

Sermon Mark S. Aites
THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

INTRODUCTION:

1. I imagine that most of us enjoy the prospect of going to a restaurant, to sit down and be served by a waiter or waitress.
2. We expect them to clear the tables, to clean up spills, to give us refills on our beverages, and even provide crayons and place mats for our children.
3. We spend a great deal of money on dining out.
 - 1) According to the USDA, the trend of eating out has risen 33% since the latter portion of the 70s.
 - 2) 57% of Americans eat snacks or a meal away from home on any given day.
 - 3) Since Americans eat out so much, we realize that we spend a great deal of money getting others to serve us.
4. But when it comes to the Lord's church, we don't seek to be served, but to serve (**Matt. 26:26-28**).
5. In this holiday season, one of the aspects that is good is to see the desire in doing good for others, to manifest a spirit of giving.
 - 1) While such is a joy to see in December, the challenge is to create and maintain that spirit year around.
 - 2) No, I am not suggesting giving gifts all year long, but to develop that spirit of giving and doing for others, instead of for our self.
6. If we could do that, we could go along way in helping people overcome self-pity and selfishness.

DISCUSSION:

I. RECOGNITION.

- A. Jesus has taught us that we should be willing to having a giving spirit because it is in our own best interest (**Luke 6:38**).
 1. Note that God reciprocates based upon our own standard of what we give.
 2. **2 Cor. 9:6** *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*
 3. There is a great incentive to give of ourselves when we consider that God rewards a cheerful and liberal giver; not just in regard to the monetary, but in other aspects of our lives as well.
- B. Using the monetary for a moment, to make a point, in the days of the prophet Malachi a challenge was issued:

Mal. 3:10 *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

 1. God reacts to what we put forth, be it in the contributions we make, or in the efforts we put forward in the advancement of the kingdom of God.
 2. One thing is for sure, God does not like people who are selfish and self-centered.
 3. In the parable of the talents in **Matt. 25**, we find a strong condemnation to the one who had but one talent, and who buried it in the ground.

4. In **Matt. 25:26**, the Lord had some strong words to that individual when He said:
Thou wicked and slothful servant...
- C. It was Jesus who taught: *It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)*.
 1. The word *blessed* lit. means to be "happy."
 2. There is a great joy that comes to the heart when we give.
 - 1) We know that when we give gifts to others.
 - 2) Isn't it the case during the holiday season that much of the joy we experience is in seeing others enjoy what we have given to them?
 3. But we recognize that the spirit of giving is found in the service we render to others.
 - 1) Someone may be unable to shovel their driveway or sidewalk, or perhaps have great difficulty in washing their dishes.
 - 2) There is a happiness that we experience in helping others.
 4. And yes, this same joy is found in the projects that we seek to do in doing the Lord's work:
 - 1) It is a joy to know that my giving advances the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, not just here, but in foreign lands (**cf. Mark 16:15**).
 - 2) It is a joy to know that because of my giving, someone who was or is struggling has been blessed by my efforts.
 - 3) It is a joy that knowing in my giving, I have a part in providing and maintaining a place for the church to assemble.
 5. If we would recognize that it truly is *more blessed to give than to receive*, then perhaps that spirit of giving will be manifested, not just in December, but the whole year through.

II. REVIVAL.

- A. In our effort to capture a spirit of giving, there is something to be said for the need to have a revival.
- B. Throughout Scripture, we learn that revival and the spirit of giving go hand in hand.
 1. Such was evident during the revival under King Hezekiah (**2 Chron. 31:5-12**); under King Josiah (**2 Chron. 35:7-9**); and Nehemiah **Neh. 10:37-39**.
 2. Why is a spirit of giving manifest when there is revival.
- C. *Revival* is the idea of renewing or reestablishing a renewed interest in something; in this case, in reestablishing a relationship with God.
 1. In the Old Testament, those revivals that took place stemmed from the fact that the children of Israel had forgotten God, and had placed their hearts and affections on something else
 2. The beauty in a revival, is that when we experience revival we die to self (**Gal. 2:20**).
 3. When there is a revival, we begin to realize that all of the things that we want in life, are not as important as we thought they were.
 4. The Psalmist tells us that we may live to be 70 or 80 years of age, and perhaps even longer (due to modern medical advancements); but eventually our life comes to an end (**cf. 1 Tim. 6:7-8**).
- D. I noted where one individual remarked: "You can give without loving; but you cannot love without giving." (Al Hughes)
 1. Then he made the statement: "You can give without revival, but you cannot have

revival without giving.”

2. In other words, to capture the true spirit of giving, we must be able and willing to receive the exhortation from God to give.
3. If we find ourselves unhappy and reluctant to think about giving, then there is a problem with our heart. We need a revival!

Psa. 85:6 *Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?*

- E. In **Acts 11**, we learn that there was a great effort put forth to preach the word of God in Antioch. (Thought from Hughes)
1. Many people turned to the Lord because of that great effort.
 2. In that account, we read a matter significant to this lesson (**11:28-30**).
 - 1) With a closeness to God, these brethren willingly responded to the crises without hesitation.
 - 2) Their giving was because of their close relationship to God.
 - 3) I might say here to you who are Christians, that you look at where your life is in relation to God, and that if you find it a labor to give, then it may well be you need revival.

III. RIGHT.

- A. It is the right thing to do, in trying to establish or cultivate a spirit of giving.
- B. It actually is in our own best interest to give.
1. As we have observed, God will respond to our giving with the same measure in which we give.
 2. It is in our best interest to give since our Lord assured us that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*.
 3. And it is in our best interest to give, because in giving, it having our priorities right with God, God will respond to that which is needful for our well-being and survival.
- C. Notice that I didn't speak in terms of giving you an over abundance of things to satisfy one's cravings for material possessions or money.
1. The Lord promised us that God would provide for us (**Matt. 6:31-33**).
- D. What thought then can I derive from this in terms of a developing and maintaining a spirit of giving?
1. A spirit of giving is the right thing to strive for because, as one of our songs says so well, *This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through, my treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue*.
 2. In **Luke 12:15-21**, we are afforded the parable of the rich fool, who decided to build bigger barns to house all that he credited himself with accumulating.
 3. While we often look at this parable to point out the covetous spirit that some men have, we don't place the emphasis needed on **vs 21**.
Luke 12:20-21 *But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*
12:21 *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*
 4. When a person is *rich toward God* and fully realizes that the things of this world are temporary, then their heart and interest will not be worldly (note **Matt. 6:19-21**).

IV. REVEALED.

- A. Scripture provides us with the example of the Christians at Corinth who was urged by Paul in **2 Cor. 8** to give a contribution to the needy saints in Jerusalem.
- B. He begins that chapter by speaking of the churches of Macedonia (**2 Cor. 8:2-4**).
 - 1. We learn that the Corinthians were actually in better financial shape than their brethren in Macedonia, for those who were in Macedonia were giving in deep sacrifice.
 - 2. Paul plainly says that they were giving *beyond their ability*.
 - 3. He notes the reason they were able to give, despite their situation, is because *they first gave of themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God (vs 5)*.
 - 4. Paul urged the Corinthians to abound in the same grace.
- C. Then in **vs 8**, *I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others*.
 - 1. While certainly the love for others is much of the focus in the text, such giving has its root in one's love for God.
 - 2. Paul says that giving is the test of the *sincerity of our love*.
- D. We are back again to the familiar concept of actions speaking louder than words.
 - 1. In **1 John 3:10-18**, John stresses that loving one another is not just something to speak about, but something which needs to be evident in our actions.
 - 2. Using an analogy for a moment: in **James 2:26**, we learn that faith without works is dead.
 - 3. **James 2:24** *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only*.
 - 4. The point that can be made in an analogy, is that love without action, or works of evidence, is dead.
 - 5. Again using the analogy, we can say, *Show me your love without action and I will show you my love by my actions*.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. It is such a wonderful blessing to see the spirit of giving, of peace, and of love, but friends there is no reason that we cannot demonstrate that spirit year around.
- 2. If however, we find that we struggle and spend too much time thinking of ourselves in self-pity, or in being self-centered, then how can we truly be Christians and manifest the spirit of Christ in giving to others?