

SERMON ON MT. THE CHRISTIAN AND GIVING

Matthew 6:19-24

Today we look Jesus words on the
the holy Habit of Giving the Spiritual Discipline of Tithing.

As I thought about what age of people love to give most,
I had to say it is children.
Don't you love the way they are willing to serve and share.
Before they are caught up in greed and self centeredness.

I love the giving spirit of a little two year old girl,
Who had broken her arm, and had been given
a little tea set as a get well gift.
Daddy was baby sitting when the little two year
old brought Daddy a little cup of tea, which was just water.
When his wife came home, he called her in and said
"Watch, this is the cutest thing".
Sure enough the child brought daddy another cup of tea
and he oohed and aahed over it.
Then his wife said: Did it ever occur to you,
what is the only place she can reach to get water ?
And we don't have a gold fish bowl.

Whenever I talk about giving it makes people mad, glad, or sad.
My goal is not to try to pry money out of you this morning.
Because we've already taken the offering!
**But to look at Jesus warning and teaching about
Money for Holy living.**

Money magazine has declared that money is
the #1 obsession of Americans.
Newsweek reports we have a new plane of consciousness called "transcendental
acquisition."- Finding happiness in life from ownership of possessions.
I have people come to my office and confess adultery.
They have confessed addictions.
I have never had anyone come to my study,
hands around their face saying, "Pastor, I am greedy."

Its because we have divided life into two broad categories:
the spiritual, and the material.
But Jesus never made that distinction.
Jesus taught that our attitude toward the material
Reveals our true spirituality.

Some people have done that with our new building.
They ask: "Why did we spend all our money on bricks and mortar.
When we could have given to the poor,
and sent out missionaries."
Our goal here at FUMC is to move bricks and mortal
to a ministry of flesh and blood.

Can't do one without the other.

If you were fortunate enough to be a part of
 Our two capital campaign drives,
 You were challenged to make a pledge
 You have seen how it has sharpened your true spiritual condition.
 Because you had to make a decision whether to give or not.
 Whether to put your trust in God or the world
 Some people had a tough year and quit giving.
 With no faith or trust in God, to finish their pledge and don't intend too,
 and they missed a greater blessing.
 And a deeper spiritual growth.
 And chose not to keep their pledge promise.

That is why Jesus now turns us to the Holy Habit of giving
 To show us that first of all:

I. MATERIAL TREASURE CAN ENTANGLE US

What is Jesus trying to show us

¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. Matthew 6:19

What is Jesus trying to show us about moths?

Remember Moths.

When years ago our houses were not very tight and secure and
 The wind, dirt, and bugs could get in.

And you could open your Chest of drawers and
 Pull out a sweater or a blanket,
 and have holes eaten in it.
 From the moths and carpet bugs.

The more clothes you had the more danger there was.
 Our treasures on earth can be destroyed even by the bugs of earth.
 Even in our hope chest.
 Beware of where we claim our treasure.

What about rust?

Iron was not easy to come by in Jesus days,
 And if you had utensils and tools made of metal
 You needed to care about rust.
 Even today if you don't wash and dry your knives properly they can rust.
 If you keep your hunting equipment in your basement,
 Then you are liable to have rust on them.
 I got rust on the back door frame of my car.
 I ground it,
 Primed it
 Painted it.
 And had to do it over and over every year.
 Because I just couldn't get to the core of the rust.
 I even had one fender done professionally,
 And in two years it had started over.

The more cars you have the more care you have about rust.

Jesus said Thieves break in and steal:

How much effort do we put in protecting ourselves from thieves.

We build houses with security alarms.

Locks and counter locks.

We even have to lock our garages,

Lock our cars in our garages.

Because the thief breaks in and steals.

We have had a rash of burglaries in Aberdeen,

And our stores are plagued with shoplifting.

All must be protected from theft.

But another theft money can take from us is time.

In the way it takes to manage it,

With consultants, brokers, bankers, tax preparers, accountants.

CEO's to take care of it.

Or the time that is stolen when someone is always

Asking you for money.

The letters that come and the door bell rings.

For this cause and that.

Pretty soon you don't have any time or money left for God,

Because the thief has come in and stolen it.

We come to church cynical and tough hearted,

when it comes to giving.

Money has us stuck more firmly than our tongue on a cold flag pole.

Because we're continually licking our riches and counting our coins.

I have seen some men with chains on their wallet

That connect them to their belt loops.

But I have also seen chains on their wallets that connect them

To their hearts.

The sign of the saved person

Is his love for the least.

Jesus said: In the end times,

All the nations of the world will be gathered before him and he will separate them into two groups as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

The saved from the unsaved.

What qualifies them to be saved?

I tell you the truth anything you did for even the least of my people here you also did for me.

The saved do for the least.

I was hungry, you gave me food, I was thirsty you gave me something to drink. I was alone away from home, and you invited me into your house. I was without clothes, and you gave me something to wear. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me. Matthew 25:31-46 selected.

You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

Then Jesus says:

II. MATERIAL ASSETS CAN HAVE SPIRITUAL REWARDS

²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matthew 6:19-20

How do we store material treasures up in heaven?

We just switch banks.

From an earthly realm to a heavenly realm!

How can we move our accounts from the bank down the street to the bank up in heaven! By our giving.

**We can't take anything with us when we die,
But Jesus is saying you can send it on ahead.**

That's a real investment and

it's burglar proof, rust proof, decay proof, corrupt proof...

we don't need the FDIC for protection,

and the interest is out of this world!

Every time you drop your offering in the plate
you can whisper to it silently, 'see you in heaven.'

Every hour of time you invest

Every cup of water given,

Every class we teach and attend,

Every dollar we give in serving God

will reap an eternity of reward.

Every one of us will be surprised when we get to heaven

Some by surplus of resources heaven has for us.

Other by the lack of resources heaven has for us.

A teacher said: "Joey, if you put your hand in one pants pocket and found 75 cents, then you put your other hand in your other pants pocket and found 50 cents, what would you have?" Joey said: "I'd have somebody else's pants on!"

The only thing in your pants pocket in heaven will be what you have put there.

When I think of the folks who are now dead and gone,

who gave and worked sacrificially to build this church

God reminded me that they are still drawing interest

in heaven on their investments here.

You know what

I believe that if you would ask any one of them them today.

Not one of them would say,

"Oh I gave too much,"

Jesus said: Giving clears our eyes to see correctly.

²²"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 6:22

The old Jack Benny skit clarifies this best for us.

An armed robber approaches Benny and demands, "Your money or your life!" Benny hesitates and says nothing. Finally, the robber says, "Well, what will it be?" To which Benny replies, "Don't rush me, I'm thinking about it!"

Your money is really your life.

In Matthew 19:21-22

The rich young ruler problem was not that he had possession,

But that his possession had him.

It was all he could see.

v. 22-23 The eye is the window that lets the light in to our soul.

²³But if your eyes are bad,

You can't see to be giving and generous,

your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness,

how great is that darkness! Matthew 6:23

The question today is: are you spiritually minded or materially minded?

That can make a major difference in your life.

Remember Lot?

He and his uncle Abraham were so blessed that the land could not sustain both of their herds and flocks. So Abraham suggested they split up,

If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left.

Genesis 13:9

Lot looked up and saw the well watered plains of the Jordan.

And the bible say he say it was a good place to raise cattle.

So he chose Sodom and Gomorrah.

His mistake was: He saw it was a good place to raise cattle' ...

but he never thought about whether it was a good place to raise kids.

How many people get a job offer or promotion

which requires a move,

and they jump on it because of the financial bonanza,

but never look if it's a good place to raise a family,

or if there is a good church to worship in.

Lot moved to Sodom a wealthy prince.

But he left Sodom a widower and a bankrupt pauper.

When we fall in love with the world and its lifestyles,

It leaves us open to greed and complaint when anyone ask us to give.

It reminds me of a hound dog sitting in a country store in the Ozark howling as

hounds do. In comes a stranger who says to the storekeeper, "What's the matter with the dog?" "He's sitting on a cocklebur." "Why doesn't he get off?" "He'd rather holler."

Bits and Pieces, May, 1990, p. 20.

Maybe today the spirit of God is saying,

we need to change the way we give,

Get off the cocklebur

And step up to tithe.

And friend we may have good intention today,

but if we don't do it now,

By next week the world will have erased any memory
Of the whisper of God's spirit from your ear,
And nothing will change.

III. OUR GIVING REVEALS WHICH GOD WE WORSHIP

²⁴"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Matthew 6:24"

"Serve" means to be a slave.

Jesus is saying we are all owned by someone or something.

The two choices are God or Mammon,

Heaven, or earth?

Which world owns you?

Which world determines how you live, and give?

Like a Chicago man wearing a sandwich board which read on the front, "I am a fool for Christ". People walked by him and laughed, then looked back and saw the other side which read, "Whose fool are you?"

The world's advice can be tempting.

But it can also be spiritually bankrupting.

It can move us into Idolatry.

You cannot serve both God and Money. Matthew 6:24

Who do you listen to when you decide what to give?

A recent secular woman's magazine told of a woman, named Lyndsey,

Who wrote to a consultant asking how

She and her husband could get ahead financially.

Lyndsey 23 yrs old, makes \$30,000 a year

Spends the bare minimum on almost everything,

Packs a lunch most days for herself and her husband.

Rarely shops for new clothes or indulges in beauty treatments.

She says we are financially stable with minimal debt.

She gives 10 percent to her church as her tithe.

She puts \$200 a month into savings for a down payment on a house. Her husband puts in

\$300. a month. She knows she should invest in the 401 K retirement plan her employer

offers, but she just hasn't gotten around to it.

The consultant says:

Lyndsey should be proud of her frugality,

In four years she will have enough for a down payment on a modest home.

But if Lyndsey wants to have the down payment sooner

She might have to reconsider reducing her church tithe

to less than 10 percent of her income until she reaches that goal.

The consultant said: It's about choosing your priorities.

She was right,

But where do you think Lyndsey's eyes and priority are focused?

Her tithe tells us.

She is not only thinking about her physical home in this life,
But her spiritual and eternal home.

Where is your focus? Where is mine?

Where does our heart lie?

Jesus is saying our giving reveals whom we trust-

Do we serve the Lord or Mammon,

Do we trust ourselves or God to provide.

I challenge you to change your giving

And step up to begin to receive an amazing blessing from the Lord.

21. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.