

The Grace OF GIVING



“but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

- Matthew 6:20 -

Crestwood
CHURCH OF CHRIST

www.crestwoodcoc.com

October – December, 2025

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GOD: THE GIVER OF GOOD GIFTS

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” (James 1:17-18)

Introduction

1. God is the great giver of all things. He is both gracious and generous.
2. *“The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” (Psalm 145:15-16)*
3. This study on *The Grace of Giving* is about developing the character and heart of a gracious giver; learning a way of life that reflects the character of God.
4. Let us learn from God how to have an “open heart” and an “open hand.”

Discussion

I. Every Good Gift.

- A. James 1:17-18: When we make our requests to God, such as asking for wisdom, we ought to do so in faith, remembering that God is the source of every good gift and supplies our every need.

1. DISCUSSION: Contemplate how “every” good and perfect gift comes down from God: _____

2. James 1:5: How does God give? _____ What does that mean? _____

3. Acts 17:28: *“In Him we _____ and _____ and have our _____.”*

4. What does this mean? _____

- B. Psalm 145:1-2, 14-17:

1. David wrote, *“I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever.”*

2. Later in His Psalm, he gives the reasons God is worthy of such continual praise.

- a. Vs. 14: _____
- b. Vs. 15: _____
- c. Vs. 16: _____
- d. Vs. 17: _____
- e. Vs. 18: _____
- f. Vs. 19: _____
- g. Vs. 20: _____

II. God Gives with an “Open Hand.”

A. Psalm 145:16; 104:28:

1. DISCUSSION: How does the image of an *open hand* illustrate an attitude of giving? _____

2. Deut. 15:7-11: How did Moses teach the Israelites to have an *open hand*? _____

3. Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17: To whom does God do good? _____
How does this manifest His “open hand” approach to giving? _____

B. God gives “liberally” and “without reproach”.

1. James 1:5: What does it mean to give “liberally”? _____
2. Romans 8:32: How has God proven this about Himself? _____

3. Matthew 7:11-12: How does Jesus illustrate God’s willingness to give? _____

4. Vs. 12: How must we apply this to ourselves? _____
5. James 1:5: What does it mean to give “without reproach”? (See also Luke 15:21-22) _____

III. Imitators of God as Dear Children

A. Ephesians 5:1-2: “*Therefore be _____ of God as dear _____.*”

1. Vs. 2: Walk in _____.
2. “As Christ _____.”
3. “And gave _____.”

B. 2 Corinthians 9:7; Matthew 5:43-48: Why does God love a cheerful giver? _____

1. Isaiah 58:7-12: How does God desire His people show their love and devotion to Him? _____
2. Matthew 25:34-46: In the end, who will the King invite to inherit the kingdom and why? _____

C. 1 Pet. 4:9; Phil. 2:3-4, 14: DISCUSSION: What might hinder us from giving “without reproach”? How can we overcome it? _____

Conclusion

1. Everything we learn about giving, we learn from God.
2. As generous as He is, we should also learn to be.
3. Each of the lessons in this series will focus on key Bible texts that instruct us on how to be a generous, loving, and giving people.

THE GRACE OF GIVING

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”
(2 Corinthians 9:8)

Introduction

1. God gives every good gift, He gives generously, and He loves to see His people doing the same. *“God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Cor. 9:7).
2. The Scriptures teach God’s people to give generously, cheerfully, and lovingly.
3. Paul reminded the Corinthians that as they gave to the needs of the saints,
“God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” (2 Cor. 9:8)
4. As God makes His grace abound toward us, we ought to give to others in the same manner and spirit by which we receive.

Discussion

I. Grace for Giving

- A. God’s “amazing grace” includes far more than salvation.
 1. We often associate grace with God’s gift of salvation—and rightly so (Titus 2:11).
 2. We must broaden our understanding of grace to include:
 - a. Every resource we possess (2 Cor. 9:8).
 - b. Every ability given to us (Rom. 12:6-8).
 - c. Every opportunity to do good (James 4:17; Gal. 6:10).
- B. God’s grace “for giving” transforms the way we think about what we receive.
 1. 2 Cor. 9:10: *“Now may He who supplies _____ to the _____, and bread for food, supply and _____ the seed you have sown and increase the _____ of your _____.”*
 - a. What is the “seed” God supplies? _____
 - b. What does he call those who receive the seed? _____
 - c. Can you say you are living up to that description with the seed God gives you? _____
 2. **DISCUSSION:** How should this analogy affect our relationship to the resources we receive from God? _____

II. Grace through Giving.

- A. Grace describes both the gift received and the attitude of the receiver.
 1. To have grace is to have “gratitude” or “thankfulness.”
 2. Colossians 3:16: We are instructed to sing to one another with “grace” (NKJV) or “thankfulness” (NASB) in our hearts.

3. Hebrews 12:28: “*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have _____, by which we may _____ God _____ with reverence and godly fear.*”

a. Acceptable service requires a thankful heart.

b. Rom. 1:21: Like faith, without gratitude, it is impossible to serve God acceptably.

B. We express grace (gratitude) toward God *through* giving as we have received.

1. Luke 6:30-38: Jesus teaches us to give as generously as we would like to receive from God.

2. Leviticus 7:12-15; 22:29: The Law of Moses gave instructions for offerings of “thanksgiving,” to be given as free will offerings to the Lord.

3. Psalm 107:21-22: “*Oh, that men would give _____ to the LORD for His _____, and for His _____ to the children of men! Let them _____ the _____ of _____, and declare His works with rejoicing.*”

4. Hebrews 13:15-16: “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of _____, that is, the _____, giving _____ to His name. But do not forget to _____ and to _____, for with such _____ God is _____.”

III. Giving Acknowledges, Honors, and Glorifies God.

A. Proverbs 3:9-10: “_____ the LORD with your _____, And with the _____ of all your _____.”

1. How do we honor the Lord with our possessions? _____

2. What does it mean to honor Him with our first fruits? _____

B. Proverbs 14:31: We honor God by _____

C. Proverbs 19:17: To show pity on the needy is to _____
Explain: _____

D. Matthew 25:40: When we do good to God’s people, we _____

E. 2 Corinthians 9:11: When we are generous with what God has given us, what does it cause others to do? _____

Conclusion

1. God’s grace supplies salvation, but also every good thing we have and experience.

2. In the world, we are taught to use God’s gifts for personal pleasure and self-indulgence, but the Scriptures teach a better way.

3. Yes, God wants us to enjoy His gifts, but when we receive His blessings with a grateful heart, a grateful heart will use those blessings as opportunities to serve Him with thanksgiving.

4. As faithful sowers, let us use God’s blessings as seed to be scattered for His glory.

STEWARDS OF GOD'S GRACE

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10)

Introduction

1. Previously, we learned that God's grace provides for salvation as well as every good thing we receive and experience in this life.
2. We are described as sowers, and every gift from God as seed to be used and scattered to His glory and praise.
3. In this lesson Peter describes this concept in another way –as *stewards* of God's manifold grace.

Discussion

I. Stewardship:

- A. GK *oikonomos*. “Manager of household or of household affairs...farm...entrusted management” (Strong's).

1. Gen. 43:16: Joseph had a steward over his _____
2. Luke 16:1: The unjust steward was wasting his master's _____
3. Rom. 16:23: Erastus was _____ of the city.
4. Dan. 1:11, 16: The steward Daniel spoke to was over _____
5. In both the Greek and Hebrew, a steward is a servant. Stewardship is to be placed over or in charge of any asset or realm belonging to another. To have charge of its care, use, distribution, or increase.

- B. Luke 12:35-48: The Parable of Wicked and Faithful Servants.

1. What had Jesus been teaching about before this parable? (see vs. 36-37)

2. Vs. 42: What was the faithful and wise steward ruler over? _____
3. What was he expected to accomplish in his stewardship? _____

4. Vs. 43: What should that steward be found doing when his master comes?

5. Vs. 45: What other word is used to describe the steward? _____
6. How does wicked steward behave? _____

7. Vs. 47: The wicked steward _____ his master's will, but chose not to _____ himself or _____ according to his will.
8. Vs. 48: How does God measure the expectations placed upon His stewards?

II. 1 Peter 4:10: Stewards of God's "Manifold Grace"

A. "Gift" and "Grace."

1. In the Greek, "grace" is *charis*, gift is *charisma*.
 - a. Grace describes *how* a gift is given – freely, undeserved, without merit.
 - b. Gift describe *what* is given—the object, resource, ability, etc.
2. Rom. 12:6-8: Paul identifies various gifts Christians would have found in their possession, including supernatural natural gifts:
 - a. Vs. 6: _____
 - b. Vs. 7: _____, _____
 - c. Vs. 8: _____, _____, _____, _____.

B. "Manifold": GK *poikilos*, diverse, various, multi-faceted.

1. NIV, "*grace in its various forms.*" ESV, "*God's varied grace.*"
2. Vs. 11: As in Rom. 12:6-8, Peter gives examples of God's varied grace.
3. If anyone speaks, let him speak as _____
4. If anyone ministers (serves), with the _____
5. That in all things _____

C. Personal application: Take inventory of your life. Ask yourself, "What (gift) has God given (grace)? What am I steward over and am I using it correctly?"

1. What resources? _____
2. What abilities? _____
3. What people? _____
4. Compare your present stewardship to Luke 12:42 and 45.
 - a. Who did the faithful steward serve with his master's grace? _____
 - b. Who did the wicked steward serve with his master's grace? _____
 - c. Who are you serving? _____
5. Luke 17:7-8: When does a good servant eat? _____
6. How should we prioritize the use of God's gifts to us? _____

7. What one word sums up our willingness and ability to do this? _____

Conclusion

1. Like seed in the hands of a sower, every gift of God ought to be used to glorify Him.
2. Good stewards consider how to accomplish the will of their master first, then enjoy the fruit of their labor after.
3. Wicked stewards serve themselves first, and only serve their master's will as an afterthought—last minute or using the leftovers.
4. As Peter exhorted, let us learn to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God."
5. And as such, we are commanded to use God's gifts to "*minister to one another.*"

THE LAMP OF THE BODY

“The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.” (Luke 11:34-36)

Introduction

1. It may not be readily evident, but the expression “evil eye” is a Hebrew idiom about a person’s attitude toward the needs of others
2. Jesus stresses the importance of this principle, saying, *“But when your eye is bad, your body is also full of darkness.”*
3. Let us take a closer look at this figure of speech to understand how to make our light and our bodies “good” and not “evil.”

Discussion

I. “Evil Eye”: A Hebrew Idiom

A. Deuteronomy 15:7-11:

1. Vs. 7: When there is a poor man among your brethren, you shall not _____ your heart or _____ your hand from your poor brother.
2. Vs. 8: Open your hand wide means to: _____
3. Vs. 9: What is the condition of one’s heart who refuses? _____
4. He who gives nothing has what against his brother? _____
5. Vs. 10: What is the solution? What must one do to avoid that condition? _____
6. Vs. 11 “You shall _____ your hand _____ to your brother, to your _____ and to your _____, in your land.”

B. Proverbs 28:22: (Read the NKJV or NASB and ESV)

1. When a man has an “evil eye”, what is his attitude toward riches? _____
2. What word does the ESV use to translate “evil eye”? _____
3. What will come upon a man like that? _____

C. Proverbs 23:4-8: (Read the NKJV, NASB, and ESV)

1. What is the difference between working hard and what is warned against in vs. 4? _____
2. Compare vs. 5 and Matthew 6:19-21. Why is it not wise to overwork to get rich? _____

3. Vs. 6: The Hebrew in this verse is literally translated, “*Do not eat the bread of a man with an evil eye*” (ASV). What words are used in other translations to describe this kind of man?
 - a. NKJV: _____
 - b. NASB: _____
 - c. ESV: _____
4. Vs. 7: What kind of person are we if we think like this? _____

II. The Teachings of Jesus:

A. Matthew 6:22-23; Luke 11:34-36:

1. What is the spiritual condition of a person who has an evil (bad) eye? _____

2. REVIEW: What words describe us if we have an evil eye? _____

3. What does it mean to have a good eye? _____
4. What is our spiritual condition if our eye is good? _____
5. DISCUSSION: Consider how Jesus connects our attitude toward giving to our entire spiritual condition in the sight of God. _____

B. Examples:

1. Matthew 20:15: How did some laborers express an evil eye? _____

2. Mark 7:21-22: From where does an evil eye flow? _____

III. Let your Light be Good

- A. Proverbs 22:9: What kind of eye will be blessed? _____ Why? _____

- B. Proverbs 11:25: Who will be rich? _____ Why? _____

- C. Luke 6:30-31, 38: What measure will God use to do good for us? _____

Conclusion

1. Read 1 John 3:16-22: How should the example of Jesus transform the lamp of our body? _____

2. If we want to have a right relationship with God, how important is it that we learn to develop a “good eye?” _____

BUILD ON THE ROCK

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24-25)

Introduction

1. Following up on “the Lamp of the Body”, we would do well to consider the other sayings in the Sermon on the Mount considering Jesus final admonition.
2. Jesus said, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them...” Consider how many sayings in this sermon pertain to our attitude toward our brethren and neighbors!
3. We cannot overstate our need to develop a giving and generous spirit.

Discussion

I. Matthew 7:24-27: Build on the Rock

A. Are we wise or foolish?

1. Who is like the wise man? _____
2. Who is like the foolish man? _____

B. Where do we find these sayings of Jesus? _____

1. Matt. 5:14-16: _____
2. Matt. 5:38-39: _____
3. Matt. 5:40: _____
4. Matt. 5:41: _____
5. Matt. 5:42: _____
6. Matt. 5:43-47: _____
7. Matt. 6:2-4: _____
8. Matt. 6:19-21: _____
9. Matt. 6:22-23. How does this teach us to fulfill vs. 19-21? _____

10. Matt. 7:11-12: _____

C. The list above does not contain all of Jesus’ sayings in the Sermon on the Mount, but what do these all have in common? _____

II. Matthew 7:21-23: “I Never Knew You”

A. *“Not everyone who says to Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

1. What do those who call Jesus Lord understand about His authority? _____
2. Luke 6:46: What does Jesus expect of those who call Him Lord? _____

B. *“Have we not...?”*

1. What kind of mighty works did these people do “in Jesus’ name?” _____
2. What was their objection? Why did they feel they deserved to enter the kingdom? _____
3. And yet, Jesus said, “I never knew you.” How is this possible? (see 1 Cor. 5:9-13; Galatians 3:1-5; 5:24-26): _____

C. *“You who practice lawlessness”*

1. Despite their mighty works, what did Jesus say they were missing?
 - a. Vs. 21: They did not do: _____
 - b. Vs. 23: They practiced: _____
2. What does that mean? _____
3. How does the disobedience of king Saul in 1 Samuel 15:18-23 illustrate the teachings of Jesus in this passage? _____

III. Make the Application:

A. Wise vs. Foolish People:

1. Is God looking for “many mighty works” from His people? _____
2. What is He looking for? (vs. 24) _____

B. Considering the substance of Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, what should be a priority in our daily devotion and efforts to serve God? _____

Conclusion

1. What do many Christians or congregations focus on when it comes to the church and the work of the church? (see 7:22) _____
2. Instead, what should we be focusing on to be like wise man? _____
3. How will this study on *The Grace of Giving* help us in that? _____

TREASURE IN HEAVEN

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

Introduction

1. Treasure can be identified by what we value most and are most likely to invest time, energy, and effort obtaining.
2. Another aspect of treasure is, the more we cling to it, the less willing we are to give it up, sacrifice it, or become distracted from its pursuit.
3. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).
4. In this lesson, we will consider how our treasure affects our grace for giving.

Discussion

I. Matthew 6:21: “For where your treasure is.”

A. Our treasure can be identified by things to which we assign greatest value.

1. In general, we tend to hold on to or cling to things we treasure.
2. Often, we give up (sell, trade) things of lesser value to gain more of what we treasure.

B. Parables of the kingdom.

1. Matt. 13:44: What had the greater value? _____
2. Matt. 13:45-46: What had greater value? _____
3. In both parables, what was the person willing to do with items of lesser value to gain the items of greater value? _____

C. Luke 18:18-23: The rich young ruler *desired* eternal life (vs. 18) but *treasured* something else.

1. Can you guess what it was? _____
2. OBSERVATION: Since eternal life was not his real treasure, how did that affect the way he used his earthly possessions? _____

3. APPLICATION: When we hesitate, resent, or begrudge helping others, what does that indicate about the treasure of our heart? _____

II. “Rich Toward God.”

A. Luke 12:16-21: According to verse 21, the rich man was “not rich toward God.”

1. Vs. 19: What was his primary concern or purpose for his life? _____

2. Vs. 18: Because of that, what did he plan to do with his wealth? _____

3. What was he missing? Why was God displeased? _____

4. Vs. 21: What should have been his primary concern? _____

B. How do we become “rich toward God”?

1. 1 Timothy 6:18: What was Paul’s answer? _____

2. How does that make us “rich toward God?”
 - a. Matthew 25:40: Why share with believers: _____

 - b. Prov. 19:17; Matthew 5:16; Heb. 13:15-16: Why share with unbelievers: _____

 - c. Acts 10:1-4: Even before Cornelius was converted, what had gone up to God as a “memorial”? _____
3. What does that mean (see Heb. 6:10)? _____

Conclusion

1. Our treasure is either on earth or in heaven.
2. Luke 18:22: If we want to have treasure in heaven, what must we be willing to do with the things that are on earth? _____

3. 2 Corinthians 9:8: When God gives us an “abundance” how does He expect us to use it? _____
4. 1 Timothy 6:19: And if we want to be rich toward God, how should we use the earthly things he gives us? _____

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”
(Matthew 22:36-40)

Introduction

1. “Love your neighbor as yourself”. This is the second greatest commandment after Loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:36-40).
2. Luke 10:25-37 records an exchange between Jesus and a lawyer in which the lawyer also acknowledged the greatness of these commands.
3. Apparently, though the lawyer understood this, he had not been living it. Wanting to justify himself, the lawyer asked, “Who is my neighbor?” To which Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan.
4. Let’s consider Jesus’ teaching in this question.

Discussion

I. “You shall love your neighbor or as yourself”

- A. Leviticus 19:9-18: Various laws governing inappropriate behavior toward one’s neighbor, summarized in verse 18, *“but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*
- B. “As yourself” = “in place of self”.
 1. To love others as ourselves naturally requires that we suppress self to give to our neighbors.
 2. Philippians 2:3: *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind **let each esteem others better than himself.**”*
 3. Romans 12:10: *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, **in honor giving preference to one another.**”* (NKJV) Or *“Outdo one another in showing honor.”* (ESV)
- C. Luke 10:25-29: Who is my neighbor?
 1. The lawyer’s question was intended to “justify himself,” implying that he had not been obeying this command.
 2. Like Pilot’s question, “What is truth?” (John 18:38), the question is intended to imply vagueness or uncertainty, exempting him from accountability.
 3. Since the law does not specify who my neighbor is, how can one be held accountable to it?

4. Luke 10:30-37: Jesus answers the question with a parable showing that the openness of this command does create uncertainty, but rather broadens our neighborly responsibility to all men, whomever may have need.

II. A Priest, A Levite, and A Samaritan.

- A. Vs. 30: "A certain man." The victim in question had no peculiar heritage or connection of importance. Nothing obliged others to be of service to him.
- B. Vs. 31: "A certain Priest".
 1. The priests were the teachers of the Law (Hos. 4:6). They were the righteous of the righteous; the ones who – of all people – were expected to not only know the law but to teach it and uphold it.
 2. What was his response to the need of this "certain man"? _____

- C. Vs. 32: "Likewise, a Levite."
 1. The Levites were assistants to the priests.
 2. They were devoted by God for the menial service of the tabernacle / temple system (Num. 1:50; 3:9).
 3. Together with the priests, the Levites were sanctified and set apart for the service of God.
 4. How did the Levite respond to the need of this "certain man"? _____

- D. Vs. 33-35: "A certain Samaritan."
 1. Among the Jews, Samaritans were viewed with contempt (John 4:9; 8:48).
 2. To Jesus' audience, he was the least righteous and least worthy of the three.
 3. How did the Samaritan respond to the need of this "certain man"? _____

III. Vs. 36-37: Who Was Neighbor to Him?

- A. What was the lawyer's answer? _____
- B. In your own words, explain how this parable applies to you: _____

- C. DISCUSSION: How does Titus 3:8, 14 elaborate on this principle? _____

- D. What about Galatians 6:9-10: _____

Conclusion

1. "Go and Do Likewise."
2. Who is your neighbor? _____

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 6:14-16)

Introduction

1. God’s people ought to be distinctly different from the world as though foreigners and strangers in a place that is not our own (see 1 Peter 2:11-12).
2. We are to separate ourselves from the world in behavior, manner of life, and influence, yet still be “among” them, to shine as lights glorifying God in the midst of a world full of darkness.
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus describes this as one of the greatest priorities for His people—to live in a way that we may be described as “the light of the world.”

Discussion

I. The Light of the World (John 1:1-18).

A. John 1:4-9: Jesus is the true light of the world.

1. Vs. 14: What do we behold because of His light? _____
2. Vs. 9-10: Where did He shine as the light? _____
3. Vs. 12: Who was able to receive His light? _____

4. Vs. 12-13: What is given to those who receive His light and why? _____

5. John 1:14, 18; 14:7-11: How did Jesus declare/reveal the Father to the world? _____

6. John 10:25; 37-38: What is the correlation between Jesus’ works and how He declared/revealed the Father to the world? _____

B. Matt. 5:14: Jesus said to His followers, “*You are the light of the world.*”

1. DISCUSSION: As the only begotten Son, Jesus declares the Father through His words and His works. His entire life was the perfect expression of the Father’s will. Those who believe in His name are given the right “to become sons.” How does this teach us to shine as the light the world? _____

II. A City and a Lamp (Matt. 5:14-15)

- A. For those in the darkness of the wilderness to be drawn to the light of the city, where is the best place to build the city? _____
- B. To illuminate a dark room, where must the light be placed? _____
- C. Luke 15:1-7: Where did Jesus spend much of His time in ministry and why? _____

III. Let Your Light So Shine Among Men (Matt. 5:16).

- A. *"That They May See Your Good Works"*
 - 1. Some have difficulty harmonizing Matthew 5:16 and 6:1. How do we let them "see our good works" AND "not do our good works to be seen?"
 - 2. Let's first define, "good works". How do the following passage help with this?
 - a. Ephesians 5:8-14: _____
 - b. Vs. 14: How do our works "expose" the works of darkness? _____
 - 3. Philippians 2:15: _____
 - 4. SUMMARY: What the world sees is not an individual act done for show (Matt. 6:2), but a constant, continuous life directed by the will of God and lived according His good pleasure (Matt. 6:9-10, 33) _____
- B. *"They may glorify your Father in heaven":*
 - 1. Jesus declared the glory of God through His words and led others to glorify God by His life. RESEARCH: Do a word search for "glorified God". _____
 - 2. John 13:34-35: How does Jesus call His disciples to do the same? _____

Conclusion

- 1. Consider the implications of this lesson on God's grace for giving.
- 2. Galatians. 6:9-10: How must our role as "the light of the world" affect the way we interact with the world and those who do not yet know Jesus Christ? _____

Pure and Undeclared Religion

“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. Pure and undeclared religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:26-27)

Introduction

1. When asked, “What religion are you?”, how might you answer? _____
2. In James 1:26-27 we are reminded that the religion God looks for us, though it may include some ceremony and disciplines, requires the practical and fruitful outflowing of Christ-like character and love.
3. Let us consider what pure and undeclared religion looks like.

Discussion

I. Religion: More than Religious Rights and Ceremony

- A. “Useless” (NKJV) or “worthless” (NASB) religion should be concerning to us.
 1. Have you ever put great time, effort, and energy into something for it to amount to nothing? How does that feel? _____
 2. Imagine giving a lifetime of religious devotion to God only to hear Him say, “What you are doing is worthless to Me.”
 3. Malachi 1:6-14: Why did God consider the worship in the days of Malachi worthless? _____
 4. Matthew 15:1-9: Why was the religious practices of many Jews in Jesus’ day called “vain”? _____
 5. Matthew 7:21-23: Why will some who call Jesus “Lord” be rejected by Him? _____
- B. How do we ensure our devotion to God is not in vain?
 1. Matthew 7:21: What answer did Jesus give? _____
 2. Matthew 7:24: Elaborate. _____
 3. In these sayings of Jesus, how did He teach us to relate to...
 - a. The world? Matthew 5:12-16: _____
 - b. Sin? Matthew 5:22, 28: _____

c. Our neighbors? Matthew 5:43-48: _____

C. MAKE THE CONNECTION:

1. The qualities of “pure and undefiled religion” as stated by James are not arbitrary. They directly relate to the teachings of Jesus.
2. Throughout His ministry, Jesus consistently emphasized the need for neighborly love over human tradition and ceremony.
3. He taught a religion that is practical, useful, and helpful; one that reflects the light and the love of God (Matthew 5:12-16).
4. This is the religion James describes in James 1:26-27.

II. Making Our Religion Pure and Undefiled

A. What three things did James identify with pure and undefiled religion? _____

B. Why orphans and widows?

1. Psalm 82:3-4; Isaiah 1:16-17: God has always presented the fatherless and widows as representative of the most destitute and needy.
2. Titus 3:14: What should our people learn to do with such needs? _____

3. Does this characterize your religion? _____
4. What can you do differently? _____

C. Why bridle the tongue?

1. James 3:2: As the most difficult member of our bodies to control, if we can learn to bridle our tongues, what will that do for other areas of our lives? _____

2. James 3:8-12: Why is the use of our tongue so important? _____

D. Why unspotted from the world?

1. James 4:4: What are we if we continue to love the world? _____

2. James 4:6-10: Our religion ought to help us draw near to God. What must we do with worldliness in our lives if we want to draw near to God? _____

Conclusion

1. When asked, “What religion are you?”, how might you answer? _____

2. Devotion to God certainly includes religious practices (study, prayer, meditation, fasting, etc.). James does not eliminate these but rather brings giving and sharing to the forefront, so that in our devotion to God we may bear much fruit to Him.

As I Have Loved You

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Introduction

1. We began this series by considering the generous nature of God. As we near the end, we come full circle to consider the perfect example of God’s generous spirit through the love and sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.
2. God, the giver of every good gift, gave His only begotten Son so that we might live in Him (John 3:16).
3. As Jesus prepared to fulfill His mission, He set the standard for all who would follow Him. *“As I have loved you, that you also love one another”* (John 13:34).
4. Let us consider how loving one another as Christ loved ought to affect our approach to giving and caring for one another.

Discussion

I. A “New Commandment.”

- A. Previously, second greatest commandment, *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matt. 22:39).
 1. From Lesson 7: “as yourself” implies “in place of” or “instead of” yourself. I.e., Love my neighbor as if my neighbor is me.
 2. Jesus described this as the second greatest command.
 3. As the time of His death drew near, He took the command to love to a whole new level by giving a “new” command.
- B. John 13:35: Jesus’ new commandment, *“that you love one another as I have loved you.”*
 1. How did Jesus love? What did it look like?
 2. John 13:12-17: _____
 3. John 15:12-13: _____

II. “By This All Will Know”: How to love like Jesus

- A. John 13:5: How do we prove to be true disciples of Jesus? _____

1. Necessary Inference: What if we do not or are unwilling to learn how to love our brethren the way Jesus loved us? What does that say about our discipleship? _____
2. 1 John 4:7-8: How does John describe those who do not love in this way? _____

B. 1 John 3:16-18: Learning to love like Jesus

1. Vs. 16: How did Jesus show us what the love of God looks like? _____

2. What ought we to do because of that example? _____
3. Quandary: Jesus died on the cross because of His love for us. Does loving one another as He loved us mean we must die on a cross? _____ If "NO", then how? _____
4. Vs. 17: How do we lay down our lives? _____

5. Test: How can I know for sure that the love of God abides in me? _____

6. Vs. 18: Compare James 2:14-16: Explain how our love manifests these qualities:
 - a. Word or tongue: _____
 - b. Deed: _____
 - c. Truth: _____

III. 2 Corinthians 5:14-17: Controlled by the Love of Christ

A. Many difficulties can prevent us from loving others. Can you give examples?

1. _____
2. _____

B. Controlled by Love?

1. Controlled (NASB) or Constrained (NKJV) means that our way of living is motivated and defined by and restricted to the love of God in Christ.
2. Vs. 14-15: This is why. Since Jesus died for us, it is as though we ourselves have died. But we are still alive. What then is the purpose of that life? Who does it belong to?

3. Vs. 16: How do we overcome personal and personality challenges to loving as Christ loved us? _____

C. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: How love behaves.

1. Vs. 4: Love is: _____
2. Vs. 4: Love is/does not: _____
3. Vs. 5: Love is/does not: _____

4. Vs. 6: Love is/does not: _____
5. Vs. 6: Love does: _____
6. Vs. 7: Love does: _____

Conclusion

1. Are you a disciple of Christ?
2. Evaluate your own life. Do you live in a way that "all may know" you are a disciple of Jesus?
3. What can you do better to love as Jesus loves you?

Portraits of Godly Givers

“At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.” (Acts 9:36)

Introduction

1. Throughout this study we have explored God’s instruction for becoming gracious givers like Him.
2. In this lesson, those truths come to life through the examples recorded in the Scriptures.
3. This will help us see how to bear similar fruit in our own lives.

Discussion

I. The Poor Widow: Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4:

- A. Jesus spoke in the “treasury” in the temple. These donations were given for the maintenance and improvement of the temple (John 8:20).
 1. What does this say about the scope of our giving? _____
 2. Compare Luke 7:5; 1 Chron. 29:1-3; Ezra 7:27-28. _____
- B. Mark 12:43: Why would Jesus “call His disciples to Him” at observing this widow? _____
- C. What does Luke 21:3 teach us about what Jesus truly values when it comes to our giving? _____

- D. How does Luke 21:4 define “much” in God’s eyes? _____

- E. Discuss the implications of verse 4, “putt in all she had to live on” (ESV). _____

II. The Early Church: Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35

- A. What is the connection between the apostles’ doctrine in verse 42 and the behavior of these new Christians in verse 44? _____

 1. Look at both sides: Were all the believers giving? _____ If “no,” what of those who were not giving? _____
 2. In 2:45 and 4:35, what was the basis by which some Christians received from what was given? _____

- B. In 4:32, what was their attitude toward one another? _____
 1. Compare Paul’s teaching in his letter to the Philippians in Phil. 2:1-3: _____

 2. From these passages, describe “one mind”: _____
- C. From verse Acts 4:34, what was the result of their generosity? _____

III. Barnabas: Acts 4:36; 11:22-26, 30

- A. Barnabas was among the earliest disciples. His name was Joses (or Joseph). Why was he called “Barnabas” by the apostles? _____
- B. In Acts 4:37, how did he show his generosity? _____
- C. How does 11:24 describe his character? _____

IV. Tabitha: Acts 9:36-39

- A. What was Tabitha or Dorcas known for? _____
- B. From 9:39, what kinds of works must that have included: _____

- C. How does her example help us better understand Matthew 5:16? _____

V. The Disciples in Antioch: Acts 11:27-30

- A. What prophecy did Agabus give? _____
- B. What did the disciples determine? _____
- C. How did they determine how much to give? _____

VI. The Macedonians: 2 Corinthians 8:1-6

- A. The key cities in Macedonia were Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16:1-17:10).
- B. In 2 Cor. 8:1, to what did Paul attribute the Macedonians’ willingness to give? _____
 - 1. In verse 2, what was the Macedonians’ physical condition as they strived to give to the needy in Jerusalem? _____
 - 2. Compare 2 Cor. 8:2 and Luke 21:4. How could the Macedonians have both an “overflow in wealth” and “extreme poverty”? _____

- C. In verse 5, to whom did they first give themselves? _____
 - 1. How does giving oneself in this way change or affect the way we give to others? _____
 - 2. In verse 6, how did Paul describe their act of giving? _____

VII. Gaius: 3 John 1:1-8

- A. What did Gaius do for those who “went out for the sake of the name”? _____

- B. Why should we support people like these (vs. 8)? _____

- C. What does John conclude in verses 3-4 because of Gaius’ generosity? _____

LAY BY IN STORE

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” (1 Corinthians 16:1-3)

Introduction

1. In our final lesson in this series on giving, we will visit the apostles Paul’s instruction for laying by in store on the first day of the week.
2. Giving and charitable deeds must become a way of life to those who desire to be followers of Jesus Christ. This made abundantly clear throughout the Scriptures.
3. Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 must be considered in light of that.
4. In this lesson, we will discuss the immediate and broader context of 1 Corinthians 16:1-3. We will then make a few observations and applications for today.

Discussion

I. Context: “Concerning the collection for the saints.”

A. What was the “collection for the saints”?

1. Rom. 15:25-28: *“A contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.”*
2. 2 Cor. 8:4, 10-11: *“What you began and were desiring to do a year ago.”* This gift for the saints in Jerusalem was over a year in preparation.
3. 2 Cor. 9:1-6: *“Now concerning the ministering to the saints... Prepare your generous gift that it may be ready.”* Paul’s instructions in 1 Cor. 16:1-3 pertained to individual savings, but as the time drew near to send what they had saved, the entire congregation was to prepare their “gift” (singular), meaning all the brethren were to pool together what they had individually saved up.

B. How did they prepare their gift?

1. 1 Cor. 16:2: *“On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper.” (NKJV)*
 - a. *“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save as he may prosper.” (NASB)*
 - b. *“...each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper.” (ESV)*
 - c. *“... let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper” (ASV).*
2. The implication was that, over a long period of time, each individual was to set aside a portion of their prosperity purposefully, regularly and consistently, until it was time to send their gift.

C. How much was each person to prepare?

1. 1 Cor. 16:2: *"As he may prosper."*
2. 2 Cor. 8:8: *"I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine."*
3. 2 Cor. 8:12: *"For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have."*
4. 2 Cor. 9:7: *"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."*

D. *"On the first day of every week"* (NASB).

1. At the time Paul penned these words, Roman culture was transitioning from an 8-day to a 7-day work week.¹
2. Sunday was becoming recognized as the first day of the week, but was not given special significance until Constantine designated it a day of rest on March 7, 321 A.D.
3. Most laborers were paid daily (See Matt. 20:1-16).
4. Christians were one of the only (or the only?) group known to place significance on the first day (Acts 20:7).
5. Therefore, isolating the first day as the day to lay by in store seems to have had nothing to do with pay or work schedules, but everything to do with unique customs within the church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:26).

E. When did they give their gift?

1. 1 Cor. 16:3: *"And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem."*
2. 2 Cor. 9:3: *"Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation."*

F. A model for all the churches or just Corinth?

1. 1 Cor. 16:1: *"As I have given orders (instruction, appointment, ordained, commandment) to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also."*
2. 2 Cor. 8:1ff: *"Among the churches of Macedonia."*
3. 1 Cor. 4:17: *"For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in **every church**."*

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/science/week>

II. Observations and Applications.

- A. "Every week": Deliberate, purposeful, generous, and consistent.
- B. Willing AND Ready.
 - 1. In the context, Paul addressed a specific need among the churches in Jerusalem.
 - 2. Some take this to mean that Christians need not lay by in store unless there is a specific need to address. The rest of the New Testament teaches otherwise.
 - 3. Titus 3:1, 8, and 14: Paul commands that those who believe in God must 1) "*be ready for every good work*", 2) "*be careful to maintain good works*", and 3) "*learn to maintain good works and meet urgent needs.*"
 - 4. Therefore, while Paul's instructions were for a specific need at that time, he establishes the pattern by which believers in Christ are to order their lives to ready for every good work.
 - 5. To lay by in store each first day of the week means to save up or set aside for oneself funds specifically designated by that individual for charitable giving and ministry.
- C. Personal savings or congregational giving?
 - 1. Both. The wording of Paul's instructions suggest that each individual was store up within himself funds which he/she intended to give for the ministry to the saints. Later, as the time drew near, they were instructed to prepare those funds congregationally to be send as a single gift.
 - 2. A congregation has both on-going and occasional needs that each member should be mindful of.
 - a. Ongoingly, a local church provides for edification, evangelism, and benevolence of local saints.
 - b. Occasionally, a local church may support or aid sudden and urgent needs, both locally and in other parts of the world.
 - c. Thus, members of a local church ought to order their giving to address both.
- D. Grace for Giving:
 - 1. Rom. 12:6, 8: What and How we give is the result of God's grace working through us by faith.
 - 2. 2 Cor. 8:19: To give generously is described by Paul as an "act of grace."
 - 3. 2 Cor. 9:6-11: God is the one who makes "*all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*" That is, our ability to accomplish any act of grace is the result of God's grace toward us.
 - 4. It is God who supplies seed for the sower. We are the sowers. As such, let us prepare ourselves to use God's grace by sowing bountifully to Him.