

“What Motivates Us to Do What We Do?”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney - October 17, 2021

Mark 10:35-45

IT JUST SEEMS RIDICULOUS: How can anyone be a cheerful giver?

Paul tells us that God loves a cheerful giver. That’s all well and good, many of you are thinking, but who exactly is joyful about giving? It’s hard for many to believe that there are cheerful givers. And that’s why so many give so little.

Further, there are others of you here who are tithers, but do it out of habit or obligation. You are actually givers in more substantial ways, but there isn’t much cheer in it anymore. “Someone’s got to pay the bills.” “It’s just the way I was raised.” For those, it is important to remember how it’s possible to be a cheerful giver.

“GIVE CHEERFULLY BECAUSE GENEROUS SOWING BRINGS GENEROUS REAPING.”
2 Corinthians 9:6.

There are certainly noble and sacrificial reasons to give. “I’m overwhelmed by all that God has done for me and I want to show that.” “God has blessed me so much financially that I want to use a good portion of it to further His Kingdom.”

Paul tells us that sowing sparingly means reaping sparingly. Sowing generously means reaping generously.

Now, most of us can understand what is meant by sowing sparingly and sowing generously. It has to do with how much of our money we give. Do I give the smallest bill I have in my wallet just so I can toss something in the plate? Do I tithe because I believe in investing in the Kingdom? Do I look for opportunities even beyond that to point people to Jesus?

So, the sowing part is pretty clear. The reaping part, though, is not as clear.

Let’s start with what it’s not. This is not a PROSPERITY GOSPEL passage. This is not Paul sounding like a cheap televangelist: “Just send in your money and God is going to return ten-fold back to you within the next 30 days!” That’s just straight up heresy.

We know this with certainty because of reading the New Testament as a whole. It gives us no vision of God wanting to make us all rich so we can live out our

materialistic passions. To the extent that He gives us an abundance financially, it is largely so that we can be a blessing to those around us, not so that we can endlessly raise our standard of living.

So, then, what does it mean to reap generously?

I want to talk about four things that are included in that. My goal in sharing these four is to attempt to give those who aren't giving, a vision of the good God desires to do in your life if you give. Certainly, that is not to be the main reason we give, but it is helpful for the new giver to find motivation to pursue this.

WHAT DOES "REAP GENEROUSLY" LOOK LIKE?

1. Spiritual Growth for Me

One of the great goals of our lives as Christians is supposed to be that we want to grow to become more like Christ. If that's not something you care about, you can probably go ahead and check out mentally from this sermon because it's very doubtful that I'll say anything that is going to convince you.

On our trek for spiritual growth, we are always looking for tools that will help us achieve increasing Christlikeness. One, obviously, is the Bible. As we read it, we learn what it means to be like Jesus. That's a powerful tool.

Another tool is money. Certainly, using our money for the Kingdom has an impact on those on the other end of the equation. We desire that fruitfulness from using our money will expand the Kingdom.

But using our money for the Kingdom does not just impact others. It helps us as well in our quest to become more like Christ.

How does that happen?

In *Matthew 6:21* we are told that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. So, if I spend a ton of my money on a big boat, my heart is going to go there quite a bit. If I love to spend my money buying new clothes, my heart is going to go there quite a bit.

Money is "heavy." Money has a spiritual or emotional "weight" to it. Where I put significant amounts of my money, my attention and heart are going to be drawn there.

Now, what that means for our purposes this morning is important. Let's say that right now I am someone who gives almost nothing to the Kingdom. As I invest in the Kingdom in increasing amounts, my heart is going to increasingly be drawn

to Kingdom things. Why? Look at this verse: “where your treasure (your money) is, there your heart will be also.”

If someone from the church is going on a mission trip, I’m not really that focused on how it goes. If, however, I give \$500 toward the trip, all of a sudden, I’m acutely interested in how things went. That money was “heavy” and drew my heart there.

Let’s say a family has two incomes that add up to \$80,000 a year. If I’m dropping a \$5 bill in the offering plate each time it comes by, I’m not invested in what Kingdom work is happening here. If I’m writing tithe checks twice a month to church totaling \$333, I’m suddenly paying a lot more attention.

2. The Joy in Seeing People Know Jesus and Grow in Jesus.

Buying stuff from the mall or Walmart or Target or wherever, gives us some joy. It might be short-lived, but we love playing with our new iPhone or big screen TV or showing off our new blouse or sitting in the living room of our new house. We are constantly overwhelmed by commercials promising lasting, fulfilling joy if we just keep buying. That, of course, is a lie.

Any joy we receive from our purchases is fleeting.

When we have a Kingdom mentality, however, we begin to get our greatest joy from seeing people know Jesus and grow in Jesus. We want to see evangelism and discipleship.

Now, here is a brutal truth about that: in most situations, it takes money to minister.

This church has stood as a lighthouse in this community for over a century, but that witness has not come without expenses.

If we want to see people come to Jesus, then we have to help with our giving.

3. Increased Confidence that God Will Care for My Financial Needs

Jesus tells us that if we put the Kingdom first, God will take care of our financial needs. It is important to again note the condition on this promise. This is not available to just everyone, but only to those who are putting the Kingdom first.

As I do that, I’m stepping out in faith, trusting that God is going to be good for His Word. And as He comes through for me, I’m going to see my faith in God increase. I trusted Him and He proved Himself true.

Faith requires that we believe without sight. Faith requires that we step out before the answer has come. That's the only way faith will grow.

4. The Investments We Give Will Outlast this World.

We are investing for the long haul. And I do mean long.

We are told, don't store up treasures down here on earth, instead store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

What He means is that as we invest in the Kingdom, that "investment" will outlast this world.

All the multi-national corporations of the world will expire someday. All the great nations of the world will someday end. But the Kingdom of God will outlast this world.

And, so, as we invest in the Kingdom of Jesus, that investment will outlast this world. We will receive rewards in the presence of God for what we've invested in the Kingdom.

Have you ever sat back and thought about what motivates you? In times of need, we give generously because we can see the need. But in times like today, we must have faith that our acts of giving generously, will grow our spiritual lives and the kingdom of God. Just look at the ministries that we do that would not reach so many others if you were not partners with God today. Amen.