

“Out of this World Giving” //

Matthew 6:19–34 // FIRST 1.5 #2

If you're excited about...

Lot of things pull at my heart strings: baptisms; family; church planting (goal: 1000; sent out 1200; 18,000; 1/30)

Matthew 6: Here's a radical thought to start today with: **Generosity is not something God wants from you; it's something he wants for you.**

- Generosity is not something he wants from you because he has no needs. God is not in heaven...
- It's something he wants **for you because money** has a way of captivating our hearts, tearing us away from God, and subjugating us to all kinds of heartache; generosity is how God tests us and liberates us.
- His **goal is not to get money out of our pockets**, but idols out of our hearts!

Jesus talked about money all the time (as I pointed out last week, every third message he preached was on money; he preached on it **more than he did prayer and faith** combined.)

And that's not because he needed money. Nowhere in the Gospels do we see him taking an offering.

- He could take 5 loaves and 2 fish and turn it into an all-you-can-eat Golden Corral buffet in the middle of the desert;
- Once when needing to pay a tax bill he sent Peter out to pull money out of a fish's mouth. (BTW, I just got the tax bill for my car last week and sent Adon out fishing. Apparently that was a one-time deal.)

Works Consulted:

What Jesus Demands from the World, John Piper

“Generosity,” The Bible Project

“Treasure Verses Money,” Tim Keller

“God's Greatest Competitor in Your Life,” Bryan Loritts

Jesus didn't talk about money because he needed it; he talked about because he knew that what we do with money and how we relate to it is the best indicator of where our hearts are.

So, here's the thought: what if, rather than dreading or resenting his teachings on this--sneering at him--you welcomed them, because what if you knew he was trying to free you from one of the worst tyrants on earth?

Think about how much stress, anxiety, and even relational discord in your life is attached to money!

- If you're **married**, just think of the last 3–4 fights you had. (Or, as my wife and I call them, “discussions of passion.”) My guess is at least half of them involved money.
 - *You* want a new television, but your wife wants to re-do the downstairs bathroom and you were like, “I could buy 15 TV's for that price and all I do in the bathroom is sit there. Or shave.”
- I've even heard it's an issue for those **dating**, money has gotten complicated. My generation got a lot wrong, but at least it was assumed that if you took a girl out, you, the guy, were just supposed to pick up the check. A girl in our church was telling us how she went out with a guy to a really nice restaurant—and she was pleasantly surprised that he just picked up the check, no questions asked. ... Until later that night, when she got a Venmo request from him for her half of the meal.

God wants to free you from the awful tyranny of money, and today, I'm going to give you an opportunity to take a tangible step in **doing that.**

As your campus teams mentioned earlier, **we are going to end with a time of commitment** in which we renew ourselves to **Jesus being first in our lives** in the area of finances.

- For some, this will be a renewal; for others, this is the first time you've done something like this
- **And, for many of you, it's going to be a scary moment. Faith steps always are. It's going to feel like that story** I have told you about the first time a friend took me rappelling. There were 4 of us who had never been before and somehow I got volunteered to go first... I'm standing up there on the edge and my friend told me, "You are all strapped in, now lean your weight back."
- **Mentally, I knew what I was supposed to do**, but I just couldn't make my body do it. **I'd been rock-climbing before**. But this was a new kind of faith.
- I must have stood there for 5 minutes. **Eventually, I realized that my friends** would never let me live it down if I didn't do it, so I prayed to ask Jesus into my heart one more time.
- **Well, my friend...** he was not really trusting the rope. He was still mainly depending on his arms and legs to hold him up; he was just using the rope as a safety net.
- **This is a picture of the Christian life for many people:** You are going along fine until you come to a **moment of obedience that requires a new level of faith**—and you realize that what's gotten you here won't take you there and you're going to have to **trust Jesus in a new way** if you want to keep going.
- Girl who wrote me

I am praying that today you will be able to make that step of faith. Because it will be a mile marker in your walk with Christ.

- So, do me a favor: **Grab the card... our primary goal is that 100% of us...**
- **Hold the card** (if w/ spouse, hold it together) and we're going to pray...

- **Hey listen, if you're new with us**—this is your **1st week**—you've picked a really exciting moment to join us. This is what we are about and maybe God brought you here to join us!

Take your card, **hold it up in the air, and let's pray:**

PRAYER (MUSIC)

- *Thank God for the almost 400 baptisms of the last few weeks; ask for faith*

MATTHEW 6: We're looking at a **core teaching of Jesus** on money:

"No one can serve (religious word that means depend on, worship-- look to for things like happiness and security) **two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.** (Luke 16:13; Matthew 6:24)

I say this is a **"core" teaching of Jesus because this particular statement gets repeated verbatim in Luke 16** and Matthew 6 as part of 2 different sermons.

- (And I told you last week, evidently, Jesus had sermon points he repeated again and again! So, when I do it, don't hate, I'm just being like Jesus. #WWJD).

So, let's work our way through his sermon in Matt 6:19 **"Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal.**

This is the same point he made last week his sermon in Luke: *If you know eternity is coming*, and that compared to eternity this life is like only the blink of an eye, or the vapor that your breath makes on a

cold morning that appears for a minute and this gone, **then why would you invest all your resources here?**

- **Like they always say:** You've never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul! And that's because you can't take it with you.
- **You came into the world with nothing;** you go out with nothing.
- **BUT, and here's the huge but--while you can't take it with you,** you can send it on ahead!
 - As Jesus indicates, (**store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,**) what you invest in eternal purposes is "stored up" for you in heaven.
- **Question: If you believe in eternity, Isn't this just common sense?**
 - **Anybody here around my age** (by that I mean in your late 20's) remember the **Toys-R-Us 5-minute spending spree** they used to give away to one lucky contestant every **Christmas? In the middle of some show they'd** post a number to call and if you were like the 10th caller you got it. I tried every year. I tried all the tricks. I'd dial all the digits but the last one... all the kids with the touch tone phones got it.
 - **5 minutes to get as much as you could get from anywhere in the store** and up to the front. Imagine seeing something you like and sitting down in the floor and playing with it.
 - **Is that wise? No--you can have that toy permanently, but that means foregoing some of the enjoyment of it temporarily.**
 - **Well, that's what people who use their resources to maximize their enjoyment in life do--they are wasting for a few brief moments** what could be invested eternally.
 - **Or, here's another analogy. Randy Alcorn says it's like:** Imagine you're a **Northerner living in the South doing business** toward the end of the Civil War. In your business, you've accumulated a lot of Confederate money. **You can see the South is going to lose** and that means all the Confederate

money you've compiled is about to be worthless. So, what should you do with it? You should immediately cash out your Confederate \$ for US currency. Keep only enough Confederate \$ for short-term needs because soon it is about to be worthless.

- **"For us to accumulate vast earthly treasures in the face of the inevitable future is equivalent to stockpiling Confederate money. It's not just wrong. It's stupid."**¹ **Randy Alcorn**
- *You can't take any of your earthly resources with you to heaven, but you can send them on ahead.*
- **Financial advisors tell you when you are planning your budget, don't just think 30 days ahead, think 30 years ahead. We might add, you should think 30 million years ahead most of all!**

Jesus continues: **21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

IOW: Where you put most of your treasure is inevitably where your heart will belong.

- If the **majority of your treasure is here**, that's where your heart will be. If it's there, that's where your heart will be.
- **C.S. Lewis:** Wealth has a way of knitting a man's heart to this world!

What you do with your money infallibly reveals 3 things: what you most love, what you most trust in, and what kingdom you are living for.

- You can **talk a big game of faith** out here, but what you do with your money tells the truth.

Jesus expected his followers to be eye-poppingly generous. How we give is supposed to amaze the world.

¹ Randy Alcorn, *The Law of Rewards*, 30

- It's not just that we're a little bit more generous, a little bit kinder, a little bit nicer.
- Our giving should reveal we have a whole different kingdom!
- I've told you before about the life of **William Borden**, a young man who was the heir to the Borden milk company who walked away from it all to go be a missionary in Egypt. He was only there a few months when he contracted meningitis and died. Just a few hours before he died, someone asked him if he saw this whole "coming to Egypt" thing as a mistake. **He was so weak he couldn't talk, and he grabbed a piece of paper and wrote "no regret."** He is buried in Cairo, and his very plain looking tombstone simply has his name, the dates of his short life, and the phrase, **"Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for such a life."**

Will that describe your life? Would **anyone write those words as the epithet** on your tombstone?

- Or would they say, "He was a little nicer..."
- Are you living in a way that doesn't make sense if eternity is not real?

Most American Christians give about 2.5%. The average secular person gives away 1.8%. **Does that scream** "we live for a different kingdom?"

Bringing it closer to him, only 19% of people at this church say they tithe. What does that say about your kingdom?

- Listen: I'm **not trying to guilt you** into giving us your money.
- **But I am letting you know that you're missing out** on something. And I'm **pleading with you not to cling** so closely to that Confederate currency.

Your giving should scream: *I believe in eternity and I'm living for Jesus' kingdom.*

Look at what he says next: 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light within you is darkness, how deep is that darkness!"

Now, that might be a **confusing metaphor for some of you**—and at first glance, it doesn't seem to have **anything to do with money. But it does.** Think about it this way:

- **Imagine you get up at night and turn the light on.** If your eye works, your hands find what you are looking for, you won't be slamming your pinky toe into the furniture. Your whole body benefits from the light.
- **But if your eye isn't working**, your feet won't know where to go; your hands won't know what to pick up. Even though there's a lot of light all around the rest of your body, your whole body, in a sense, is in the darkness.²
- In the same way, **when how you see money is distorted**, it messes up every part of your life.

Some of you **have experienced this**, right? When money was what you served--when it is the thing you had to have for enjoyment in life and security in the future, it leads to some really bad decisions.

- **For example, some of** you chose a job or career--not that you love, not that blesses your family, not one that helps people, not even one you're necessarily good at, just one that just makes you money. And **for 5 to 10 years**, the adrenaline can keep you going, and then after a while, you just find yourself empty inside. Why did you choose the job? **Your eye was dark.**

² Tim Keller, "Treasure vs. Money," sermon on Matthew 6:19-34, preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church; May 2, 1999.

- **Serving money will lead to all kinds of bad decisions.** Listen:
 - When people cheat or compromise their integrity, it's not because they were exceptionally dishonest people. It's that they felt like they so needed money that when they were faced with a choice of being without money or compromising their integrity, they chose to compromise. They would never have dreamed they could do something like that, that's just how important money became to them.
- It's **why in Luke's account, Jesus follows up this eye metaphor** by saying, "**Be on guard against greed.**" As I told you, Jesus doesn't say that about anything else.
 - **He doesn't say,** "Be on guard against adultery."
 - **Why not? Because when you're committing adultery,** you know it.
 - **You don't suddenly look up** and say, "Oh, hey, you're not my wife."
 - **But greed hides itself.** It's subtle. It blinds you in a way that adultery doesn't.
 - You **depend on it so much** that it justifies any disobedience.

24 "No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

- Again, "**Serve**," is a religious word. You, in a way, worship it. You depend on it for provision, security. It **takes care of you**, so you obey what it demands.
- Because if you don't obey it, it will desert you and you'll be doomed.

I've given you 3 categories people fall in with regards to money:

- **Spender:** For these people, they depend on money for happiness. So they spend it. They look at money to maximize enjoyment in the moment.

- **Saver:** A saver is someone, by contrast, who thinks that money's greatest value is providing security for tomorrow. They limit spending, focusing instead on increased wealth accumulation over time.
- (And, *I've told you in God's providence these two kinds of people always get married to each other, and they think the other has a problem with money. But both serve money: they look to money to provide something absolutely essential for life.*)
- The other option is: **Steward:** This is the person who **looks to God** as their primary source of happiness/fulfillment/satisfaction and God as their security. They hold their money loosely, with all of it surrendered to God, because they **don't see money as the primary key** to either happiness or security! God is in charge of those things so they are free to be generous.

Jesus then says, 26 Consider the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? 28 And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don't labor or spin thread. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

A couple of things here:

- I've pointed out these two analogies **correspond to the two different personality types of money-worshippers:**
 - The birds analogy is directed at savers, those who see money as security.
 - "What if we don't have enough in the bank, we won't have enough for a rainy day; we won't have enough to leave our kids."
 - **Jesus says to them,** "Look at the birds! They don't save and yet God supplies all they need."

- For spenders, Jesus says, “look at the wildflowers!” They don’t worry about not having enough money to have the latest clothes or drive the nicest cars and live in the lushest houses and look at how beautifully God has endowed them!
- Jesus says, **put God first, and he’ll supply you to overflowing with both security and happiness!**

This whole concept is built on the abundance God has infused into his creation.

- **Confession:** The cynical part of me would always read that say, “**Well, I saw a dead bird**--that’s one that God didn’t take care of..” His point is the God has created a world of such abundance that birds have more than enough and lilies are exceptionally beautiful. That’s the kind of God we serve--a God of abundance and extravagance, so trust him! Put him first -- and make generosity the biggest part of your life--and trust him!³

You see, there are two ways to look at the world: we live in a world of scarcity, so we have to hang onto and hoard what we have. Or, **we live in a world of abundance.** Where, through the blessing of God, there is more than enough for everyone!

The whole Bible screams that!

- Think about how he created the Garden of Eden: **with abundance.** Borders reported--show you it was like YELLOWSTONE.
- When Israel wandered in the wilderness, every morning he covered the ground with manna so much that everybody had as much as they wanted! He said, literally, “Eat all you want! And don’t worry about tomorrow. I’ll cover the ground again tomorrow!” **Abundance**

³ (Most secular philanthropists would actually agree with this way of thinking. There is enough abundance in this world for everyone to thrive. What messes up the world and causes poverty is selfishness.)

God created the world with abundance. Sinful man always responds with fear of scarcity!

- “There’s not going to be enough, so I better hoard.”
- So, in the story of the manna, they tried to stockpile manna. God gave us all this abundance today but there’s no telling what will happen tomorrow. I better hoard!”
- That’s the point of the birds/wildflowers...

Look at the last verse in the sermon: **Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:34)**

- *Don’t worry about tomorrow. “Why, Jesus?” Because tomorrow has a lot of problems. But that’s exactly what I was worried about* with tomorrow!
- Tomorrow has a lot of problems, yes. But tomorrow also has the the God of abundance. And you can trust that he will **abundantly supply** you tomorrow!
- **So put him first today and let him worry about your tomorrow.**

So, that’s the question: I assume God is important to you, but is he FIRST?

Do you serve God or money?

- **Both can be present** in your life, but ONLY one can be first.
- Is it **saving? spending? Or God?**

Last year, I walked you through a quiz to help you analyze what comes first in your life.

- I thought it would be fun to do it again

1. Which of these excites you most?
 - a. A four-star vacation across Europe.
 - b. Maxing out all your retirement accounts for the year.
 - c. Dinner with your pastor, who expresses heartfelt thanks for your sacrificial support of a successfully launched, new ministry.
2. You hear about a man who, at 70, has managed his middle-class income through meager living and careful savings, with a current net worth of \$8 million. Your *first* thought is:
 - a. What a waste! Spending it would have been more fun!
 - b. Wow, he really did well. I hope I can do that, too.
 - c. He may have missed some key opportunities to experience the joy of generosity.
3. Success looks like:
 - a. Experiencing great food and travel, living comfortably, and driving a luxury car.
 - b. Retiring at 50.
 - c. Extending payoff of your mortgage and forgoing some luxuries in order to sponsor a missionary family.
4. Your annual bonus is twice as much as you thought it would be. What do you *first* think?
 - a. I'm headed out shopping / on a vacation.
 - b. I'm putting this on the mortgage!
 - c. Thank God for this provision. I can't wait to give a chunk of this away.
5. The spending in my life is:
 - a. Effortless—I love it.
 - b. Bothersome—I wish I could spend less.
 - c. Controlled—I feel good about the way it's managed.
6. The saving in my life is:
 - a. Bothersome—It's an inconvenience that gets in the way of having fun.
 - b. Effortless—I love building wealth.

- c. Purposeful—I have healthy and reasonable goals toward which I'm carefully working. Beyond that, I plan to give all excess away.
7. The giving in my life is:
 - a. Obligatory.
 - b. Formulaic.
 - c. Joyfully overflowing.

Mostly A: spender

Mostly B: saver

Mostly C: steward

Spenders and savers both serve money. Stewards serve God and use money. So they are free to put the Kingdom of God first with it and give it away.

FIRST specifics

We have been on a **2-year journey called FIRST. And this is what it has been about.** Making him FIRST.

It's not about getting money out of your pockets, it's about getting idols out of your hearts. Our goal--our prayer--**is that 100%** of you would **become faithful stewards** of what God has entrusted to you. GENEROSITY...

I can't emphasize that enough: Our primary goal is not a financial number. **That's secondary.** Our PRIMARY goal is that **100%** of you would commit to putting Jesus first in the area of your finances.

- **Last fall 100% of our pastoral/staff team** and many of our volunteers and leaders made a First faith commitment, with over **2,300 families** accounting for about 10,000 people, making a commitment.

- **This weekend we are challenging all** of our church to ask God what **sacrificial gift** would represent him having first place in our finances and **memorialize it by making a First faith commitment.**

So let me walk you through this card beginning with where it says **“My FIRST Commitment”** in the middle of the card. Here’s the formula you can think through for your faith commitment:

Current Giving + Expanded Generosity for First + Gift from Stored Resources = Commitment Amount

CURRENT GIVING

- What you’re currently giving...
- If it’s **zero**, that’s okay...

+ EXPANDED GENEROSITY

- Ask: Does this **represent him getting our first** and best?
- Does this commitment say that **God is important** to me or that he comes **FIRST**?
 - That he is my **primary satisfaction** and security
 - Does this number represent a commitment that will **change everything** in my life?
- IMPORTANT: Is this what I think the **HOLY SPIRIT** has led me to?

+ STORED RESOURCES

- I’ve explained this **exercise before**, but if I asked you to lay out 5 of the most valuable things in your life and put them at Jesus’s feet, and ask him, *“Is there one of these you want me to transfer into your kingdom?”* Or something else? Maybe just a gift from savings.
 - **One guy:** I was saving to **live lavishly on our retirement**. But now I realize that “lavish retirement” is called “heaven.” I will live simply in retirement and give away the lavish part as my FIRST gift.

- One guy a few years ago put in tickets to **Duke Carolina** at Cameron Indoor (I had a difficult time figuring out what to do with those... we could sell them for a lot of \$\$... but I could also really enjoy them and I’m sure I’d see some people at the game could pray for them... we sold them).
- Stalled kitchen reno’s. Second cars. Massive DVD collection.

= TOTAL COMMITMENT

- **This represents the sum of all of the above**, including your regular giving, your expanded giving, and for many of you, your “gifts from stored resources.”
- Let me be clear here that this is a **total** number, *not* a monthly number.

So that’s the formula. **3 GROUPS**

(1) NEW: “I Want to Make a First Faith Commitment”

- Those of you who are new here--or for whatever reason you didn’t make a commitment last time. We want to **invite you to join** us.
 - I’m not talking to guests--but if you feel like God has called you to make this church your home, you should join in.
- Maybe you’ve **never given** to the Kingdom of God before. That’s OK. **This is a great time to start** and take that next step of faith
- Again: **The question to ask: What represents FIRST?**
- What you write down here will represent a total commitment for the year, NOT a month.

(2) OR “I’ve [Already] Made a First Faith Commitment”

- **For those of you who made a commitment last year** start by writing out the amount of your initial 2-year commitment. (FORGOT?)
- Next, I want to encourage you to **finish strong**. Show the same faith in the middle that you did at the beginning. Don’t doubt in the dark what you saw in the light!

- However, for some of us, **maybe God has financially blessed you or grown your heart** for the kingdom of God and he might be calling you to increase your commitment.
 - **Me and V:** 6 months salary. THE BOOK
 - **The question to ask: What represents FIRST?**
 - TITHING, for example, is a great place to start your giving journey, but for many, it doesn't represent FIRST
 - I think of the LENKERS, our CP over at BCC: the way we want God to be first is that he is literally the biggest bill that we way. Their biggest bill was their mortgage so they set as their goal making their gift greater than that.

NONE OF THESE ARE YOUR STANDARD

Others of you--cynical? Apply by giving elsewhere

One last thing: Even though this is between you and God, please don't be *that guy* who forgets to put his name on this. It makes our accounting team cry when you do that. It would be really helpful for our team if you filled out the bottom of the card **legibly**.

As our band plays... we're going to give you a few moments to think, pray, and write.

- If **you're married**, of course, I want you to **lean in** and talk with your spouse.
- In a minute, I'll **come back up and give you more instructions**. But just stay seated and take this time to think, write, and pray.
- Remember **our goal is that 100% of us** will make a first-generation commitment of faith.
- ALL OF US, EVEN IF YOU DID IT LAST YEAR--DO IT AGAIN TO RECOMMIT. WON'T CHARGE YOU 2X

[Band plays instrumentally while people think, pray, and write... approx 3 mins.]

Instructions for the Commitment Moment...

- Before we bring these forward, I want you to look at it—**FORGET what you think this gift will mean to the bottom line of the church**. Put that out of your mind. Forget how your number compares to others
- **Does your gift represent YOUR first and best**, a number that will **change everything** else in your life?
- THAT'S WHAT GOD WANTS!

Here's what we're going to do now: we're going to **worship and commit together**. When you're ready you come forward and drop your **commitment card** in one of these buckets. Then **head back to your seat** and keep worshipping!

