.

Back to preaching. Thank you for reading the passage here in Mark, Pedro. And I had mentioned last Sunday that we would deviate a little bit from Romans 13 and have a topical message more on what do we owe God?

We had discussed, you know, paying taxes to governments, honor to whom honor, and so on. And the passage that I got him to read just brings out very clearly in Jesus' response as they tried to trap him.

That which is on earth here, we pay taxes to our governments. In their case, it was Caesar. We pay taxes to whom taxes, and we give to the Lord what is His.

[5 : 14] And this morning to focus on what is the Lord's. What's our responsibility? And I'm going to try to do it here in one morning.

You have to really condense and shorten it down. But just to give an overview, what does God desire from us? Do we understand what that is?

You know, sometimes we may feel pressured to give. Or others may put pressure on you to tithe. To give a tenth.

And is this right? Should we be under pressure to do so? I've been very thankful over the years that we've been here.

That the giving that has happened here. God has always been faithful. And we have never run short here. There's always been enough.

[6 : 21] We've never had a rich bank account. But there's always been enough. And even as we built this building, it kept coming. There was always enough to keep going.

And so, God deserves the glory for that. And it came from many of you. And so, as a background, how many of us were taught scripturally what it means to the work of the Lord?

I don't see any hands. There's one. So, very lacking teaching. And I must confess, I find it hard to talk about it as well.

And yet, the Bible has so much to teach on it. And so, we should be. We should be speaking on it from the pulpit as well. And just to see this is God's message.

So, as we go into this, I thought I want us to keep in our minds as we do this. It is only the things that we are convinced within our hearts, it's those things that we will follow through with.

[7 : 55] The things that we are convinced about within the depth of our heart, we will take action on. Keep that thought as we go.

Listen. I want to look at, again, three points here. God's purpose through Israel, the Old Testament.

God's purpose through the church. And God's purpose through you. And I've titled the message, Giving from the Heart.

Giving from the Heart. So, starting off, what is God's purpose through His chosen people, Israel?

And we know that fills the most of the Old Testament teaching. As God called Abraham out of Ur, the land of the Chaldeans, and He called him to separate.

[8 : 59] And what was God's purpose in separating this man and his offspring that would follow? And it's helpful to understand why God operated the way He did in the Old Testament.

and then later in the New. So, let's turn to Genesis 12. We're going to a bit this morning. Genesis 12. The first three verses.

Now the Lord had said to Abraham, Get out of your country, from your family, from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.

I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you, and you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

So from these verses, what is God's purpose? What's His chief purpose in calling Abraham? Blessing? Blessing?

[10 : 22] There's an answer over there. The same? It's blessing. It's a... So God would choose the descendants of Abraham to be a blessing upon the earth.

And we know that ultimately that blessing would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ coming through the lineage of the Jews.

But were the people of Israel, the Jewish people, in the Old Testament times, were they already a blessing here on earth? Did God already start to fulfill that time period?

It's something you maybe not have thought about a lot, but I firmly believe He did. And God's purpose was to reveal Himself through this people group, through the ordinances He gave them, and that they would draw in others from the countries around them, from the world, so to speak, and to see God is on the throne here in Israel.

And hence, He built a temple, a magnificent temple, that would make our building look very dim indeed. And it was here that they worshipped, and that He had commanded the Levites to serve, and it drew in, people drew in to Israel.

[12 : 05] They knew God was with this people group, and it was an attraction. So He was already beginning to work through them. And in the realm of King David, in his reign, he established that kingdom, and then with his son Solomon, a lot of the glory came together as Solomon prayed for wisdom, and God answered.

And we had people like the Queen of Sheba and others that came to see, is it really true, this glory? And so it was almost a foretaste of the millennial kingdom that is yet to come.

Maybe a small taste when Jesus will be on the throne. So God's purpose was to drop it to Himself through this people group, at least in part, and ultimately through Jesus Christ.

In Exodus 19, let's turn there as well. Exodus 19, verse 5 and 6. Exodus 19, verse 5.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people, for all the earth is mine.

[13 : 42] And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. And these are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. And so God is saying, you are a special treasure to me, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

And the world will take notice. So why are we talking about this? As a follow-through of implementing, God then commanded of the twelve tribes that the tribe of Levi would serve Him.

He called them apart from the twelve. They were the smallest tribe by considerable, I believe there was 23,000 men of age in that tribe versus, I think the number, the census was 603,000 overall, Israel.

and so they were a very small part, maybe four or five percent of the total, but one twelfth tribe-wise.

And they were called to serve in the temple and to serve in God's work. And they were also forbidden to own land.

[15 : 13] They were forbidden to work for a living as far as physical work. They were to let go of it and they were called to serve God directly.

And so how were they to survive? God implemented the tithe, tithe and offerings and He commanded the other eleven tribes, you are to bring the first fruits of your produce and you are to tithe, to bring it into the warehouse, to the storehouse, so that the Levites have to eat and that they have to live off of.

And they could take part in the offerings and so on. We can read all about it in the Old Testament. There's lots written on it. But that was God's way of sustaining His work through the tribe of Levi.

And His purpose was to make His name known that others would be drawn in. And so literally to tithe means to give a tenth.

That's what the word means, a tenth. And let's read two verses in Numbers 18. Just to back up what I'm saying here. Numbers 18.

[16 : 45] And verse 20 and 21. Verse 21. So Numbers 18 verse 20.

Then the Lord said to Aaron, You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.

Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform. The work of the tabernacle of meeting.

And so two verses that sum up well God's intent here and He forbid them to have an inheritance, to own property. And so they had designated cities to live in but they were not to farm or to make a livelihood.

And so God sustained them through the tithe. And so that's where that principle of tithe is from. That Old Testament and so often we hear of tithing now in the church age.

[18 : 01] Now is that a valid teaching? Is that something that we should be promoting here? And so let's look at the church now at God's purpose through the church.

So what is God's purpose for us today? And we just talked about putting it up on the wall here. But any thoughts? What is God's purpose for the church?

Salvation of the lost? To glorify God. to go preach to all the creatures, all the nations?

Light to the world. Is any of this different than Old Testament? Is the purpose not the same? There is one significant difference that I find.

In the Old Testament God drew them in to Israel. In the New Testament in the church age God says go. Go to all the world.

[19 : 19] But the purpose is the same to glorify God. To bring, to build His kingdom that more and more people can be saved ultimately.

Let's look at a few verses again. 1 Peter 2, verse 9 and 10. 1 Peter 2, verse 9, verse 9, but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him and you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

That's very similar to what we read in the Old Testament. A special people, a treasure to God that we may proclaim Him. Verse 10, who once were not a people, but now are the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

And speaking of the Gentiles coming to faith. And as well, 2 Corinthians 5, verse 20. 2 Corinthians 5, 20.

Speaking as to purpose, he says, now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us, we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

[21 : 05] So from this verse, what is the role of the church? We use the word ambassador, representative.

So we are here on earth representing God, bringing others to God. So these are a couple verses that clearly show purpose, and very similar to the Old Testament.

So now, my question is, does it take money to fulfill God's purpose? purpose? It does, does it not?

When's the last time God physically showered you with money? And you just fell out of the sky? It grows on trees, right?

to cut the tree down. God entrusts all of us with a certain amount of money that flows through our hands, our stewardship, so to speak.

[22 : 30] But outside of that, God limits Himself. and His work in earth goes forth as His people open their wallets, as we see God's purpose.

And God has chosen the church to be the vehicle through which He functions here, not only in reading the gospel and sharing, but also in the finances part.

And so this is a very real part of it as well. We have many, many accounts here, even within our groups here, of witnessing and sharing locally here, and perhaps abroad.

there are very few parts of the world that have not seen at least some missionary activity.

And last fall, I read that, I wrote down here somewhere, I think it was in September, Wycliffe said that the Bible, the entire Bible, had been translated into 724 languages.

[24 : 02] September of 19 to 20, or 2022. And that the New Testament had been translated into an additional 1,617 languages.

1,617 extra. You probably didn't even know there was so many languages. Is there a lot of effort in the world to reach the lost?

Yes, there is. And is it necessary to do Bible translation so they hear in their own languages? Absolutely. And much work has gone forth and is continuing.

So we know that the church is responding to the call of God. I'm talking about the universal church.

And we, as we take part in these things, either on a local level or abroad, we are part of that program. And it is all to God's glory.

[25 : 07] But bringing back the question, is it right now to teach our people to give one-tenth?

God's love. And the answer is, I'm not hearing anything. She says yes and a no over there.

We're at odds here now. The biblical answer is no. It is not. Nowhere in the New Testament are we commanded to tithe.

Okay, a sigh of relief. We can stop, right? But God has raised His principles.

And let us turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 9. It is true that we are nowhere commanded to tithe in the church age.

[26 : 23] And yet, as we look at purpose, and as we understand why are we here, we realize that there is no less money needed to finance God's program than in the Old Testament.

And in fact, if anything, there is a heightened urgency to see it go ahead before the return of Christ.

2 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 6 through 8. But this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity that I have to or I must.

Not grudgingly or of necessity, for God is a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you that you always having all sufficiency and all things may have an abundance for every good work.

[27 : 45] So the principle in the New Testament, in the church age, is not that God has commanded that we will all bring in a tenth, but rather that we recognize God is at work and I, my responsibility is to give from the heart freely, not reluctantly, not when I put a tithe or an offering into the box that I can hardly let go of it, but willingly, cheerfully, and it is a part of worshiping God to give to His work.

So there's control that we as leaders or that even God put on you, thou shalt.

You must, but rather God keeps it free. as He does everything. Love sets free.

And so we are free to be stingy and to live for self, and we are free to be motivated to serve God and to help His kingdom.

This is at the essence of New Testament giving. And there's an important principle that I want to highlight in the previous chapter, 2 Corinthians chapter 8.

[29 : 37] chapter 8. And starting in verse 1. 2 Corinthians 8 chapter, sorry, 2 Corinthians 8 verse 1. These are coming to receive verse 1.

For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we should receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and then to us by the will of God. And so Paul brings out a real-life example in their time of the churches of Macedonia, how in their state of poverty, they gave freely, willingly, and he uses the words beyond their ability.

They were sacrificing. They were giving something up. How did they do that? Here is the secret.

[31 : 17] They first gave themselves to the Lord. They first gave themselves to the Lord. And the rest will come.

That is the secret behind all that we do, including supporting the work of God, is to be a willing giver, giving ourselves to the Lord.

I want to retell a story that probably half of you have heard before, but we have a lot of faces that haven't been here so long.

There was a pastor that announced in a church that there was a needy family in their community and that we were going to collect money to give to them.

And he said on a certain Sunday, we're going to collect whatever has come together and we're going to deliver it to this family. And there's a widow in this church and she goes home with her children and they sit down and discuss how can we give to this needy family.

[32 : 46] And they come up with some ideas and projects how they can generate a bit of money and they do so and bring it into the offering plate because their heart is to help this needy family.

Well, when this Sunday comes and the offering is brought together for this needy family, that afternoon that widow receives a visit from the pastor and he presents her with the offering.

And the offering, when she opens it, is the exact amount that she and her children put in. That's a sad story.

But it tells us when our heart is right, we're never too poor. We're never too poor.

There is always a way to help God, God's program or to participate. I should rephrase that. God does not need help, but we participate in His program.

[34 : 02] There's always a way. What is my purpose? What is your purpose here?

My background, and many of you will maybe agree or identify, is that we went to church because it was expected.

And church was church and a weekday was a weekday. And we separated the two. And if things are going well at church, that is fine.

But without purpose. God has since worked in my life and in your lives to show us there's so much more because the church of God is living and active, participating in His program.

And all of us, as we've come out of wherever we were, and God is teaching us these things to the praise of His glory.

[35 : 17] So we're no longer satisfied just to attend church, but how can I be part of God's program? Where can I fit in?

And giving is one way as we see a greater purpose. It's catching God's vision in my personal heart that will motivate me to do that.

Now, how do we give? When do we give? I'm going to read a few Bible verses, a few passages here in a bit.

But when we talk about reading the Scriptures, your daily devotionals, if you only read your Bible when you feel like it, how often would you read it?

Not very often? At least at times, right? At least at times. You know, we know we need the Word of God.

[36 : 26] And I trust that we are in daily feeding off the Word in a habit, if I can use that word, of feeding off of God's Word.

This is what God's will is for us. It starts by knowing what is good for me, and I'm going to do this regardless of what my feelings tell me. You know, when it comes to giving, it is no different.

If I don't purpose to give, and I'll give when I feel like it, well, when our feelings are leading, disaster happens.

We can't operate on feelings. And so it's very similar in that way, that we have to determine in our hearts where I fit in.

This is what I can do, what I want to do to help in this work that the Lord has. To purpose and to make it a routine thing, a regular thing in my life.

[37 : 40] Not once a year, or like I said, when I feel like it, but rather it's part of my worship of the Lord. Giving in that way.

And 1 Corinthians 16. I'm going to end with a few verses here that just serve to bring it home.

1 Corinthians 16, verse 2. 1 Corinthians 16. Start in verse 1.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week, Sunday, as you let each of you lay aside something, storing up as he may, and there be no collections when I come.

So Paul is writing to these churches, and he's encouraged them. On the first day of the week when you gather, put aside.

[38 : 53] Put in an offering. A love offering to the Lord's work. And so, I don't know if it's a direct command to go weekly, but it's a good idea to get into that habit of worshiping the Lord with giving to his work.

And so, there's an example there, a New Testament example from that. Ephesians 4, 28. Ephesians 4, 28.

Ephesians 4, 28. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. So we are commanded to work.

God has given us the ability to work. Not only to feed our family, but also to help others. And we all know that when we reach out and help, it does something to us.

[40 : 18] It's rewarding. It lifts us up. And this is a blessing of the Lord. And so, Paul here commands that we should always strive to be able to help the next person, the needs that arise.

And then, lastly, in Luke 6, verse 38. Verse 38. Verse 38. Verse 38. Verse 38. Verse 38. Verse 38. Jesus' words.

Luke 6, 38. He says, Give, and it will be given to you good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom.

For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. And there is a verse of encouragement. You will not outgive God.

If you don't believe me, try it. You will not outgive God. And we don't give with a motive, well, I'm going to give 20 bucks this morning at church, and God, you better pay me 30 back during the week.

[41 : 42] God will bestow blessings on us, on your life. As we, as we give and, and seek to participate, He will bless your life in so many ways.

Through your children, through your decisions, there's an endless amount of ways that God's blessings come. And, and often there are financial blessings as well.

I'm not saying that there aren't. But that is not our motive. That God, now you owe me back. That, that would be wrong. And so, we, we are, we are challenged here to, to give freely, trusting the Lord will, will bless.

And, as we do that. So there, here's the principles of Scripture in, in giving, very short and brief this morning.

So as, as we have opportunities, let us seek God's will, each one of us individually. and the amount that I give will be different than what you do.

[43 : 04] And as God, God has given us different gifts and abilities to, to be stewards of money. Some of you will go through ten times the amount of money that I've ever seen.

And, and He expects you to, to be a steward of that for His glory. And others may make less than I do.

But we're all different, we're in different shoes. And so we don't look at each other, but where am I before God? So that's, I think that's where we need to start and, or to continue and to focus on.

And, and first of all, in our hearts, do I have the vision for God's work? Do I have His purpose in my heart?

Do I desire to be part of that? And, as that develops, then we, then we want to give. So may the Lord continue to bless you.

[44 : 11] And, it's, I'm open to questions later about this. I, I know in my life this was a teaching that was very scarce.

And so, if you have questions, talk to someone. And just, it's a good place to start. So let's close in prayer this morning.

Father, Father, by grace we are saved. Lord, you have provided salvation on the cross.

It was free. It is free. It is by faith. Lord, that is so deep.

And as we, as we have a certain amount of time left here on earth, as your child, God, show us the way to present ourselves as living sacrifices.

[45 : 35] To say, here am I, Lord. that you've entrusted me with. May you guide each heart that we would seek to freely participate.

To your glory and to your honor. Amen.