

Week 3 - Saturday

“Are You a Giver or a Taker?”

Scripture: *“It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).*



It has been said that we are either givers or takers. Very likely, however, most of us fall somewhere between these two ends of the spectrum. In John 12, we read about a very generous giver and an extreme taker. Mary, the sister of Martha and the brother of Lazarus, was the giver. Her giving was the anointing of her friend and Savior. *“Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair”* (verse 3). Mary’s action demonstrated much love and devotion. She anointed Jesus with very expensive ointment or perfume. Very likely this was special ointment that she had been saving, and she found the perfect occasion to use it. How she anointed Jesus also showed her love and devotion. It wasn’t enough that she used very expensive ointment; she used her hair to wipe Jesus’ feet. Her acts of love epitomize giving. Mary gave herself and her best.

In the same story, we find a taker. *“But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples (he who was about to betray Him), said, ‘Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it”* (verses 4-6). It is clear that Judas was a taker. It’s equally clear that he found no benefit from his greed, but only self-condemnation and despair.

In our prayers, let us ask our Lord to send His Holy Spirit to grant us giving and generous hearts. May we, like Mary, be willing to give ourselves and our best.

Prayer: Dear good and gracious Heavenly Father, forgive me when I hoard what You’ve entrusted to me. Help me to understand that all I am and have are from Your hands. Enable me to see my money as a tool to be used in ways that give You honor and glory. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.



Daily Devotions

for the whole family!

Faithful Stewards of God's Gifts

WEEK 3

Generous and Ready to Share

1 Timothy 6:18

Sunday:..... “Giving Expresses our Gratitude”
Monday:..... “Giving Cheerfully”
Tuesday: “The Pump Needs to Be Primed”
Wednesday: “Whose Money Is it Anyway?”
Thursday: “Your Giving Speaks”
Friday: “Robbing God, Robbing Yourself”
Saturday: “Are You a Giver or a Taker?”

Week 3 - Sunday

“Giving Expresses Our Gratitude”

Scripture: *“You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God” (2 Corinthians 9:11-12).*



An old legend tells of a man visiting Africa who was amazed to find boys playing marbles with diamonds. The boys, however, found nothing unusual in this; this was the only kind of stones they knew.

There is a danger that the familiar can lose its value. What wonderful truths we hear each Sunday from our pulpit! What gracious gifts we regularly receive through the Sacraments! What a treasure is the Bible which we can own and read whenever we wish! What value do we place on these things of God? How long can God trust us as stewards of His Gospel if we treat it so lightly and neglect the opportunities to spread His Word?

In the New Testament, hardly any facet of Christian life is discussed more often than that of giving. The Bible teaches that it is the obligation of all, the rich and the poor, to give regularly, proportionately, and in the name of and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that giving is an act of faith, of thanksgiving, and of gratitude for our God and for what He has done for us. Scripture tells us *“God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7) and that He wants us to excel in this grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7). Thankfully, God tells us that He will make it possible for us to give when He tells us *“God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work”* (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Let us pray that we would once again comprehend the sacrifice that has won our eternal salvation. Let us tell others of the wonderful hope and love that can be found in Jesus. Let us place our gifts in the offering plates as though they were the nail-scarred hands of Jesus.

Prayer: Dear Father Almighty, please grant me the courage and generosity to share what You entrust to me with those in need and to extend Your kingdom. Help me to develop an attitude of gratitude. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

Week 3 - Friday

“Robbing God, Robbing Yourself”

Scripture: *“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6).*

In the last book of the Old Testament, God uses the prophet Malachi to tell the people they were robbing God by not giving their tithes and offerings. Malachi asked the people, *“Will man rob God?”* (Malachi 3:8). This was more an accusation than a question. The people’s hearts had turned away from God, and, because of their hard hearts, they gave blemished animals to sacrifice. Giving animals that were sick, lame, and blind was dishonoring God. God commanded the people to bring the whole tithe into God’s house. Then, God promised, He would *“open the windows of heaven for [them] and pour down for [them] a blessing until there is no more need”* (Malachi 3:10). God promised an abundance of blessings for their faithful giving.

Just as it was clear that God’s people were robbing Him then, so it is today that we rob God when we don’t give Him our first and best. Being thankful for Who He is and what He has done and continues to do for us, we show our gratitude by giving generously and cheerfully. We can make the case that, when we don’t give faithfully, we are also robbing ourselves. The people during Malachi’s day were not prospering as they withheld from God.

God Who created us and owns all things does not need our gifts. Giving is for our benefit rather than His. God uses our ability and desire to give to help those in need and to extend His kingdom. Thus, the recipients of our gifts are blessed and we, as givers, are also blessed. Giving is God’s way to help us grow spiritually and to enrich us. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God”* (2 Corinthians 9:11). Jesus said, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35). In the words of Solomon, *“Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine”* (Proverbs 3:9-10). Throughout Scripture, we find God’s special blessings to those who give faithfully and generously. Don’t rob God and yourself.

Prayer: Dear Lord, You are the owner of all animals in the forest and the cattle on a thousand hills. Help me to live my life knowing that all things belong to You. You have created me and recreated me in my Baptism. May all that I do give You honor and glory. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.



Week 3 - Thursday “Your Giving Speaks”

Scripture: *“But as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you – see that you excel in this act of grace also” (2 Corinthians 8:7).*



At the appointed time in each church service, time is set aside to worship the Lord with our financial treasures. This time is sometimes referred to as taking the collection. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians regarding the collection: *“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (1 Corinthians 16:2).*

The Greek word for collection means “to say something.” When you put your money into the offering or collection plate, you are saying something. You are making a statement about what you value as a person as well as what your priorities are. Your giving, or lack thereof, says something about your understanding of stewardship, because the proportion of your income that you give tells what kind of steward you are. Your giving, or lack thereof, indicates whether your treasure is here on earth or in heaven.

Only by God’s grace are we enabled to give. We tend to want to hang on to what we think of as ours, out of greed, insecurity, and for other reasons as well. However, we, as redeemed children of God through whom the Holy Spirit is working, can learn to rely on God instead of money for the provision of our needs.

Giving begins by acknowledging God’s ownership as well as trusting that God will provide. When you give generously, you are saying that you believe God to be the owner and provider of all things. May your faithful giving be a response to our faithful Lord Who has first given to you.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your provisions this day. Help me not to be anxious about tomorrow. Grant me the faith I need to share my gifts freely and generously. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

GOD OWNS EVERYTHING

Week 3 - Monday “Giving Cheerfully”

Scripture: *“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).*

One day a second-grade boy came to school without his lunch. He did not think about it until his classmates started washing their hands and getting out their lunch boxes. He was a shy little kid, and he did not want to say anything because he was embarrassed, but his stomach was really growling. Against his will, his lip started to quiver and his eyes filled with tears. Soon his teacher noticed and then all the students, and he was forced to tell them his problem. No sooner were the words out of his mouth than his classmates were looking into their lunches. One student had two sandwiches and gave the hungry boy one. Another child had an apple and an orange and gave his friend his choice of fruit. Another had too many cookies (could that ever be?!) and shared them. In short, the hungry boy had a feast, all because of the generosity of others who had more than they needed.

This kind of thing happens often. One person is in need and others give so that the need is met. This is just as God has planned it. The Bible says that *“your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness” (2 Corinthians 8:14).* Sometimes we need to get, and, at other times, we need to give. God gives us the sun and the rain, homes to keep us warm and dry, food to nourish our bodies, clothes to wear, and many other things we could name. In other words, most of us have plenty. God uses those who have plenty to help others. Yet all of us should prayerfully consider giving part of the income we receive from work or other sources of income away. Our first gift should go to our church in the weekly offering. Certainly, we can think of many ways we would like to spend that money and maybe we’re not such cheerful givers. God can handle that problem, too. As we ask Him to help us give and to make us happy about giving, God will answer our prayers and change our attitudes. Everything God asks us to do, including giving, He helps us to do and gives us the right attitude about doing it.



Prayer: Dear good and gracious Heavenly Father, thank You for Your generosity toward me. Help me to be generous with what You entrust to me. Grant me a giving and loving heart. I ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.



Week 3 - Tuesday “The Pump Needs to Be Primed ”

Scripture: *“Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your [income]; then your [wallets] will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine” (Proverbs 3:9-10).*

If you’ve ever been on a farm, you may be familiar with old-fashioned water pumps. When pumps have been out of use for a time, they can often be pumped fruitlessly. The problem can be solved by priming the pump with water, which expands the cork, bringing up water, rather than just air.

Life can be compared to that pump. In order to receive, one may need to give first. We have to put something into life to get something out of it. Paul stated this principle in Galatians 6:7: *“Whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”* Rewards and successes in life are earned; they result from hard work and time.

This principle of priming the pump, of sowing and reaping, applies to our giving as well. It is true that God provides for all. Jesus Himself said, *“For He [God] makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and unjust”* (Matthew 5:45). However, He also promised a special blessing on those who are generous in their giving: *“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you”* (Luke 6:38).

As redeemed children of God, our main motivation for giving is our desire to respond with grateful hearts to Him for His marvelous gifts, especially the gift of His Son, Jesus, Who brought us forgiveness of sins and life eternal. We will desire to give, not for reward, but to honor Him with our lives and our time, talents and treasures. We will find that we cannot out-give God. Speaking through the prophet Malachi, God promised, *“Bring the full tithe 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”* (Malachi 3:10).

Accept God’s challenge: put Him to the test. Prime the pump.

Prayer: Dear Father, thank You for accepting me as I am and for Your desire to adopt me as one of Your children. Place in me a desire to please You, especially in how I give to You through the giving to my church and my generosity to those in need. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Week 3 - Wednesday “Whose Money Is It Anyway?”

Scripture: *“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1).*

Please ponder the following questions: Who owns the money that you have? Who owns the cash in your wallet? Who owns your paycheck or business income? Who owns your bank account? Who owns the equity in your house and car? Who owns the stocks, bonds, mutual funds and other investments in your portfolio? Who owns all this? Whose money is it?

You might say, “That’s obvious. It’s mine, of course. It’s my cash, my paycheck, my bank account, my house, my car, and my portfolio. If it’s in my possession or under my name, it’s obviously mine.” But not so fast. What if someone else actually owns it and you have it only in order to manage it for him?

It makes a huge difference who really owns the money you are handling. If the money belongs to you and you alone, then you can do with it whatever you like. But if the money is really someone else’s and you’re only managing it, then you have to handle the money the way the real owner wants, and you have to answer to the owner for how you manage his money.

And the truth about money is this: you don’t own a single penny. I don’t own a penny. Nobody on earth owns a penny. So, whose money is it? It’s God’s money – every penny of it. Whatever money we have is ours to manage, not to own. We must handle money God’s way and answer to Him for the way we deal with His money. May God grant us all the desire and ability to be faithful managers of all that He entrusts to us.

Prayer: Dear Father, thank You for the faith that You’ve given me that enables me to understand that You have given me the ability to earn money. Help me to understand that it is Your money and I’m a steward of it. Amen.

