

A Generous Gospel
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(Genesis 1:1, Genesis 3, Psalm 50:10-11, Genesis 1:26-28, Leviticus 23:10, Malachi 3:10, John 3:16, Genesis 2, I Timothy 6:10, Mark 10:17-23, I Cor. 15: 22-23).
Proverbs 3:9-10, 11:24-25, 22:7

Story of getting my driver's license and Mom asking me to go get her milk. She gave me a \$10 and I didn't want to give her the change.

The Gospel is a story. The story of the Gospel begins with God's creation of a beautiful, perfect earth with perfect people. **Genesis 1:1**

God's ownership of creation didn't end with human's sin. In Genesis 3, humanity decided to live different from God's plan and sin entered this good creation.

Psalm 50: 10 for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. 11 I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine.

God possesses all things. They are His.

It all belongs to Him.

LBJ Story about helicopters. A serviceman said "Mr. President, your helicopter is over here." LBJ replied "They're all my helicopters!"

God created all things. But then He gives us a responsibility:

He created humans and gave us a responsibility. We read about this responsibility in Genesis 1:26-28: 26 *Then God said, "Let us make*

mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Theologians call this responsibility our cultural mandate. We have a mandate to reach out to the world. God is the owner and creator, we are the manager.

We have been called to manage creation on behalf of God.

A steward is one who manages the affairs of a house on behalf of others.

Stewardship flows from the idea of God as the Creator of all things.

Sin entered in and marred that beauty.

The Gospel story begins with Creation and ends with New Creation

God Owns All Things

Proverbs 3:9-10

"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

Stuff is everywhere. We like our stuff. We like to look at it, to stand on it, to drive around in it, to listen to it, to hold it, to wear it. We like stuff. Because of this, it is unthinkable that we would give it away.

In the Old Testament, there is a concept known as the firstfruits. It is the first and the best portion.

Leviticus 23:10 ¹⁰ *"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest'"*

How much is a "sheaf" understanding a tithe as a tenth of what you take in. A tithe means tenth.

How much is enough? Firstfruits is to give up 10%.

Not a magical view of God. A magical view of God is if you do something, then God is forced to respond in predictable ways.

But there is unique language in scripture about this. *"Test me in this"*

Talk about the use of the tithe in Malachi 3:10 ¹⁰ *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and put Me to the test now in this," says the Lord of armies, "if I do not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.*

Giving a tenth of what we possess is a start to honoring God.

God Desires Our Generosity

Proverbs 11:24-25 *"One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."*

A Generous spirit is attractive.

God calls us to more generosity.

Generosity. Would not God give you more if you don't hoard it, but are generous?

Honor the Lord with our tithe. Then we give an offering. Give up an offering, and then a sacrifice. 10% is a start. 10% of net. 10% of gross. Generosity is heart-driven and sacrificial, not legalistic.

This is not prosperity gospel. This is not viewing God as a divine vending machine, but there is blessing in generosity.

God is one who gives. We become more like Him when we give.

When we give, we become more like the God who loves us.

God is the ultimate giver (John 3:16)

He gave life to us in Genesis 2 and eternal life in John 3:16.

God is Our Security

Proverbs 22:7

"The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.

If you are finding your security in your bank account, you will be disappointed.

There is a spiritual dimension to money:

1 Timothy 6:10: *¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Love of money

The Love of money is powerful.

How powerful? It can keep you out of heaven. It becomes Idolatry.

Idolatry is anything we look to for security.

Mark 10:17-23 *¹⁷As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.' ²⁰"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." ²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²²At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. ²³Jesus looked around and*

said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

Why is it hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God? Because they rely on money for their security.

If you are unwilling to give up your money, then that is what keeps you from following Christ.

Good things can come between ourselves and the Lord.

We must be willing to give of our money to honor God. It is a symbol of what we owe God. Like baptism, like the Lord's Supper. Giving up our money is a symbol.

Part of why we are to honor God with the firstfruits.

The Gospel story concludes with God recreating this world. A new heaven and a new earth for the old heaven and the old earth has passed away.

What begins in Creation in Genesis 1 ends in new creation.

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" — 1 Corinthians 15:22-23

On July 6, 1999, the band Sixpence None the Richer was on the David Letterman show. Sixpence None the Richer is from New Braunfels and had had a hit song the year before called Kiss Me. Letterman asked about their name. Leigh Nash, the lead singer explained that it came from CS Lewis' Mere Christianity and shared the Gospel.

David Letterman replied: *"That's a beautiful story... God bless you."*