



Stewardship: Living as God's People in God's World

Lesson 4: How Should We Give?

THE GOSPEL RENEWS THE CITY SOCIALLY

Nothing is more clear or strong in the Bible than the call to care for the poor. And yet, most people talk about care of the poor as if it was an option--one of many. Perhaps that's why Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount is so much more popular than Luke's. Matthew says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." But Luke hits it head on—"Blessed are the poor...But woe to you who are rich..." Care for the poor is central. The Gospel, to the extent that we get it, calls us and enables us to know the poor, become the poor, and love the poor.

Review

The theme of our first lesson was the kingdom of God. We saw how God is to be worshipped as the Lord and King of all creation. We also looked at how God's kingdom is described in the Bible. It's a realm where peace, justice, and righteousness triumph over conflict, oppression and sin. Finally, we noticed how Jesus described his ministry as ushering in this promised kingdom through his life and death. The second week we studied what it means to be a "steward" in God's kingdom. Last week we focused our lesson on the blessing and challenge of money.

Further Informed & Further Involved (15-20 minutes)

Sermon Topic: The Gospel Makes Us a People of Mercy

- Share about a time when you were in need and someone was a "Good Samaritan" to you. What did they do that was so meaningful to you?
- Read Luke 10:25-37. What does it mean to love your neighbor? What aspect of loving your neighbor do you have a hard time with?
- Which character in the parable can you most identify with? Discuss.
- In what ways are we like the man dying on the road? How is Jesus the real "Good Samaritan" to us?

Further Invested (45-60 minutes)

God is not only concerned *that* we give, but he is also concerned *how* we give. The Bible emphasizes this in a number of places, and we're going to look at a couple of them this week. We'll first look at a giving church and then we'll also look at the example of a giving individual.

So first, let's meet a generous church. When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, he wanted to encourage them in the grace of giving, so he told them about the Macedonian churches. These

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

¹And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

²Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. ⁵And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:8,11

⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ¹¹You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Luke 21:1-4

¹As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ²He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³"I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

2 Corinthians 8:9

⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

churches were not rich materially, but they were rich toward God and those in need. The specific need was in the church in Jerusalem, where many of the people had been ostracized from their communities and were living in poverty.

- Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and Romans 15:25-27. What further details do these passages give us about Paul's collection for the saints in Jerusalem?
- Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. What are some things you learn about the Macedonians from their giving? What was their motivation to give? How could they "give beyond their ability"? What was their first priority as they gave (v. 5)?

There are five specific ways that Paul encourages us to give based on the example of the Macedonians. First, give *thoughtfully*. Paul says that each should give "what he has decided in his heart to give." Often we need to respond spontaneously to needs as they arise, but Paul here is also encouraging us to plan our giving carefully. Don't just respond to spur-of-the-moment appeals; the most important causes to support are often not the most urgent. Second, he encourages us to give *freely*. The Macedonians gave "on their own," without arm-twisting. Third, we are to give *cheerfully*. Literally, Paul says we should be "hilarious" in our giving! Fourth, the Macedonians teach us that we should give *sacrificially*. They gave "beyond their ability." And finally, we are to give *confidently*. We can be confident because we can trust a generous God who will meet our needs and enable us to be generous to others!

- How can giving money away become a source of cheerfulness for the giver? How does your understanding of God and the gospel free you to give sacrificially? What idols of your heart keep you from giving generously?
- For what purpose will God materially bless us? How is giving contagious? How does it reflect God's grace?

The story in Luke 21 reminds us that when we give, God is not impressed with great sums, but with great sacrifice. Some commentators tell us that the widow actually gave the smallest gift that was allowed to be given; anything smaller was considered an insult. But, that was all she had! So for the widow, her choice was, "Do I give all I have or do I give nothing?"

- How did the widow's gift express her faith?
- How did her gift demonstrate her hope?
- What did her gift tell us about her love?

Our ultimate motivation for giving is the gospel! Christ gave up so much for us and God calls us to respond to that love with giving hearts as well

- Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. Describe the "riches" that Christ gave up. In what ways did he become poor? In what ways have we become rich as a result of his poverty? How should this affect our giving?