



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

Five Characteristics of Godly Giving - (2 Corinthians 8:1-12)

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[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

I don't know about you but I get hooked on infomercials from time to time - don't really watch TV a whole lot anymore - too much to watch in my home with my daughter and sons babbling over whatever it is there babbling over at the time. Or you know now a days we just, we just pick up Netflix and they don't have a whole lot of infomercials on Netflix. But, I have in the past dealt with some insomnia in my life and so late at night the only thing that you can see on TV is Infomercials. I always find them interesting, I know we make parodies of them now because they're so easy to satirize - they're so easy to make fun of because they're usually pretty much the same. After I've watched them, I don't usually switch the channel immediately cause I just want to see kind of what they're selling and how life changing this mop really is going to be. I don't know if you've noticed this though in a lot of the infomercials, they don't tell you the price at the front end. In fact, they will wait and wait and wait and they will say, "Let's go to commercial." Which of course the whole thing is a commercial, but, "Let's go to commercial." Which is going to be a commercial about this commercial that you're watching. "And after the commercial we'll tell you how you can be involved and what it's going to cost." And then eventually toward the end of the whole thing they will say, "And finally it's only 3 easy payments of..." by the way they're always easy payments right - ah... "3 easy payments of \$199.99." Right? And the the price is given to you and of course at that moment when you hear the price, you're like, "Ohh whatever?! No!" And then you switch the channel. And the reason they don't give the price early on is because they know that if they give you the price early on, you're not going to listen until later on. They want to give you all the details first and *then* the price. That's how marketing works - that's how you sell things like Iphone's and other stuff.

I've never been good at marketing, so I'm just going to just come out and give you the price. Our church, last year, came to the conclusion that we thought we could be an engine for church planting and church multiplication - not just in our region, but around the world. That we actually thought that under the hood of this church, God had placed quite a significant number of horsepower that could drive forward this kind of mission *all* over the place. We could see healthy disciples made and healthy local churches, all over the place. I've avoided, up to this point, to talk about how much money we're talking about and how much money we'd like to raise. So here you go - ready? Over the next 10 years our goal as a church is to raise thirty million dollars for this task. To make it worse, we're hoping to raise about eight million dollars by the end of this year so that we can launch some of the projects and ideas that we've got both here and elsewhere to multiply healthy disciples and healthy local churches. Now when I've said that before people hear the number and they're like, "Woah wait a minute!? Thirty



million dollars - are you nuts?" Okay let's step back from the cliff for just a second [laughter] right - you can see why the marketers don't do this. Step back for a minute - I'm not the first pastor to ever ask his congregation for money, in fact the Apostle Paul has that claim. And the passage that I told you turn to in 2 Corinthians 8 is basically that - it's a portion of a fundraising letter.

Let me give you a little background to it - for the Apostle Paul he was trying to raise money because a famine had hit the entire Roman world at the time. And especially in a land of Judea where Jerusalem was - the famine had hit really hard. And so the Jerusalem church was suffering, and the Jerusalem church was the church that planted all the other churches, they sent out all the missionaries to the other churches - so this Jewish church in Jerusalem plants a bunch of Gentile churches everywhere in places like Corinth. And so Paul - seeing the needs in Jerusalem - starts going around to all the other Gentile churches and saying, "Listen you guys - can you just set aside some money every week for a while and then I'm going to come back later and I'm going to collect it all and wouldn't it be cool if some of you Gentiles - in this moment where there's a fight between Jewish and Gentile believers in the church - wouldn't it be great if some of you Gentiles, took the money with me and handed it to this church in Jerusalem. Can you imagine the unity that would break out - seeing you guys give sacrificially of your money to help this church over here." So this becomes his fundraising mission. And he goes to all of these different churches and he asks them for money. And what you have, like I said in 2 Corinthians 8 is pretty much a missionary fundraising letter. You've gotten those before right? "We're headed to Thailand - give us this much! Pray too, but give us this much." That's what you got here. So what you can learn from this passage is kind of the motivations that Paul brings to this church on why it is that they should be godly givers. Why should you give money to the Lord's work? So I'm going to point out here five characteristics of godly giving that you can see in this passage - 2 Corinthians 8:1-12.

[Godly Giving is Sacrificial]

Five characteristics of godly giving - here's the first, godly giving is sacrificial; godly giving is sacrificial. Look at 2 Corinthians 8:1 with me,

"And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches."

Now Corinth is not in Macedonia - Macedonia is a state. It's a state that's north of where Corinth is; Corinth is in Achaia. But Paul's talking not about Achaian churches, not about Corinthian churches, but about churches in the northern province immediately bordering them in Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 8:1-3,

"We want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability."



So in other words when I went to them and I saw them and I brought this opportunity to give to this collection, man they - even the ridiculously poor - they just kind of gave like crazy - those Macedonian churches.

Now I'm going to show you a map, I said that Macedonia was immediately north and Achaia was south, now Achaia is on the sea. Whenever you think of Greece and all those white houses on the Mediterranean Sea - right, the place that you want to visit, and you think heaven probably looks like - we're talking about Achaia. Not only that but Achaia had the cities of Corinth and the city of Athens in it. And if you know anything about your Western history you'll know that probably the seat of Western history, philosophical history, is Athens. That's where all the philosophers came from, you can go there today and see the remains of the Parthenon - it's where Mars Hill is in Athens. Corinth - like Athens had a form of the Olympic games - they called them the Corinthian games. Dude if you were *anybody* you lived in Corinth or Athens, you know where did you not live if you were anybody - Macedonia. I mean it's like Alberta [laughter] aw come on. And the people who lived in Achaia thought of themselves very similar to the way the people in BC see themselves right - ah it's better than everywhere else.

Listen now you, you might think - some of you recoil at that, "No we in BC don't feel that way." Okay so I'm an outsider, my mother was from Prince Edward Island, so I always thought, she was always, "Oh PEI is amazing." It is, it's beautiful. But I was at a baseball tournament - a national baseball tournament in Ontario just recently - and I noticed when I was with the parents from our team, the British Columbia contingent at this baseball tournament, I noticed the parents from BC kept talking about how rude all the other parents, and all the teams were to us, and how much they wanted to beat BC. And I finally asked an *Ontario* parent, "Why is it that everybody hates BC so much?" And this guy from *Ontario* said, "Because you guys think you're better than everyone else." [Laughter] Hmmm how does that feel Ontario? [Laughter] I said, "Really?"

"Yeah, yeah you guys think your part of the country is better and prettier and nicer and you don't what to listen to anybody else and you just want to do your own thing. So we always love to beat you."

"Ah come on." So anyway fast forward a couple weeks, I'm driving with my wife and kids through the Coquihalla Highway, mountains everywhere and I turned to my wife and I said, "Jeanie, it's better here than everywhere else." [Laughter] And I came to the conclusion the reason they think that we think that we're better than everyone else is because, we actually think that we're better than everyone else. [Laughter] Well that's how people in Achaia viewed people in Macedonia. You know how you don't motivate people from BC - you don't motivate people from BC by talking about how the church Medicine Hat's doing it - okay. You don't motivate people in Corinth by telling them how the churches of Macedonia are doing it. And yet that's what Paul does here. He's like, "You know those churches in Medicine Hat? You should see how they're giving - you guys think you're so great - you Corinthian churches? You should see how they're doing it in Medicine Hat?" How are they doing it in Medicine Hat?

Well he describes, okay in Macedonia - here's how they're giving here's how they're responding to this opportunity to give to this collection. He said amidst a very severe trial, likely they're under persecution at this particular time in the early church - especially in Macedonia, the belief was that the Christians



were responsible for everything bad that was happening in the society. They were called Atheists, not because they didn't believe in any god, but they didn't believe in all the gods - they only believed in one. They were called cannibals, those Christians, because ah when they got together they ate the body of Jesus and drank his blood, mmm? They called each other brother and sister - that's weird. A lot of misunderstandings about what happened in the Christian community, but those kind of stories grew into great fables and when anything bad happened in the society - you know if there was a flood or there was some sort of storm that came that wiped out a group of people or houses - everyone would blame the Christians and they'd say, "Oh it's because the Christians aren't worshipping all the gods, that all those gods they're not worshipping are mad at them. We need to get rid of them." Well in Macedonia that was really happening, so under a severe trial - while they're under great persecution, and out of their, he says, extreme poverty. One of the forms of persecution was that you lost your business, they just wouldn't go to your store because you didn't share their worldview. You know what that's like in this day and age - hear about that happening all the time. So they have nothing, they're under massive persecution, but they have overflowing joy that is welling up in rich generosity. They're so enamoured with what Christ has done for them - the fact that they have a future hope, that no matter what happens, Jesus will not be taken away from them and he will never leave them, so no matter what they're plight in the present moment, it is infinitely going to be better. All apart from anything they've done, they have this hope inside of them and that hope is just *overwhelming* them. That grace shown to them is overwhelming them in rich generosity. They're just looking for opportunities to give. So Paul's like, when I came to them and I offered this collection - they were like, "Oh yeah! What do you need? How much more can I give?" "But you're sacrificing too much," Paul's response would be. That's right, godly giving is sacrificial.

I was in, to give a picture of kind of what this is like, I was in China a number of years ago - I think I've shared this before, a number of years ago - and I sat down to a meal with a bunch of pastors and church leaders who together in the room, if you pooled all of their income together it would have fallen short of mine. My house could have purchased, quite honestly, probably ah, their church. And I'm sitting down at this table and these pastors are all around it, and me and a couple other leaders from our group were there and they - you know this big lazy susan thing - is that what they call that? The big spinning thing in the middle of the table? No - I've always wondered who Susan was ... anyway. [Laughter] Probably a very dizzy woman. But um, on this lazy susan, there is in the middle of the table and they started loading it with all kinds of local delicacies and foods and I mean I couldn't read much Chinese but the guy who's with me - I was saying, "Man how much is this going to cost?" He said, "This is costing them a fortune." I said, "Ha, dude they don't have a fortune, tell them to stop." And he's like, "No, no, no, no you don't understand, they are just delighted to share with you out of what God's done for them." And they were, they were sitting next to me and every time a new plate would come they'd look at me to see my response. Man I was looking at it going, like the fish were looking at me off that plate, and I was like, "I don't know! "Ohh it's lovely, mmmm, you know it's fantastic." But that was the experience that I felt like - here are these people who have nothing, they under, seriously, they are under persecution in a very real way and yet the opportunity to give is just too much to pass up. Because if you knew what Jesus has done for me, what I'm doing for you is just so small. Sacrificial, godly giving, it's generous on that level, it's not cheap or stingy, it's accused of going overboard. People who give sacrificially in a generous fashion like this, are the kinds of people who



they're accountant when they find out - are like, "Really, are you sure because you're giving so much that it's actually cutting into some other areas." Right, it's that kind of generosity. It's not looking in your pockets for the lint - what's the least amount I can actually give to the Lord and get away with it? No.

[Godly Giving is Aggressive]

Second, godly giving is aggressive. 2 Corinthians 8:3-5,

"For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us."

Now I used to work as a letter folder when I was in seminary, of the seminaries fundraising letters. And it was not exciting work - tried to help pay for my school - my wife was working as a teacher and she was paying for most of it; a fact for which she has not let me forget. [Laughter] But I was helping out by folding these letters - so they've come - this was the days before letter folders, I fold the letter and then you put it in the envelope, fold the letter...sometimes you get bored and start reading the letters and man you should see - fundraising letters are crazy. These fundraising letters from the seminary had all sorts of different colours on them and lots italicized and bold - have you received these before? Yes, right - like it's **URGENT**, urgent in bold. And then if they really want to get you it's **URGENT** - bold, italicized, underlined, red. Right? [Laughter] By the end of the letter, if you look at it just at a distance, it's all these colours and angles and worlds and different fonts and finally you're like compelled at the end that if you don't give, the world's going to end - you have to give. It feels like begging a little bit.

But what's interesting about what's going in this passage - and what's happening with these Macedonian christians - Ralph Martin, one of the commentators on this passage, he says it well.

"Normally we think of the fundraiser as 'begging' the would-be donors. Here it is the donors, who could least afford it, who entreated Paul for the favor of having part in the enterprise."

Just read the words again, "entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us, for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people." They didn't need to be tapped on the shoulder, they didn't need to have somebody come along and have special meetings with them five times in order to get them to move, and write a cheque. They were like, "No I got my cheque, I've already filled it out - here you fill out the number, it's fine." Entirely on their own. Paul gets to the point where he's like, "Stop - put your wallet back, you can't afford it." You see the aggressive nature of it? Godly giving is like that, it's aggressive.



One of the great passages of Scripture that I keep coming back to in my life when I want to know how then I ought to be living in this time - and by this time I mean the time from which, between which Jesus saved me and when he's going to come back and bring me home. That's the time we're all in right now. Okay, so, so saved, but not yet totally saved - freed from sin, but not yet totally freed from sin. How do I live in the meantime? One of the passages that actually addresses that specifically is the parable of the talents. The passage I've spoken on here several times. And you know the story, those of you who've been around. There's a land owner who says I'm going to go away for a while - he represents God, and going to go away for awhile and then I'm going to come back, and in the meantime I'm going to give different servants different amounts. So you get five million and you get two million and you get one million. Your job while I'm gone is to multiply my assets. It's my money, it's my kingdom, it's my work, but you are employed now to multiply it. The first guy is like, "Alright!" and he's off he goes and he doubles his five million and he turns it into ten. Likewise the two million guy goes out, does some business here and there, takes some risks here and there, cause it's hard to double that kind of money. And he doubles his - he's got four now. But the one million dollar guy's like, "Ohh yeah one million dollars - this is great, I mean it's not as much as everyone else has, but I've got this money. Okay, I could go out and try and make some money off of it, but I also I know my master is kind of a hard man and I don't want to lose any of it, so it's way easier if I go back here and I bury it in the backyard. I'll put a little flag above it and stuff, and then I'll go and I'll watch the football." So he does! Of course time passes and the master finally comes back and he calls all these people to account and then they show up and the five million dollar guy - who's got now ten - he receives a reward and a commendation from the master - the two million likewise who's now got four gets commendation. But the one million guy says, "Here's your money! [He blows the dirt off it.] Here you go, not one penny's missing! Kept it from the dog and everything, here you go." The master has a look at it and looks straight in the eye of this servant and he says, "You wicked, lazy, servant." See the thing that he points out that's different between the five and two guys and the one, is that they were industrious - they were aggressive, they were creative and entrepreneurial with the money that the Lord had given them. And the other guy just sat on it and did nothing with it - out of fear that he was going to lose some or whatever. And there it is - what do we do between the time when Jesus saved us and the time that he brings us home? We invest in the master's economy. We double the master's money. It's not our money. It's aggressive this posture then. That's what he expects.

[Godly Giving is Spiritually Mature]

Third characteristic, godly giving is sacrificial, it's aggressive, number three - it's spiritually mature, godly giving. 2 Corinthians 8:6-7,

"So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. [What he's saying there is that we sent Titus to you to collect the money that you promised you'd give. You guys talked a lot about it and now you've sent him to collect that money from you.] But since you excel in everything —[you excel] in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving."



Okay, so now the Corinthians really did believe that they excelled in everything. If you'd ask the Corinthians, "Give me evidence that you are close to God as a church, that God is active among you." They would have said, "Phh, just come to our worship services man - and you will see something." And they did, they had a kind of worship service where you had prophets speaking one after another after another after another, sometimes so many prophets would be speaking they'd have to interrupt the ones who were speaking before them; God was speaking through others in tongues that were being spoken out loud, kind of an ecstatic utterance outloud and Paul has to correct that and say, "Look I want there to be translators for those tongues so everybody can be edified by them, not just the person who's speaking it." People would come up to you with like knowledge about the future and say something to you that was specific for you, give you a word of knowledge, or a word of wisdom when you walked in this church. And you'd walk out, if you're a visitor, you'd walk out, you'd say, "My goodness, God is among those people. They are connected to the divine." And yet they were proud of this. Like out of all the churches everywhere - we're the ones who are close to God. You can see it happening. And Paul builds on that, and he's like, "Yeah there's a truth in that guys. You are close to God, because of all these things that are happening among you. *But* if you really want to show, in addition to that, that you really get the gospel and that you really are close to God - you got to finish this work. Show it with what you give."

Giving money to the Lord's work is one key sign that the Holy Spirit is actually at work in your life. If there is a consistent testimony that comes through the entire Bible about money, it's that one. It's that I can tell your real spiritual commitment based upon what you give. Zacchaeus - great little story about this little guy - he's a tax collector, a chief tax collector. And when you hear those lines in those days you should understand that to be; filthy, stinking rich. Well he's this little tiny guy, he's richer than everyone else around and he finds out that Jesus is going to be coming by, and so this little tax collector, because he's shorter than everyone else, he climbs up a tree. Now in those days they wore skirts - men wore open things, and rich, important men, wearing skirts did not normally climb trees for the obvious reasons. It was a sign of shame, that you would do something that radical, to go and see Jesus. By the way, this day and age, rich, important men don't usually climb trees. I haven't seen Henry Braun up a tree recently at all. It's a shameful act. Here's this guy, he's climbing up a tree and everyone around is going, "Ah typical, tax collector." Then he's up there and he's getting a view on Jesus who's just passing by - Jesus stops underneath this tree, he looks up at Zacchaeus, and he says, "Hey, I'm coming to your house for lunch today." Which is a sign from Jesus, that I want to be your friend nobody else wants to go to your house Zacchaeus, cause they think you're a traitor and you're robbing from all of them, cause you're a tax collector - but I want to go to your house, and I want to have lunch with you. So Zacchaeus, we assume, scrambles down the tree, takes Jesus to his house for lunch, and then in the middle of lunch, he's so overwhelmed with the grace that Jesus has shown him, that he said, "I make a declaration," you know ... ding, ding, ding, ding, "Everybody, I want to propose a toast, to this Jesus and in response to what he's done I'm just going to tell you I'm going to give half of my possessions to the poor." Jesus responds to this by saying, "I can tell that the kingdom of God's come into this house today." How can he tell? By what the grace of God has done to this man's generosity. You can always tell whether or not the gospel has struck a chord in your life by what it's done to your generosity. A commitment to Jesus is seen in how we give our money. Kent



Hughes, “Jesus can have our money and not have our hearts, but he cannot have our hearts without our money.”

There’s this old book called, *My Heart Christ’s Home*, that I read years and years - I don’t even know if it’s in print anymore. But the image is really interesting isn’t it? So when you invite Jesus into your life, it’s like inviting him into your home, and the book is funny because it basically details, okay so what kind of house guest is Jesus and is he just a house guest at all? And I got to tell you right now, if you’re kind of new to the faith, Jesus stinks as a house guest, he’s terrible. You know like when you invite your guests over to your house, you usually have a room in your house where you throw all of the junk that was in your kids room or something to make it look like your life is actually together, and then you lock the door to that room or closet or junk drawer, right - and if the guests come in there’re certain rooms in the house that they’re allowed to go to, they don’t go to all the bathrooms, they go to the one that you cleaned in the last year right. They don’t go to all the rooms cause one of the rooms has got all the junk in it, and you didn’t do it. Good house guests know the rules. Well Jesus isn’t a really good house guest, what he does is he comes into your life, into your house, and he goes immediately toward those rooms. You’re like, “No, no, no stay out here in this nice area - don’t you see how clean it is? Like I got way cleaned up for you.” Jesus is like, “Nah, nah, that’s great - um what about that room there and this drawer over here and that closet that’s bulging out, there’s stuff coming out of it - can I just, I’m going to open that.” And you’re like, “No!!! Don’t open the closet - we’ll all die.”

“No, I’m going to open that closet.” And he does, it all comes falling out, a big smile on his face, “Hey we’re going to fix this.”

“Noooo I don’t want to fix this.” That room over there - he’s, “What’s in this room.” You’re like, “Nothing’s in that room.” And he opens it up and it’s all your money!

“No you’re not allowed to go in here Jesus. This is the money room.” “Oh I want the money,” he says. He doesn’t need your money, listen God doesn’t need your money, he owns a cattle on a thousand hills, you’re money’s his anyway, he doesn’t need it, but he wants it, just like he wants every other part of you. That’s what it means to follow him, take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow me, he says. Godly giving is spiritually mature.

[Godly Giving is Motivated by Grace]

Here’s the fourth one, godly giving is motivated by grace. 2 Corinthians 8:8-9,

“I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

Now I’ve got to a question for you. So the Apostle Paul is called, the *Apostle* Paul - and if you read through the New Testament and see what kinds of things, what kind of authority the apostles have, it’s really surprising. So apostles can do some amazing things, so if there’s a couple in the church who go and sell some property, they come in and they lie about the amount that they sold it for, “Hey we’re going to give this money and it’s all the money we sold our property for,” and they’re keeping back a



little bit - this actually happened this couple named Ananias and Sapphira. They came down and the Apostle Peter said, "Really, are you sure that's the full amount?" And they're like, "Ah ha, absolutely, that's the total amount." And Peter says, "Right - you're dead." And the Spirit kills them on the spot at the Apostle's word. Read it, the Bible's crazy - Acts 5 - just read it! The shadow of the Apostle Paul crosses the path of sick people and they get well. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul says, "I want you to cast the immoral brother out from among, I want you to hand him over to Satan for the purification of his sinful nature." That's the kind of authority an apostle had - so listen if you're an apostle and you're trying to raise some money - why would you not just come in and go, "Boom, boom boom, you're all giving some money." Why not issue a law? You've been commissioned to write the Bible - why not just write down, okay everybody's got to give 30%... 20%, 40%, whatever, whatever strikes you as good. Why not issue a law? You notice he does not right? Like he has that line right at the beginning that I'm not commanding you he says, we're going to raise this money, but I'm not commanding you - but here's what I'm going to do instead. Let me tell you about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ - you saw that line there right? For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that he was rich and yet for your sake he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich. So instead of giving you a law, what I'm going to give you instead is a picture of what Jesus has done for you, okay so let's rehearse, so Jesus who is co-equal with the Father, eternally beautiful, gave up his standing with the Father and he came down and was born in a manger - now that's a distance. Infinitely wealthy, to be licked by animals in their trough. And then this Jesus as he grew up he says he has no place to lay his head. He's not wealthy in any way, he doesn't accumulate any kinds of goods. And eventually he dies on a cross being mocked by the very people he made. Why would he do this? Well he was rich and he became poor so that you and I - the very people he made, who mocked him and sent him to that cross - might become rich. And I'll tell you if that knowledge starts to get a little deeper into you, if you start to realize how far you've come, completely apart from anything you've done, that in 4,000 and 10,000 and 15,000 years you'll be sitting in infinite, wealthy, bliss with God in heaven. The desire of your heart fulfilled in every conceivable way because of what he's done, not what you did - when you start realizing that that's a guarantee because he decided it was going to be so. And that starts to do something to you a little bit, that kind of grace starts to move you a little bit.

So you have a story about a woman in the Scripture in Luke 7, you have a story about a woman who comes bursting into a meeting where Jesus is having with a Pharisee - they're having lunch there together and this woman bursts in with her hair going everywhere and she's got a vile of perfume which is - she's a woman of the night, and this is her, this is an instrument of her work. So it costs probably all her life savings, and she takes that vial of perfume, basically all her money, and she just starts dumping it on the feet of Jesus which have not been washed after walking through the dusty Middle East for all these days. And she's dumping it there and crying tears and she's wiping it with her hair. This is crazy, outrageous worship, and Simon the Pharisee is there, is just shocked that Jesus is letting this woman touch him. What's the difference between this woman and that man? Why is this man at the table who's supposed to be so religious and righteous and good - not worshipping Jesus the Son of God like she is? At the end of the story becomes very clear - Jesus says - "Well the difference he who is forgiven little loves little, and he who is forgiven much loves much." Like she gets the gospel, she understands what God has done for her in Christ.



So listen if that starts happening to you, crazy things start going on. You start seeing your money absolutely differently. So John Piper - everybody wants a law about money, this is always what ends up happening. People I've pastored for years - "Hey give me a rule." We all want laws about money. John Piper in a wonderful little book - he actually gave this line, it's very poignant and pointed about that desire. He said,

"You will ask your people [this book is written for pastors to encourage them on how you should speak to your people about these matters.] You will ask your people, 'Is it wrong to own a second home that sits empty half the year?' And you will answer, 'Maybe and maybe not.' You will not make it easy by creating a law. Laws can be obeyed under constraint with no change of heart. Prophets want new hearts for God, not just new real-estate arrangements. You'll empathize with their uncertainty and share your own struggle to discover the way of love. You will not presume to have a simply answer to every lifestyle question. You will acknowledge that your own lifestyle is lavishly comfortable in comparison with most people in the world... But you will help them decide. You will say, 'Does your house signify or encourage life at a level of luxury in heedless unconcern for the needs of others? Or is it a simple, oft-used retreat for rest and prayer and meditation that sends people back to the city with a passion to deny themselves for the evangelization of the unreached and the pursuit of justice for the suffering oppressed?' You will leave that arrow lodged in their conscience and challenge them to seek a lifestyle in sync with the Gospel."

See I can't give you a law, I can't tell you how much you should give, I can't give you any rules for that. Here's what I can do - I can ask you a question, it's the same question Paul asked this church. How much is Jesus worth? Ah man that's way worse - right? He's that pokey house guest though isn't he.

[Godly Giving is More than Just a Good Idea]

Alright, last one, godly giving is more than just a good idea. Look at 2 Corinthians 8:10-11,

"And here is my judgment [he says] about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. [You guys talked a good game about it. You're excited about it, came and said, we're going to take this collection, and you're like, "Yes!!! Collection!!!"] Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means."

Alright so my son got Twitter just a little while ago - my oldest son, and ah sometimes when I ask my son to go and mow the lawn he does not do it immediately - I know that that's odd for a 16 and 17 year old boy, but he will promise repeatedly, "Yeah I'll do it." He'll say things like, "Don't worry, don't worry, don't worry." And I'll say, "I'm worried, I'm worried, I'm worried." And finally after two, three days of being told I shouldn't worry and that he'll do it by the end of the day, and 72 hours later, I just stop being patient. And so my sons first tweet at the bottom of it, it said, "This is what happens when my father wants me to mow the lawn." And this is a picture of the text message that I sent him. [Text message: lawn, lawn, lawn, lawn, lawn, lawn, lawn, lawn] [Laughter] There's about 30 of those. Right,



sometimes after a while you just get sick of talk. If you made the promise - fulfill the promise. If you said the words - do what you said you'd do. This is what Paul's trying to get at with these folks. He's already spoken to the Corinthians about doing this and now it's time for action. They were mentally convinced but they hadn't actually put it into practice.

You do know that whenever we talk in church about money, this is essentially what happens. I frequently see people nod, "Yeah that's true, look it's in the Bible - we read it. Mmm that's true." Sometimes from my point of view, sometimes you get some people with the elbows you know - wife to her husband, "See we should be more generous." You know, or something like that. And lots of nodding, lots of agreement - yes, we believe it. And then often we don't do anything about it. It's just a mental agreement. It's more than just a good idea. One of the great temptations as we sit there and fold our arms and say "Yes, that's absolutely true um for that guy over there, have you seen the size of his house?" This isn't about him and his house, it's about you, it's about me! It's more than just a good idea.

So what do we say in the end here. How then shall we give? There's one last verse in this passage that I find really fascinating and helpful. 2 Corinthians 8:12,

"For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable [listen to how it's acceptable] according to what one has, not according to what one does not have."

So essentially Paul's saying, okay so when it comes down to the brass tacks here, here's what I need you to know. That some of you have been differently blessed. We do, we have different range of blessing. So let me finish all this by just ah talking to three different kinds of blessed people. There's most of us here, number one - there's most of us - who've been blessed in the middle class. And you say at the beginning, oh my goodness thirty million dollars that's a ridiculous amount of money. Okay so if every giving unit - do you know what a giving unity is? Ah that doesn't mean every person in our church - that means every family in our church. That currently gives money - which is less than half of the people who attend are church okay? If that number of people who currently give money to our church were to increase their giving by \$250 a month, we would raise thirty million dollars in five years not ten. So for most of us \$250 extra a month would be sacrificial, it would be generous, and it would be great. Second category of people though - ah some of us have less than most of us. And you're thinking to yourself - "\$250 a month, that's ridiculous, that's so much money, there's no way I could ever do that!" Right - fair enough, if that's between you and the Lord ultimately, but I got to tell you that even the widow's mite was honoured by Jesus. That it's not actually about the amount at all, it's about the willingness of the heart that's followed through with the actions - that's it. Find something that you can be a part of - believe me it's going to help you in the long run. Jesus wants your money so you'll be free from it. And then the third group, there are some with more than most of us. And you know who you are - the idea of \$250, you're like "Oh \$250 a month - hold on just a second I got that with some lint in here right?" And that's just nothing, and for you to give \$250 would just be perfunctory. It would just be overly simple. So here's the challenge I've got for you - you've got to be looking at that parable of the talents and thinking long and hard about it don't you? That God actually has invested a great amount of money in you and it's not so that you can sit on your porch and drink



lemonade. It's so that you can just retire in bliss and have a little heaven before heaven. It's so that you might become an engine of missions for his glory. Double the master's money.

Can you imagine if you went over to someone's house and they had, this is the last thing I'll say okay. Okay you go over to a friend's house and they have a lamborghini and they get in that lamborghini and you get in and they say go for a ride and they take it off and you're driving down the highway basically the same speed as a golf cart. And they're just kind of slowly going - after about a minute you look over and say, "What are you doing?" And they're like, "Oh I just don't want to wreck it." "What do you mean wreck it? I didn't get into this massively powerful car so that I could drive it like a golf cart - hit the accelerator man - let's see what she can do!" And if they did, "Woah!" You'd be, "Wahh, this is great!" - right. So here's the thing, man I've been in this church for twelve years and I got to tell you this is a lamborghini church, like I've been in a lot of churches, there's a lot of horsepower in the engine here - right, there's a lot of it. And I think sometimes we drive this sucker like a golf cart - it's easy to keep doing ministry the way we're doing it - it is easy. We can go nice and slow and bury it in the backyard and be cool. Can you imagine what the Lord might do if we drop the hammer? Can you imagine what would happen in 30, 50 years in our country, in our world, through this church. If we would just take small moments, make small changes. Let's see how fast this baby goes.

Let's pray. Father, I'm thankful for your grace, I'm thankful Father that you've placed me in with my brothers and sisters here and I'm thankful that everything I said here applies equally and doubly to me as it does to them. Would you find me faithful and them faithful Father as we respond to your leading. And Father ultimately these things are between you and us, and I pray Lord that your spirit would be active and moving us forward as a body of people as we seek you with everything we've got. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.