

The Tithe

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 February 2014

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0 : 00] Alright, thank you all very much. As was mentioned earlier, I had the flu this week, at least I think that's what I had this week. On Wednesday, I had a temperature of almost 103. My highest measure was 102.9. I just felt like I cooked all day Wednesday.

And I was really hoping to have a little more energy for today, but I really feel like I could fall over just at any moment. Like if the air comes on, I might just tip over here on the stage. I told Wes before the service started that my hope this morning was to not say anything false and to not start just coughing madly during the sermon.

So, I've got my bottle of water in my hand. I might be drinking from it profusely this morning as we open up the Word of God together. Now, we've been working together through the Gospel of Mark, and we're going to take another break from it today.

And I just want you to know that as a general pattern, as a church, we're committed to verse-by-verse exposition. As a general pattern, we find it to be the healthiest way that we can work through the Word of God together.

However, there are times that it's important to stop and look at something in a more topical fashion. And topical preaching can be done healthy, so don't ever hear us when we talk about believing a pattern of verse-by-verse exposition is the best pattern, that other places are wrong for doing it differently.

[1 : 31] There are a lot of very Gospel-centered, Christ-exalting churches that pastors preach on topics, and they do so in an expositional way, which is essentially to say that they teach what the Bible has to say.

They don't use the Scriptures to support their own opinion, but they bring to you what the Word of God has to say about a particular topic. So this morning, I don't know if anybody ever pays any attention to the bulletins that we give out, but this morning we're going to look toward a biblical practice of the tithe.

That's what we're going to talk about this morning. And I think this is a good time to do that for our church for multiple reasons. Number one, if you do give to Christ Family Church, you just got your giving statement, so you know exactly how much you gave last year.

So you kind of know where you stand in that process, and it's a good time to stop and think and reflect on whether or not you're giving faithfully. Secondly, we're coming in under budget for the year, and it's early in the year so far.

We are trusting in God's provision for this year, but as a church, we voted on a budget to support a budget, and we're coming in up underneath that at this point, which doesn't cause any panic in anybody in the leadership's place.

[2 : 45] We've been under budget at other times before, but sometimes things like that can be indicative of another thing, a deeper thing going on within our church. And it may not be, but it's probably a good time to stop and really look at what the Bible has to say about giving for that reason.

And then thirdly, just my own conviction about the topic of giving. And this is what I mean. In the past, in a lot of ways, I have really relegated this topic off and thought of it almost as, and maybe even unintentionally taught it as, a necessary evil.

An example of that is the way we do giving, the box being in the back. There's nothing wrong with doing that. Not many healthy, biblical, Christ-exalting churches do the offering that way, and I think it is a way to do the offering that is perfectly acceptable.

But I've got to tell you, the reason we started doing it that way is because I didn't want to make a big deal about collecting money at all. Just shove it off there. It's a necessary evil. Stick it in the back.

Don't make a big deal. A little mention at the end of the service is enough.

And that really does you a disservice. Because the Bible has much to say about giving. And this is a giving that is to your profit, not to mine as a person who receives a salary from this church, but to your profit.

[4 : 10] My heart in this is the same as Paul's heart in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, where he says, I seek not what is yours, but you. I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.

So understanding how it is that we ought to give and what we should be giving to is really incredibly important for our own sake. How is it that if we're to be disciples of Christ, drawn into obedience in every way, and following Him, that we are supposed to handle our money?

So, for example, turn to Mark chapter 4. It's where we've been together. We just finished up chapter 4. The aim of Mark, as is the aim of all of the Gospels, is to convince us that Jesus is who He said He is, that He is, in fact, the Son of God, and to find us following Him in every way.

And I've simplified that for you by saying that we would be disciple-making disciples. Now, be clear, there is no other kind of disciple. Disciples make disciples, because that's what Jesus did. So if we're following Jesus, we will make disciples.

But because it seems in this age there needs to be some clarification on that point, I'll continue to say to make disciple-making disciples. This is the great calling that we have, and this is the argument that Mark is making for us, using all of these different pictures of Jesus' life.

[5 : 41] And he pauses, particularly in chapter 4, to give us some of the teaching of Jesus. And he talks in these different parables. This is entirely unplanned on my part, so forgive me here. The parable of the sower.

And he talks about this good fruit that yields 30-fold and 60-fold and 100-fold. Then he talks about the lamp under the basket. It shouldn't be hidden under the basket or up underneath the bed, but it should be put out to give light to the room.

He talks about the sower that doesn't know how it is that seed sprouts up, but he sows, right? And then the mustard seed. We don't understand how it is that the kingdom of God becomes the thing that it becomes, the magnitude that it has, but yet we still are to be about this work.

And so he's building this case for us here that we should be disciple-making disciples. Our church has a vision statement. The Christ Family Church exists to glorify God by experiencing, proclaiming, and displaying the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things to all peoples.

And this is unique to us. I mean, this is our statement, but this should not be a unique drive of the Christian life, right? We're not trying to create a cult of vision as if God has given us some special vision statement, and we're going to follow this vision statement together, right?

[6 : 52] This is the biblical mandate to all believers. We've just put it in these words because we found them particularly beautiful, and we thought we could communicate the different aspects of Christian living through such a statement.

And so we're called to be disciple-making disciples, and that includes the way we deal with our money. It includes all aspects of our living. The Bible is not silent about finances.

You sit in a lot of churches, and you would think so. You would think that Jesus never spoke to the topic, but he spoke to it all the time. The Bible is full of teaching about the potential evil of money, the way it should be used righteously, and it's missed so often, so often in our churches.

And I don't want to be a church, and I don't want to be a pastor that leads you in that way. There's a study, it's a really fairly famous study called Passing the Plate. It was done in 2008.

I would encourage you to look at it in greater depth. But it gives us a little bit of an idea of the state of giving of American Christians.

[7 : 59] And this is of committed Christians. So these are those who self-reported that their faith is very important to them, and those who stated they attend church at least twice per month. And that's another sermon about what it means to be a committed Christian.

But this is the way they qualified who these people were. Committed Christians in America. \$2.5 trillion a year is the income of these committed Christians in America.

Which means that this group, if we pulled out committed Christians in this reporting, this group could be admitted to G7. I don't know if you know what that is, but that's the summit of the seven highest, the seven largest economies in the world.

They get together and they talk world problem, world economy. And Christians in America, committed Christians in America, could be admitted to that group with the \$2.5 trillion a year that

are earned by those households.

Households. So if we start with the premises of a tithe being 10%, if 10% was given, \$46 billion more than is currently given would be given.

[9:07] If all of those households gave 10%, 46 billion more than is currently given. That's a phenomenal amount of money. And you may be thinking, well, 46 billion really isn't that much money in the scheme of things.

But 10 billion would sponsor 20 million children for a year. Pretty phenomenal. \$330 million would sponsor 150,000 indigenous missionaries in countries close to religious workers.

150,000 indigenous missionaries in countries close to religious workers. \$2.2 billion would triple the current funding of Bible translation, printing, and distribution.

And we've only spent... Oh, I can't do the math off the top of my head. I'm such in a fog right now. Anyway, after we've spent that, we still have \$33.5 billion left to spend per year.

That money, it's a staggering amount of money. And so much good can be accomplished with it.

The average percentage of income given across the board of these committed Christians is 6%.

[10:10] However, the median amount... This is the shocking fact. The median amount given of each of these households is \$200 a year.

The median. That would be in college, right? The average one in the middle, right? The average number. Not the average of the total, but the number in the middle. \$200 per year, which is just over half of 1% of after-tax income.

Just over half of 1% of after-tax income. The reason it averages out to 6% is because there are many very generous, very philanthropic people counted in this number that pull that average way the other direction and give everybody a little bit of credit there.

But it's not coming from the vast majority of believers, but from a few that are really faithful in their giving. So, what does God's Word have to say about our giving?

And let's start just in one place. We're going to get all over the place today. But let's look in Luke chapter 12 together first. Always good to start with our Lord's teaching.

[11:36] Luke chapter 12 beginning in verse 15. And He said to them, Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness. Or you could replace the word there with greed.

For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Now, beloved American church, just sit and let that soak into your heart for a moment.

Jesus said, Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness or greed. Whether you have money or you don't have money. We're all in this category, speaking to every single one of us.

What is going on in your heart as it concerns money?

Right? For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Verse 16. And He told them a parable saying, The land of a rich man produced plentifully.

And He thought to Himself, What shall I do? For I have nowhere to store my crops. And He said, I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods.

[12:37] And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you.

And the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. Now this is not a parable He's teaching here to tell us that we ought not save.

That we ought not invest in the future. That we ought not be in some way planning now for retirement later. This is not what He's saying here. Remember, this is a parable coming right off of Him saying to be on our guard against greed.

Because our life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions. So recall that. If we do not want to be the fool, what is He saying to us?

He's saying that we should be rich in what we do with our money toward God. We should spend what we have on the kingdom. The Bible teaches elsewhere that we should save.

[13:46] I would commend it to you, having worked as a budget coach. You should do some saving. It's a good thing. In fact, your saving can serve the kingdom of God. What he's saying is, don't live for yourself.

Don't take possessions and hold on to them tightly. That you may have them and you may turn them over and treasure them. He will call you a fool one day. These things you cannot hang on to.

You can't take them with you. So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. Now there's an Old Testament practice, an Old Testament law called the tithe.

And we should look at that together to begin with. So turn with me to Leviticus chapter 27. I have to tell you this morning that I desperately want to make tithing a law to you.

It would just make things so easy. If I could just simply make a simple justification. It was an Old Testament law and nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus negate it.

[14:51] He doesn't. He doesn't tell people to not tithe in the New Testament. I would love that you say, so 10%, get it done. If you're not doing 10%, you're being disobedient. How dare you?

You should do 10%. Let's all go home. It would be a lot easier. It would be easier for me personally. It would be very nice just to simply pull out my calculator. Anytime I had any income come into our house.

Do the quick calculation. Write the check. Put it in the box. And I'm done. That would be so simple. But it's not quite that simple. Now, there were two types of giving taught in the Old Testament.

There was required giving and there was voluntary giving. So, in required giving is where we first start to see this picture of the tithe. Which, in Hebrew, ma'aser literally means tenth part.

So, Leviticus chapter 27, verse 30. Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord. Now, what was done with all that tithe?

[15:53] What was done with it? Because it's the Lord. Does the Lord store it up? Does the Lord have it someplace? No. It was used to support the administrative work of the government. But remember that this was a theocracy at the time.

At the time, God reigned over Israel. And the Levites were agents in God's governance. So, the Levites received payment for the work that they did in the temple. But this was the way the government itself was run.

It was a theocracy. I praise God one day we'll return to such a rule. We won't live in a democracy in your Lord, but a theocracy. A righteous rule over the top of us.

But this was what was going on at this time. Right? There were actually other tithes as well. Not just the general tithe, but there was a tithe. We don't turn there, but Deuteronomy chapter 14.

We'll take a look at it later. But there was a tithe for the funding of a national festival. It happened. Every year, they brought in tithes and they ate. And if they couldn't travel with the food that they ate to the place they were supposed to go to, they sold it, took the money, and they went and bought whatever they wanted in this place.

[16:57] And it was a big festival that that tithe took care of. There were smaller requirements, right, that were intended to provide for the poor. Turn to Leviticus chapter 19. I'll show you what I mean.

This is not the only place this is found. Smaller requirements or laws placed on the Israelites. Leviticus 19, verse 9. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge. Neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare.

Neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner. I am the Lord. So there was requirements placed on them even for how they were to provide for the poor. And that just wouldn't go to the edge of the field.

Just don't take everything out. When you pull the harvest, don't strip it completely clean, but leave some behind for those who are poor. And this was required giving in that day. Secondly, there was voluntary giving.

[17:56] Exodus chapter 25, verse 2 says, Speak to the people of Israel that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him, you shall receive the contribution for me.

1 Chronicles 29, 9. Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly. For with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord. And this was to gather in the things necessary to build the temple, to decorate it, to make it ornate the way the Lord had commanded.

And this was voluntary giving. This was not compulsory. It was voluntary. So these are the two types we see in the Old Testament. And you could argue, I've heard the argument made that we are now given the same command, the same required giving to support the government with our taxes.

And we are. I mean, not negate that. Matthew chapter 22, verse 15 through 22. And Romans 13, 1 through 7. We are supposed to obey civil authority. And we are supposed to pay to Caesar what is

Caesar's.

So pay your taxes. As a good part of a democracy, vote for people and vote for laws that decrease taxes. That's a good thing that we can do together.

[19 : 10] There's no thing that the government can do better than a private individual, I would assert to you. I digress. Right? Right?

So you can make this argument that we're now fulfilling that requirement, the Old Testament requirement of the tithe, because now our governing is being taken care of that way. But it's a little more complicated than that, isn't it?

Because that doesn't include the running of our churches. And I praise God for that, that we don't have state church. But it's a little more convoluted than that. But the point of what I'm trying to say to you, in so many words, is that tithing just can't be taught as a law.

Right? Giving 10% of everything that you have just simply can no longer be taught as law. But it certainly can be taught as principle. It certainly can be taught as principle.

And I want to show you why, as we look at the New Testament, what it has to say on the matter with four reasons. Right? Four reasons. And there are some more. But four reasons to give at least a tenth of what you make to the work of God.

[20 : 20] Number one, giving at least a tenth today is in keeping with the purpose of the tithe in its day, at least in part.

Another example, Old Testament example, 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 the service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting. You remember when the Israelites were led into the promised land, the land was divided up amongst the tribes.

And there was one tribe that didn't get the vision in that. They didn't get the means by which to produce income, which would have been land. Right? And those were the Levites.

They were specially set aside for temple service. And so the way they were able to profit was that they were given a tenth of everybody else's earnings because they served in this special role in that way.

[21 : 22] Right? So Old Testament, just stick with me. I'm building that case for you. I've already said it. We're saying it again. There are still men and women who set aside vocational employment in order to serve the needs of the church at home and abroad.

This is still something that happens today, is it not? It happens quite often. In fact, I use myself as an example. Up until last year, I worked two jobs. And for quite some time, I worked a full-time job so that I could work here for no money.

And then we've slowly transitioned those two things. But I've set aside vocational employment. I don't have time to do a job that earns income for my household so that I can serve the church.

Be an example of that. Another example. I'm sitting amongst us. I haven't spotted a space yet, but I'm sure I will in a moment. Daniel Gentry is a member of our church. There he is, right in the middle. Daniel Gentry is a member of our church.

And our church's hope is to send him and his soon-to-be wife, brand-new fiancé, sitting on the front row with him there. It's the first time I've said hi to you. To Nicaragua in a little over a year if the timeline works the way we think it may.

[22 : 30] And as a church, we would like to support him in doing that. And Daniel, great guy, said, I'll just go down there and work. But we would love to be able to send him so that he can devote himself fully to the work of God in that place.

Now, we're all called to be missionaries. We're all called to lead. We're all called to be pastors. But we just do it in various ways. And there are some who are set aside for this particular way in which to serve.

And we have to make a living somehow. My family doesn't eat apart from your generosity. And I thank you for it. Because we do eat. And we eat well. We're doing just fine. But this is the way in which God cares for these people.

A couple of examples of that. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 5, verses 17 and 18, Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor. Which, fascinatingly, he's talking about pay here.

Especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, in Deuteronomy 25, verse 4, You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain, and the laborer deserves his wages.

[23 : 34] This is from Luke 10, verse 7, and some other places as well. So, the worker's worth is wages. You shouldn't muzzle the ox when it treads out the grain. There should be some provision for this kind of worker.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 13 and 14, Paul writes, 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?

He's talking about the Levites there, and their service in the temple. Verse 14, In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

Right? So, giving at least a tenth today is in keeping with the purpose of the tithe in its day. Right? At least in that way. To help to provide for the work being done.

Now, the question gets asked here, If I'm going to give at least a tenth of what I make, should I only give it to the church? And my answer, my simple answer to that is no.

[24 : 41] Again, I'd like to make a law here and go, Yeah, you should. All of it should come here.

But you need to be very, very prayerful about where it is given, because many churches are anemic, and are starved financially, and as a church, it's such a blessing to pool our resources, and get to do things in our community, to have the kind of resources we need, to really reach out and do stuff as a church.

Right? You should really consider bringing it together, so that we can cooperate in efforts in that way. If you're constantly shooting your money out in a thousand different directions, because there are already, I mean, millions, you get offers all the time, places that you can send your money. It becomes really difficult as a church to be effective in a community, and so you should consider that. But, you're going to have people come to you going on trips, and living overseas full time, and doing things like that, and I would say, Yes, give.

Yes, give. Support the work of the local church, and I would say, support it primarily, but look to the ways you can give otherwise. I can't make a law at that point. Right?

So, giving at least a tenth today, recognizes and honors that Old Testament principle. Secondly, giving at least a tenth today, honors God as the owner and giver of all things.

[26 : 02] Psalm 24.1 says, The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. Everything belongs to God.

You're very, very deluded in your thinking, if you think that only a tenth belongs to God, and therefore you're going to give it to Him. And the other 90% you can do with as you please.

Everything that we have, ought to be carefully considered, and we ought to be looking at it and saying, how is it that I can use this to the glory of God?

So, how is it that Sam and I can pick a home in a location that we can serve God in? How is it now that we have a home that we can use it to the glory of God?

Right? Is it our private refuge? Is it our place to get away from people? Sometimes, because that's good for the kingdom. Sometimes it's good to get away and be in a refuge. Wednesday, I cooked at 102 degrees all day.

No one needed to be around me. I needed to be in my home by myself that day. But our home should also be a place that's welcoming, where we can be hospitable, where you can bring people in and show them what family life looks like, and wrap our arms around them.

[27 : 10] Right? Like our home should be used in that way. Our cars should be used in that way.

Right? Can I fit an extra person in the back seat of this car versus this car? This car has got cool rims, but this one will hold another person.

Right? Maybe that's the decision that you should be making. Right? We need to be thinking about how is it that everything belongs to God, and how is it he would use everything that we have for his service.

Now turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 14. I'm really going to only make you look at one verse. I just want you to see it in its context. I'll go there with you too. I didn't set it as one of my goals not to have a voice at the end of this, so we'll see how that goes.

So Deuteronomy chapter 14, we've got instruction beginning in verse 22 for this tithe that was for this banquet that was to be had each year, this festival that was to be had each year.

And there's a lot of instruction about exactly how it was to take place. There's some instruction at the end for a philanthropic part of it, that there should be things left for the Levites and for the father of the will of the sojourner.

[28 : 26] We see that in verse 29. But the main thing I want to draw your attention to is to verse 23. Where God says that you may learn to fear the Lord, your God, always.

To have this big festival, to recognize, to give proper place to the fact that God had provided all of these things.

Matthew Henry and his wonderful commentary on the whole Bible, on this text, says, The whole appointment evidently was against the covetousness, distrust, and selfishness of the human heart. It promoted friendliness, liberality, and cheerfulness, and raised a fund for the relief of the poor. They were taught that their worldly portion was most comfortably enjoyed when shared with their brethren who were in want.

So that's why this particular tithe was put in place, that they might learn to fear the Lord God. That they might put their heart in a proper place and recognize that all things come from Him.

[29 : 36] Now, let me give you just a simple example of this. I have a three, almost four-year-old now, going on seven-year-old, named Caban.

And when I get home from work, often I'm tired. I've spent the day with people. I've spent the day in thought, hopefully deep thought. And I am usually very exhausted when I get home.

And the question that always arises, a couple minutes after I've been home, is, Hey, Daddy, you want to come play with me? Hey, Daddy, you want to come play trains with me? Hey, Daddy, you want to come play cars with me? And most of the time I really feel like going, Nope, I don't.

I don't. I feel like sitting in that chair and doing nothing for a couple of hours. And it's not really acceptable in that case, is it, for me to say, Caban, I've spent all day loving you.

Look, I've been at work today. I've been trying to earn income for our household. I've been trying to do things that are good for our community and for our church. I've really been spending all day loving you.

[30 : 37] Go play by yourself. It just wouldn't even resonate with him, right? He wouldn't get that at all. So how do I show him? How do I prove to him that I love him? I go play with him, right?

I get down on the floor. I'm sore and hurting. And I lay on my side on the hardwood floor. And I play trains and cars with my son, right? Now, certainly God is not a toddler.

And God doesn't need us to express our love to him in this way. But the way we show ourselves that we trust him, the way we show ourselves that we believe that he is the provider of all things, that all things belong to him, the way we show others that we believe that that is true is we give. We give liberally. We give a tenth and a beyond. We say this money came from God. It belongs to God.

He can use it however he wants to use it. And I know he'll continue to provide for me. I can tell you in my own life, in my short life of earning money and giving, God has never, ever failed me.

[31 : 45] You all have all had everything you've ever needed. Even in some of your stinginess, right? You've had what you needed. Try giving and see what God will do for you. See if he won't continue to provide for you faithfully.

So it honors that God is the owner and giver of all things. He is the owner and giver of all things, whether you recognize it or not. But it honors that. It gives evidence that you believe it to be true. It shows other people that as well.

Thirdly, giving at least a tenth today helps protect our hearts from the wiles of money. From the wiles of money, the deceitfulness, if you would prefer, of money.

That was the word that popped into my head and I liked it. So, I used it. It helps protect our hearts from the wiles of money. hear me carefully.

It helps protect our hearts. It's not the only thing. You can consistently give, put a number in your head and give, and still be deceived by money.

[32 : 52] Right? But it helps protect. Letting it loose into the kingdom helps protect our hearts from the wiles of money. Turn to Hebrews chapter 13. This is going to be the reason you guys prefer verse by verse.

Beginning in verse 5. Keep your life free from love of money and be content with what you have. For he has said, this is so good, keep your life free from love of money and be content with what you have because of a promise.

Right? You can do this because there's a promise that's been made to us. I will never leave you nor forsake you. So, we can say, the Lord is my helper.

I will not fear. What can man do to me? And that's Psalm 118.6 that the writer of Hebrews is quoting there. Right? Money is not the solution to our problems.

Money is not our security. The fact that Jesus has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you is our security. Right? Therefore, we can keep our life free from love of it.

[34 : 09] We can keep ourselves away, our hearts from being captured by the deceitfulness of money because Jesus has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

I will care for you as a father does for a son. Matthew 6, verse 19. I'm going to start reading it. You can get there if you want to.

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. The eye is the lamp of the body. It's beginning in verse 22. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.

But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness. No one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

[35 : 21] You cannot serve God and money. Ah, these words of Jesus should just rip through our Christian culture. Right?

Just leave people laid waste through our Christian culture. You cannot serve God and money. Now the interesting language beginning in verse 22 about the eye, this was a common Greek analogy, a metaphor.

This eye was thought to be the eye of the mind. So essentially, he's saying the way in which you think, the way in which you process, the things that you love and hold dear, that is a lamp to the body.

Right? So if you love the world, if you serve money, if you do that kind of thing, that's what's going to fill you. That's what he's saying to us here. Right? If you love God, your body will be full of light. Right? This is the idea that's being communicated. He says, so if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. If your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. And then he sums this up by saying, you cannot serve God and money.

[36 : 30] And I think that we all have read this and we've all said, well, that's fine. Like, that's cool. I get that. That's very clear to me. I understand that to be true. And we quickly then want to say, well, but it's okay to have things.

We just can't serve things. And to a degree, I'd say, yes, that's true. There are some things you can have. I'm not making a call to you today that you ought to be impoverished by any stretch of the imagination.

Right? Some people would make a pitch at this point to say that much of the world only lives on a dollar a day. Well, it's more expensive to live in the United States. Right? It's not really a fair comparison. It costs more to live in the United States.

But we all have so much more than we need. We all have so much more than we need. Many places in the world they're very thankful to have one pair of shoes that are not worn out.

How many pairs of shoes do you have? Can you count them? Socially acceptable to have a couple different pairs of shoes. I would agree. Not really probably good to wear flip-flops to a formal.

[37 : 33] Right? It's okay to have some things like that in the culture that we live in. But you have to really ask yourself. Right? Really ask yourself. If I have some of the things I have, do I not worship them?

Right? If I came to you and any given thing that you owned and I said, this would serve the kingdom of God. If I could only take this from you and I could sell this, we could do such good things with the kingdom of God.

How long would you hesitate before you said, okay? Right? Test yourself in this way. Ask God to show you the things that you serve in your life.

Right? These things will be indicative of where your heart is at. Let me give you a couple of examples. Some men in history. Many of you, I hope, know who Rich Mullins is.

Many of you probably don't know who he is and you should. You should go check out his lyrics. Rich Mullins took all the profits from his tours and album sales and gave them, they were entrusted to his church.

[38 : 33] He gave all of these to his church who paid him, and this was by his request, the average salary in the U.S. that year. Right? He made millions of dollars in his career.

Very, very popular, famous Christian artist. Made millions of dollars. It was all given to his church, and all he asked for in return was that he wanted an allowance. He wanted to make what the average male made in the U.S. that year.

And the rest of it was given away to kingdom purposes. Right? Rich Mullins didn't trust himself with his own money. That's why he did it that way. He said, I don't want to be deceived by riches.

I don't want to be drawn away from my devotion to God by the temptation of all that money. So I'm going to give it to the church. It's all going straight to them, and they're going to give it out.

In that way. Just give me what it takes for the average guy to live each year. Another great example is John Wesley. In the first year of his ministry, his income was 30 pounds.

[39 : 33] I don't know how to translate that to you. Especially not for the year that he lived in. 1700s. But it was 30 pounds. And he found 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. So catch that. He gave away more than he lived on.

So he was giving away a full salary. 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 in a year.

But he rarely let his expenses rise above 30 pounds in a year. So he was able to do so much. And this is where we begin to think of this idea of giving at least a tenth.

Giving at least a tenth. I would commend to you for the reasons that I already stated that you ought to just go ahead and sit down and pull out the calculator. Young people, I know you don't make a lot of money.

[40 : 38] I know that your jobs seem pitiful. But you do make money. And it adds up. It really does. Sit down and do the calculation and figure it out and start at this place and begin to ask God how he would have you give more and the ways in which he would have you give.

Should I give it every bit of it to the church? Are there some other ministry areas that are important that need my funding as well? Begin to be drawn into relationship with him that he might direct the way you give.

And that is the beauty of us not being able to make just a simple easy law, just a little dogmatic thing that we go through is that God says there's some parameters to the giving. Right? I want you to check this out.

It's going to be about like this. Here's the dangers of not doing it. Come to me and I'll give you the answers. Right? Come to me. Spend time with me. Sit with me. Abide in my word.

Right? Begin to care about the things that I care about and you'll start spending your money the way you're supposed to spend your money. Right? So if you care about how it is you spend your money then you're going to draw it deeper.

[41 : 42] You're going to go into a deeper place with the Lord and that is always always a good thing. Now people have asked me various questions about how to do giving here.

We're actually next week going to pass not a plate probably a bucket. So just look for that change next week. We're going to be looking for some ways to better incorporate giving together as part of our worship service.

Not to manipulate you but to serve you. To say this is important and it matters. We're going to be looking for some ways to do that. But people have asked me questions like can we do online giving?

Is there a way that maybe we could take cards for giving? Things like that. And there's a primary reason that we don't do it. Well I mean there's two primary reasons. The first one is many of you may not know this but if you run a credit card you have to pay a credit card transaction fee on it. It's usually just under 3%. As a church we don't want to pay 3% of all of our giving to credit card companies. That would that would actually be a pretty good ding in our small budget.

[42 : 47] And I don't think you want that happening either. I don't think 3% of what you give you want going to a credit card company. But secondly and really more importantly it's good for you to get into the habit of sitting down writing the check counting out the singles whatever it is that you do

and going through the practice of doing that of coming together as we come together as a church and giving should be something that's on your mind.

We're a culture that tends to consume so much in church setting but to be thinking about what can I do to come and give and of course I don't just mean financially if that's what we're talking about this morning.

You should be thinking about how you can give in all aspects of our service together but that's a way for you to be thinking like what is my part to play? What do I do in this service?

How is it that I can come and contribute to what's going on? You can certainly always contribute in that way. You can never give too much to our church. I promise that we will do God honoring things with the budget.

Getting involved in giving is a really really valuable way for you to get involved with the life of a church too and I'm speaking specifically to young people. You should be giving your money to a local church and you should be caring what the local church is doing with those funds.

[44 : 06] It should matter to you. We have a quarterly budget meeting for that very reason. We want to be very above board. We want to say this is the budget that we decided on together as a church. This is the direction we said that the Lord is leading us in this year and we're supporting it.

Here's what we're doing with it. This is where the money is going or we don't have enough money. What are we going to do? What are we not going to do as a result? Look, we have an abundance. Abundance. Praise God for the times that that's happened. What should we do with the abundance?

How should it be spent on the kingdom? It's a valuable way to get involved in the life of a church and as you get older you're going to make more and you're going to give more and I really hope that you get more invested in a church in that way.

Alright, that was thirdly. Fourthly, giving at least a tenth today is a means for good works which glorify God.

It's a means for good works which glorify God. I think most of you who are hearing me and understanding what I'm saying right now understand that things cost money in this world.

[45 : 14] Right? The way things get accomplished in this world is by money. 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 6 through 10. Turn there.

You should turn there. I didn't hear pages flipping. You should turn there. And we're almost done. 2 Corinthians 9 beginning in verse 6. The point is this. Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.

And whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. We've been talking about sowing, haven't we? Back in Matthew, I mean, excuse me, Mark chapter 4. The one who sows sparingly will reap sparingly.

Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Here, Paul's talking about giving. How is it that we give? Financially. Verse 7. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under a compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

[46 : 30] And 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.

As it is written, He has distributed freely. He has given to the poor. His righteousness endures forever. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

Now, get what Paul is saying here to us. That if you give bountifully, right, it's the admonition he's making there in verse 6. If you give bountifully, God will continue to provide to you bountifully, but not so that you can have stuff, right?

He doesn't say having all sufficiency in all things in verse 8 and ended at that. Yeah, give so that you can have. No, that's not what he's saying at all. He's saying give so that you can have so that you can give in verse 8.

You may abound in every good work, right? And you see, the result of this is that our righteousness has an increase, right? The reason we're given things is that we might enjoy God and enjoy the kingdom of God, that we might give freely to it and experience what God does in those circumstances, right?

[47 : 49] That we give away something that we can't hold on to and we can't keep to gain things that we can. We store up treasure in heaven rather than treasure on earth. So we give so we can

get so we can give so we can get so we can give so we can get so we can give and this is God's economy and the way in which God's people can accomplish so, so much financially.

There's a test God asks of us or we ask of God in Malachi 3, verse 10. He says, 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.

Just see what will happen if you begin to give the way I've asked you to give. See if I don't just continue to pour down on you and provide and to provide and to provide and to provide.

This is the way in which God accomplishes His work. And I hope that it is your great desire, I hope it is your primary desire in your life to magnify God.

Because of what He's done on your behalf in the gospel. Because He sent Christ to die on your behalf. That it is your great desire and great joy in this life to magnify the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[49 : 13] And so by magnify the Father. Shouldn't it be? It would be the great desire of all of our lives not to have more stuff, not to own more things or go on better vacations or have a better experience here or there.

But to make Christ known, it should be. That's not always for me. It should be. It should always be. It should always be the case. How is it that we're using our money to accomplish this thing?

So giving at least a tenth today is in keeping with the purpose of the tithe in its day. It honors God as the owner and giver of all things. It helps protect our hearts from the wiles of money and it is a means for good works which glorify God.

Let's pray together.