

This morning the topic in our series of worship lessons which will be about giving and how it relates to our worship to God. A lot of times when people hear a preacher start talking about giving they think, “*Oh boy here we go. All they want is more money.*” I can understand why people think this way because when watch the TV evangelist, frequently you hear them pleading for your contribution. So let me ease your mind; that is not my intention or purpose this morning. My goal is to simply share with you what the Bible teaches about this matter because giving is indeed a part of our worship to God. Notice what Paul says in, ***1 Corinthians 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.***

Here the apostle Paul is commanding that each Christian give on the first day of every week. If you back up to verse 1 you will see that he is informing the church at Corinth to give on the first day of the week just as he had taught the Galatians to do and just as he has taught every church to do. ***1 Corinthians 4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.*** Notice Paul doesn’t teach one thing at one church and another thing at another church; therefore it’s reasonable to conclude that his command to give on the first day of the week is command for every Christian.

Examining 1 Cor 16:2 you will notice that Paul also tells the Corinthians that ***every one of you lay by him in store.*** The ESV words it this way. ***Each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper.*** Consider also what Paul says in ***2 Corinthians 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*** Do you see that Paul is saying you are to put some thought into what you are going to give?

Likely some of you have a budget. In a budget we determine how much money we can spend on various things; we have our house payments, car payments, telephone bill, etc. If we want to buy something new, we plan for it and then we buy it. Well Paul is telling that we should set aside an amount that we have determined beforehand what we are going to give to the Lord. That is the meaning behind the term “*purpose in our heart.*” Put your contribution in your budget.

This means that giving is more than just dropping money into the collection plate. It is something that we have prepared to give beforehand. If we simply show up and then open our wallets or purse and see what we have left to give, then we are not giving as God has commanded; instead we are just giving God our leftovers.

This is the same thing that the people did in the OT. In the book of Malachi, the last book of the OT, in chapter 1 we see that the people started offering God their leftovers. They were supposed to give God their best animals for sacrifice, but instead they were giving him the sick and the lame. I recommend you read this whole chapter but let look at the two verses of chapter 1.

Malachi 1:13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

Malachi 1:8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. We can learn from this example that God is not pleased with our leftovers. Over in Malachi 3:8 they are said to have “*robbed God in their tithes and offerings.*” ***Malachi 3:8-9 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. (9)Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.*** Are you robbing God? We don't want to be guilty of robbing God. God cursed the nation of Israel for such.

We see in our giving the principle of sowing and reaping. ***2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*** This is teaching us that we reap what we sow. Now this is not saying that if you give \$100 today that God will give back to you 100 fold. You see giving to God is not some get-rich-quick plan. While it may be the case that the more you give, the more money you may make; however many times we reap the benefits of giving in many other ways. It may be that you reap monetarily, but it may be too that you reap spiritually. It is good for us to keep in mind a quote from Jesus by Paul. ***Acts 20:35 it is more blessed to give than to receive.***

Another thing Paul tells in 1 Cor. 16 is that we are to give as we prosper. This means the more money we make the more we are expected to give. We can see an example of this. ***Acts 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:*** We see here that each gave according to their ability; some could give a little; some could give a lot. God is not asking you to give more than you have. But if you are prospering, then you should give accordingly. If your income changes, then you're giving will change.

Another thing Paul tells us about giving in 2 Cor. 9:7 ***is not give grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*** You see when we give to God we should not have the attitude that we “have to give” to Him, or mummer under our breath because of what we are giving; instead we are to give cheerfully because God loves a cheerful giver. The word cheerful comes from the Greek word “*hilaros*” which is where we get our English word “*hilarious*”. So it's almost like our giving to the Lord should bring so much cheer to our hearts that we feel like laughing out loud. We have two great examples of this.

Luke 21:1-4 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. (2) And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. (3) And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: (4) For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. Here we see rich people giving from their abundance and were not really giving from their heart. However this poor widow who only had the two small copper coins which would be about equivalent to two pennies gave all she had to the Lord. Now Jesus was watching this and he said that she gave more than these rich people because she gave from her poverty. You can see that she gave from her heart and I suggest that she did so cheerfully because there is no indication that was complaining.

Our next example comes from, ***2 Corinthians 8:1-4 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; (2) How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. (3) For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; (4) Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon***

us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

Here we see a church that was giving more than their ability and you don't see anywhere where they were complaining about it, because they had the right attitude and were giving from a cheerful heart. These great examples should encourage us to give with a cheerful heart without complaining. Now the question that frequently comes up is **how much should we give – 10%?**

Many in religious world will tell that you must tithe i.e give 10% of your income. They get this concept from OT passages such Deut 26:1ff and Lev. 27:30ff. In the OT they were to give a tithe and it was to sustain the Levites. They would give a tenth of their produce and livestock to the Lord. However it is very interesting that in the NT there is not one command for us to tithe. This is another one of those instances where people try to bring an OT practice into the NT worship. We do not teach people to tithe because we are not commanded to tithe in NT. The purpose of the tithe was to support the Levites and when that old law was nailed to the cross, so was the need to tithe. Consider this, 2 Cor. 9:7 commands us to give what we purpose in our hearts. This embraces the idea of deciding from within what you plan to give. It is not based on some mathematical calculation of 10%. Now if tithing is something that we are to do today then the thought of “purposing in your heart” wouldn't make any sense.

So the question now becomes how much should a person give or what should be our motivation for giving. First of all it's important for us to realize that we are simply stewards of what God has given us because none of the things we have really belong to us; they belong to God. *1 Corinthians 10:26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.* Paul understood this concept. *1 Timothy 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.* This is the first step for each of us to determine how much we should give.

Now each person has to make up their own mind on how much they can give: that's between you and your Maker. If you decide to use 10% as your amount; understand that is because it is your choice and not because to Lord requires you to tithe. But I want to give a few more scriptures that you should think about as you personal decide the amount you should give.

First let's look at what God gave us. ***John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*** Did God give us his leftovers? No he gave us his best; his only begotten and through him made it possible for us to have salvation because we could not save ourselves. So what does he ask of us in return – give cheerful and give abundantly.

Secondly consider what Jesus gave. ***2 Corinthians 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*** Again we can see the great sacrifice that Jesus made for us. He gave up his heavenly home and became poor just so that you and I could become rich. God has blessed us in so many ways. He blesses us physically by giving us the ability to reap physical benefits

In addition to the physicals blessing we enjoy from his creation; there are the spiritual blessings and promises made available to us. ***Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*** So God has blessed us both physical and spiritual; so now the question is what will you give him. Only you can answer that question and determine what you will purpose in your heart to give God; but God expects you to give generously and without grudge.

When we think about giving, we also need to make sure that we are not covetous or greedy with our money. It seems that some today put their worth into how much money they have instead of how much spirituality they have. We need to remember what Jesus said. ***Matthew 6:19-21 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: (20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: (21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.***

You might remember the rich young ruler in Matt 19 who came to Jesus wanting to know what he must do. Well Jesus named off several things from the law and rich young ruler said he had done all these things and wanted to know what else must I do. So Jesus said if you want to perfect then sell all that you have, give it to the poor and come follow me

and you will have treasures in heaven. This made the young man sad because he had great riches and he went away sorrowful. His problem was he trusted too much in his riches and sold his soul to the devil because he wasn't willing to put God first in all aspects of his life. Jesus says, ***Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.***

So we need to be extremely carefully that we don't find ourselves serving our money instead using our money to glorify God. In the NT there has always been a concern for those who rich or those who are constantly seeking to be rich. Look at Paul tells Timothy, ***1 Timothy 6:17-19 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; (18) That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; (19) Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.***

Now none of things I have said this morning will ever matter unless you are first willing to give yourself to God. Until you are willing to become a servant and put you faith and trust in him you will never become the giver that you should be. Romans 12:1 says this is your reasonable service. You see not only are we to give our money we are give of ourselves.

This begins by becoming a Christian. When one becomes a Christian, he views things differently. ***Colossians 3:1-2 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*** When you set your affection on things above, then giving to the Lord as you should will not be a problem.

Are you a Christian?

Invitation