

Giving... Our Worship to God

Various passages

June 7, 2015

Introduction

There is a story told about a little country church whose roof was falling down. So the members of the church held regular prayer meetings after the service to pray for funds to repair the roof. At that church an old man, known to be very tight with his money, used to attend and sit near the back. He would sneak out just before the collection plate came around at the end of the prayer meeting. One Sunday, he was held up on his way to the prayer meeting and could only find a seat at the front of the church.

During the prayer meeting, a piece of the roof fell and hit him on the head. Feeling that God was speaking to him, he stood up and said, "Lord, I'll give \$500 to repair the roof." A few minutes later, another piece of the roof broke off and hit him on the shoulder. The old man replied, "Wait, I'll make it \$1,000 instead." Suddenly from the back of the church the voice of one of the deacons shouted out, "Hit him again, Lord!"

Now I certainly hope that no pieces of our roof need to fall down to help motivate anybody to give. In fact, I would hate it if anybody gave purely out of sense of obligation, or of guilt, or of fear. The Bible gives us a much better motivation for giving, a motivation that I hope to be able to highlight for you this morning.

But before I do that, I need to address the "Oh no, here comes another sermon about money" thought which might have popped into some of your heads. I know some of you have been to churches that seem to only talk about money. "Give money to this building drive, or give more money for this ministry, blah, blah, blah." And as far as that's been your experience, I'm sorry. When a church spends more time trying to raise funds from the pulpit than preaching about the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is a problem. Certainly if you've been at Grace Fellowship for any amount of time you know that we don't talk about money directly very often but instead we're devoted to expository preaching, such as we've enjoyed with our series on the gospel of Matthew.

But a church simply cannot *never* talk about money. In the Gospels, one out of every six verses is devoted to money. Jesus seemed to think that what we do with our money is important, so once in a while, as a church, we need to follow the example of our Lord and talk about it. The elders realized we haven't had much teaching on giving for some time and asked that we take a short break from Matthew and devote one Sunday to the topic of giving, so that's what we're going to do this morning. So if you're annoyed with the thought of listening to yet another sermon about giving, I want to encourage you to try to put the past behind you and listen to God's Word this morning. As a token of good faith, please note that we took the offering *before* the sermon, and I promise no guilt offerings will be taken after it! What I do want to do this morning is to show you that Scripture calls us to give because in giving we worship our God. So my ultimate goal this morning is help each of you be better worshipers of God.

As our main point for the message today, I want each of you to see what I believe the Bible teaches us throughout its pages, that...

Main Idea: Giving is an act of worship

Ultimately, worship is the highest goal in our lives. Paul says in Ephesians 1 that we were chosen in Christ that we “*might be for the praise of His glory.*” We exist so that God might be glorified through us. Therefore every aspect of our life should be directed towards worshipping our great God. We do this in different ways. We worship God when we sing songs of praise to him. We worship God when we offer our bodies as living sacrifices in obedience to his Word. And we worship God when we give of our finances for the work of his kingdom.

This morning I would like to help you understand how giving is an act of worship by highlighting two broad categories it affects: our beliefs and our attitudes. And with each of those two points, I’m going to break it down into some smaller parts to help us understand the Scriptural teaching in these areas. So be prepared to flip around in your Bibles a bit this morning!

So the first area I’d like for us to see is that...

A. We worship God when we give by demonstrating our belief that...

1. Everything belongs to God. (Psalm 24:1)

Psalm 24:1 says, “**The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.**” This verse teaches that everything in all creation belongs to the Lord, including our money. In a very real sense, there is no such thing as “my money.” All the money we have belongs to God; we are only stewards of what he blesses us with, as we are entrusted with its care.

As a result, what we do with our money is a reflection of our view of God. If we hoard our money and use it only for ourselves, then we’re implicitly saying we do not really believe that “**the earth is the Lord’s**” and everything in it. By not giving, we betray our belief that we think we have the right to dictate our money, that it is ours and God has no dibs on it. But if we’re willing to give from our finances towards the work of his kingdom, we honor God by showing that we really do believe that he has the right to all of our money by freely giving away part of it. Giving demonstrates that we believe that everything belongs to God.

Next, we worship God when we give by demonstrating our belief that...

2. God will provide for our needs. (Matthew 6:25-33)

Turn to Matthew 6:25-33. “**Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you**

will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Jesus reminds us that our Heavenly Father knows what we need and he will be faithful to provide for those needs. God owns everything and therefore he has at his disposal all things to bless his children with. If we really believe that, then we don't need to be worried about storing up food or clothing or even the money we need to buy them. God himself becomes our security for the future.

Because when we give, we let go of some of the security we think money can buy. By giving we say to God, "I trust your Word that you will provide for my every need. I don't need to cling to every last penny, I'm free to release some of the money you have given me because I know that my security comes not from my checking or savings account but from your loving hand."

Third, we worship God when we give by demonstrating our belief that...

3. Greed must be guarded against. (Luke 12:15)

Jesus said in Luke 12:15 to, **"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."**

Greed is an easy sin for us to fall into, especially for those of us who live in a wealthy materialistic culture such as ours. But when we give, we are forced to confront those things that we could have purchased with that money. If you give away 10% of your income to church, then that means you have 10% less to spend on a better car or a nicer TV or a better vacation. In giving, you're making a choice between advancing the cause of Christ in the world or having 10% more money for creature comforts and security.

God uses giving to help us be free from greed. If we're giving, then we are not buying. By giving we place ourselves in a situation where we're unable to keep up with the Jones' because we are voluntarily living on less. We're guarding against greed by demonstrating our belief that dying with the most toys really isn't winning.

Giving helps remind us that the true worth of our lives is best measured not by how much we gained but rather by how much we gave.

Fourth, we worship God when we give by demonstrating our belief that...

4. Ministers of the gospel are to be supported. (1 Cor. 9:13-14)

God has ordained that those who are called to work as ministers of the gospel be supported by those who work at regular jobs. In 1 Cor. 9:13-14, Paul says that, **“Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.”**

Paul is reminding his readers that just as the Levites in the Old Testament received their support from the tithes and offerings of the people, so also should pastors, missionaries, and others who spend their lives proclaiming the gospel be supported by fellow believers. When you give, you're showing that you believe that what God is instructing us here in this passage is good and true.

Furthermore, the money you give helps to spread the gospel in ways that it would perhaps not otherwise be spread. In light of eternity, what would be better to do: take 10% of your income and use it to buy a better car or bigger house or use it to support a missionary to reach an unreached tribe with the gospel of Christ? Giving allows you to expand the impact you can have by supporting others who have been called to devote their lives to the proclamation of the gospel.

So those are four ways that we worship God when we give by demonstrating the kind of belief that God calls us to in Scripture. Next we want to consider how our giving is an act of worship to God by how giving demonstrates an attitude that is pleasing to Him. So the first attitude we will consider is that...

B. We worship God when we give by demonstrating an attitude of...

1. Obedience (Numbers 18:20-21; Malachi 3:10)

Turn with me to Numbers 18:20-21. **“And the LORD said to Aaron, ‘You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel. To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting...’”**

God instructed the people of Israel to tithe, which meant giving 10% of their income back to him. The money from the tithes was used to support the Levites in their service to God. When Christians tithe from their income today, they are doing it in light of the principle found in here in the Old Testament.

Now I don't think the call to tithe from one's income is necessarily demanded in the NT, but that doesn't mean that it's something we can ignore either. That it was a common expectation of God's covenant people in the OT should at least give us pause to consider how God would have us use our money in the NT era. So without making tithing some kind of strict commandment, let me say that I believe tithing is a great starting point for giving. First, it's easy to calculate - if you make \$3,000 a month, you give \$300 back to God as a tithe. Plus, while it will put a pinch on your spending, it's not so much that you're going to have to necessarily radically alter your lifestyle. If nothing else, the discipline of regular tithing might just help you get your money under better control than it was before.

Now I know some of you might think, "I can't afford to tithe right now! I don't have enough money to support me as it is." I can understand that, but consider what God says to his people in Malachi 3:10. You don't need to turn there, just listen as I read it. God says, "**Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.**" God challenges his people to trust him to provide for their needs when they step out in faith and tithe.

I speak of this out of experience. Twice I went through a time when while looking for a ministry position, our family was living off of about \$1500 a month due to working part-time jobs. It was by no means close to what I needed to support a family of five. But through all that time – in both cases those times of financial hardship lasted over a year - we tithed our 10% back to God. So even though we could have really used that extra \$150 each month, we gave it away. And you know what? True to his Word, God provided for us. We started getting gift cards anonymously in the mail. Friends gave us checks for hundreds of dollars to help us out. We never asked for it, but God moved to provide for us. I think we would have had less money if we had kept our tithe, because what we were given by others was more than what we gave away.

So guys, if you're not tithing yet, now is the time to start. Test God in this and see if he will not richly bless you because of it. And that goes out to our young people too. Teenagers, start getting into the habit of tithing your income so that it is something you will practice for the rest of your life. J.D. Rockefeller said, "I never would have been able to tithe the first million dollars I ever made if I had not tithed my first salary, which was \$1.50 per week." (W. A. Criswell, [A Guidebook for Pastors](#), p. 154.). Today is the day to begin to worship God by giving him a tenth of your income for the work of his kingdom.

But not only does our giving worship God by demonstrating an attitude of obedience, our giving is an act of worship because it demonstrates an attitude of...

2. Generosity (2 Cor. 9:6)

Turn over to 2 Corinthians 9:6. Paul is in the midst of talking about the generous giving that the believers in Corinth were practicing, and he says to them in v. 6, **“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”**

We worship God by giving generously to the work of his kingdom. When we give generously, God in turn rewards us by blessing us generously. This is why pastors, when talking about tithing, don't want to make it into some kind of law. If we do that, people might be tempted to think, “Well, I've done all God has asked me to do! I gave my 10% and I'm good to go!” But the New Testament assumes the tithe as a starting point, not the finish line. We're called to strive to go beyond tithing to give in a manner that is generous. Just as God has blessed us abundantly in Jesus Christ, we are to worship him with hearts of thanksgiving by giving generously of our finances to bless others.

As your income increases, I would encourage you to increase the percentage that you give. For example, John Wesley, the great 18th century evangelist, decided in 1731 “to limit his expenses so that he would have more money to give to the poor. In the first year his income was 30 pounds and he found that he could live on 28, so he gave away two. In the second year his income doubled but he held his expenses even, and so he had 32 pounds to give away (which was a comfortable year's income). In the third year his income jumped to 90 pounds and he gave away 62 pounds. In his long life, Wesley's income advanced to as high as 1,400 pounds a year, but he rarely let his own expenses rise above 30 pounds... When he died in 1791 at the age of 87, the only money mentioned in his will was the coins to be found in his pockets. Most of the 30,000 pounds he had earned in his life had been given away” (as quoted by Piper “Toward the tithe and Beyond” sermon from September 10, 1995).

Imagine how much good for the Kingdom of God could be done if instead of using our increase in income on ourselves, we figured out what we really need to live on and gave away the rest! But we don't even think of doing this in America. Usually we expand our expenses to fill our income. We think if we make more, therefore we should buy more. We need bigger, better, and more of it! Just think of the kind of house John Wesley could have owned with the money he was taking in! He could have gone on lavish vacations and dined at the best restaurants with his huge income. But rather than have a lifestyle that matched his income, Wesley found what was the minimal amount he needed to live on and made it his goal to give the rest of it away. What great things could be done for the work of God if Christians were only willing to do the same today!

So we worship God when we give by demonstrating an attitude of obedience, and we worship God by giving with an attitude of generosity. Finally we worship God when we give by demonstrating an attitude of...

3. Cheerful Willingness (2 Cor. 9:7)

Look with me at 2 Cor. 9:7. **“Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”** As I mentioned during the introduction, I would hate for anyone to give out of a sense of guilt or obligation. The reason for that is found right here in v. 7. God is most pleased when we give willingly. When our hearts have been so moved by the love of God in our lives that we with great eagerness and joy give back to him some of what he has blessed us with, then God is pleased and our giving is an act of worship to him.

If our giving is done freely, then we can be cheerful givers because we are giving out of a loving response to God. And in so doing, we'll find it easier to be generous givers as well. We won't be like the little girl whose mother wanted to teach her daughter a moral lesson. “She gave the little girl a nickel and a dollar for church. ‘Put whichever one you want in the collection plate and keep the other for yourself,’ she told the girl. After the service church, the mother asked her daughter which amount she had given. ‘Well,’ said the little girl, ‘I was going to give the dollar, but just before the collection the man in the pulpit said that we should all be cheerful givers. I knew I'd be a lot more cheerful if I gave the nickle, so I did.’” (*Bits & Pieces*, February 4, 1993, p. 23). Giving that is done willingly is giving that is both cheerful and generous, because we are responding in worship to our great and generous God.

So what is your motivation for giving? Do you give because you feel like you have to, or because you can't help but want to return back to God some of his blessings he has poured out upon you? God would have each one of us be generous givers to his work in the world because God wants each of us to find our hearts wrapped up in worship to him. Giving is an act of worship.

Conclusion

Let me close by encouraging each of you to grow deeper in your worship of God through the discipline of giving. While Grace Fellowship certainly needs you to give if we're going to continue to minister here on the corner of Williston and Minnesota and support the numerous missionaries we sponsor, more importantly is my desire to see each of you personally worship God more deeply in every aspect of your life, including your finances.

For some of you, this may mean starting to tithe your income. Perhaps you have never tithed before. Maybe this whole idea is new to you. Let me encourage you to take a step of faith and begin giving 10% of your earnings back to him and see if you aren't richly blessed because of it. You may be surprised what you can live without and furthermore, you may be surprised in the ways the Lord may bless you because of it.

For others who have been regular givers, perhaps the challenge to generous giving that Scripture calls us to, as exemplified by the giving habits of John Wesley, has convicted your heart. Perhaps it's time to consider how you might generously increase your giving

for the sake of the gospel instead of just increasing your standard of living when you get that next raise or take that new, high-paying job. Either way, I hope each one of us here would experience the rich blessings of God as we worship him through the generous giving of our finances for the sake of gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray.

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Grace Fellowship of Waterloo, IA by Pastor Rob Borkowitz. Copyright 2015.