**Managing God’s Money Through Giving**

**Matthew 6:19-34 - November 9, 2014**

INTRODUCTION – 5 Minutes

1. Greeting & Welcome
   1. Dismissal of Children to TS
   2. Words of Greeting – Good morning – Pastor John
   3. Envelopes passed out by ushers; Instructions given
      1. You’ll notice that this morning, our ushers are passing out blank white envelopes. I’d like each person here to take one of these sealed envelopes and just hang onto it during the service. If you are like my wife Teresa, the curiosity of what these are “for” will probably drive you crazy but you will just have to trust me and be patient.
   4. Reflection on the Series
      1. As Pastor Chasteen indicated, we have embarked on an exploration of “Managing God’s Money”. Last week, he established through the story of “The Rich Young Ruler” that Jesus is to be for each of us our eternal treasure.
      2. As he quoted Jim Elliot, *“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose”*, I found myself nodding with full approval and shouting within my spirit, “Yes! That is so true” followed by a “Jesus, help me to live that way”.
      3. Today, we are going to turn our attention to “*Managing God’s Money Through Giving*”.as we try to live that way.
2. Context of Our Situation – In New England, In the Church, Personally:
   1. Admiration and examples of generosity:
      1. Now we all love to hear stories of extreme generosity – from the Jesus’ telling of the widow who surrendered her last coin at the temple as an act of faith and love to stories of billionaires who chose to give away their estates in magnificent acts of benevolence. We love to hear these stories… as long as they are stories that don’t necessarily affect us too personally. Then, we get a little bit squeamish.
   2. Common Questions and Objections:
      1. And, even as Christians, we tend to have a lot of objections around the subject of giving. I’ve collected a list of 10 that I’ve heard over the years. Have you ever heard any of these before?
         1. *My giving is a private matter between God and me, no one else.*
         2. *Christians are under grace, not under law, so the obligation to give does not apply to me.*
         3. *I am up to my ears in debt. I cannot give now.*
         4. *I would like to give but we are a young couple with no nest egg or we are an older couple facing retirement.*
         5. *I would like to give, but my spouse does not share my desire to give.*
         6. *I don’t have the spiritual gift of giving.*
         7. *I don’t give to my church because I already give to another ministry or I gave at the office.*
         8. *Stewardship is a lot more than money; I give my time and talents by teaching Transformation Station and opening my home. I consider that to be my giving.*
         9. *No one ever seems to appreciate my gift.*
         10. *Small gifts don’t really matter.*
         11. **Bonus:** *My Pastor ought to get a day job, like the Apostle Paul, that’s a more biblical way to minister.*
   3. Giving Statistics:
      1. Well, here in New England, some of these objections appear to have taken root in our patterns of giving – even within communities of faith, like Redemption Hill Church.
      2. Consider this graphic detailing overall charitable giving in the United States ranked by state. This data was collected and reported for the year 2012 based on income tax return data, I believe.
      3. I’ve projected for us the bottom ranking of states in the United States. Do you notice anything interesting about this pattern? That’s correct. Massachusetts ranks #47 of 50 states listed. And, incredibly ALL six New England states rank in the bottom six positions of the nation. Bottom line – when it comes to giving charitably – New Englanders consistently tighten their purses financially.
      4. And before we appeal to the idea that instead of giving from our discretionary income, New Englanders give from our discretionary time, I can assure you that the statistics for “volunteer time given” match the statistics for “charitable giving” also. We have to be honest with ourselves. We live in a region that can be tight with our time and with our money when we are compared to other sections of the country.
         1. You probably want to know who finished first, didn’t you? Well, in both charitable giving and in volunteer time offered, the state of Utah – heavily influenced by Mormon teaching outstrips New England by nearly 3:1. (Pause)
      5. And before we get to easily persuaded by the idea that the statistics that I just shared are only reflective of the New England culture at large, let me go back to a few nuggets that Jon shared from our Redemption Hill Church survey results. He shared:
         1. Of those that responded to our survey, 44% said that their giving is “not sacrificial or generous”.
         2. And, if we are just being honest here, in light of the generosity of God to us, that is concerning to your Elders and I hope it is concerning to you as well.
         3. In another response, 35% of those responding to the survey told us that they do not have a great understanding of biblical principles related to managing God’s money – which presumably includes this important area of “Managing God’s Money Through Giving”.
      6. And so, this morning, with God’s grace, we are going to survey the Scriptures to see what the Scriptures might teach us about the practice and attitudes of being a generous people.
      7. And I trust that as we do this, we’ll discover our Main Point:
         1. **When we trust God as the owner and provider of all that we have, we are free to respond with the patterns and attitudes of biblical giving.**
3. Prayer of Transition:
   1. Would you bow your heads and simply repeat after me while I pray?
      1. *“Father… Speak to my heart… and change my life”. Amen.”*

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #1: Trust God as owner and provider of all that we have. (10 Min):**

1. Context of the Scripture (Matthew 6:19-34) – brief review
   1. During our “Opening Scripture” this morning, we read from Matthew 6. Perhaps you can turn to there while I make a few observations about my first encouragement: We should trust God as owner and provider of all that we have.
   2. Last week, Jon did a great job of establishing the choice that we all face when it comes to earthly wealth and eternal treasure.
   3. In this passage, Jesus is midst of several monologues where he is addressing gathering crowds as well as to His disciples who had encircled him.
   4. In verses 19-24, He uses three Word-Pictures to help us in our understanding about wealth.
      1. Treasure:
         1. He says that there a kind of treasure-on-earth and a treasure-in-heaven. And that we’ll will either focus our attention on one or the other.
      2. Light:
         1. He says that there is a kind of understanding that is like Bad Light (or darkness) and a kind of understanding that is like Good Light (or health).
      3. Slavery:
         1. He says that there is a kind of master called Mammon (or Money-Personafied) and a kind of master called God.
      4. Jesus makes it clear that we have a choice between these two treasures (where we lay them up) and these two visions (what we fix our eyes on) and the most basic choice of all – either one of these two Masters (whom will we serve)?
      5. “For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other”.
   5. God, our Father, is a jealous God. He is exclusive. He requires full faithfulness in all areas of our lives – especially in our wealth.
   6. And so, either God is served with a single-eyed devotion or He is not served at all.
   7. By the time we get to verse 25, Jesus declares a “Therefore” in response to His three Word-Pictures.

(And we should always pay close attention whenever Jesus says, “Therefore” because we can be sure that a profound truth is soon to follow).

* 1. The one who lays up his treasure-in-heaven, who fixes his eyes properly on the Father, and who chooses to serve Him with wholeheartedly will enter into a future that is free from anxiety.
  2. Look carefully at how many times Jesus’ references anxiety.
     1. Vs 25 – “…*do not be anxious*…”
     2. Vs 27 – “…*by being anxious*…”
     3. Vs 28 – “…*why are you anxious*…”
     4. Vs 31 – “…*do not be anxious*…”
     5. Vs 34 – “…*do not be anxious*…”
     6. Vs 34 – “…*tomorrow will be anxious for itself*…”
     7. Vs 34 – “…*its own trouble*…”
  3. This is not a call to laziness or apathy. Rather it is recognition that the heavenly Father that has given each of us life and a body will certainly give us the lesser necessities of food and clothing. Fretting about such things betrays the most basic faith that God is Our Provider and that He will be faithful.
  4. Jesus gives us some concrete examples:
     1. In verses 26-27, He points to the life that birds have been given and the food provided to sustain them. In verses 28-30, He points to the body that flowers have been given and the clothing provided to beautiful them.
  5. And, likewise we are encouraged to not worry and to enter into a lifestyle that is distinct from the culture that we are surrounded by. Rather, we are to *“seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*” (verse 33).
  6. So what does all of this have to do with giving? Why aren’t we more naturally generous and giving?
  7. We all admire great examples of generosity. We all appreciate being the recipients of great generosity. Yet, many of us freeze before becoming generous ourselves. Why is that? Why, if generosity is noble and welcome, is it not more evident in our lives? What stops us from giving? What freezes us?
  8. Well, when I first began to meditate on this sermon, I asked myself, “Of all the objections and reasons that I’ve heard in life about why we shouldn’t give… which one seemed to be the most dominant? Which one has resonated as the most truthful? The most honest? The most “spot-on”?
  9. And then it hit me….
  10. I don’t think I’ve ever really heard anyone make the following statement but I think that it probably is the most basic objection to giving that there is:
  11. I don’t give because…. I’m afraid… I’m not absolutely certain that I can trust God to take care of me… I’m anxious… I fear that when push comes to shove, it will be up to me to provide whatever I need….
  12. And that is why understanding what Jesus’ is trying to convey is so important, so foundational to our understanding of giving. If we grasp the reality of what Jesus is telling us, it will free us from these anxieties. Once we are free of these anxieties, we will be free to give as the Bible instructs us to give.
  13. Let me put it this way: “We serve a Big God that we can trust no matter what”
  14. And… we fail to give generously because we don’t trust that God will provide what we need…
  15. He is Our Creator. He is Our Provider. He is Our Sustainer. All that we have is because He has chosen to give it to us – either through a direct blessing or through enabling us to breathe our next breath. As we seek Him, we can trust Him! For today, and for whatever tomorrows come. And because He has been gracious to us, he expects graciousness in return.

1. An Illustraton of An Intention:
   1. As a Father, I really wanted my three children to get this truth and be free from a life of anxious. There were many ways that I’d reinforce it.
   2. I’d like to invite my son, Alex, to come up and help me show you.
   3. During our dinner meals, I’d often ask them how we got supper. “Mom shopped and cooked. Dad worked and earned. But God had given the strength and the opportunities”
   4. Another way was a rhythm that occurred every Saturday after chores were done.
   5. Kitchen Chair… get the “My Savings Bank”… peel out an allowance that had been earned…
   6. “Alex, who gets the first dollar?” - “God gets the first dollar!”
   7. “Why does God get the first dollar?” – Because all of it is His and I’m thankful He lets me use it.
   8. Who gets the next dollar? - The Bank. Who gets the rest? I do
   9. And you are free to share that with someone else too.
   10. I wanted it clear to my children that we could **Trust God as owner and provider of all that we have**
   11. And was that anchor was firmly placed into their young hearts THEN I was able to teach them how to respond to that truth as a follower of Jesus.

For my next two encouragements, While the New Testament is full of references to the virtues of giving, there are four main passages in which the Apostle Paul discusses practices of giving: 1 Corinthians 9:1-23; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; and Philippians 4:15-17. I can’t possibly exegete each of them but they will form the basis for my next two encouragements about giving.

Additionally, I do want to properly credit Professor’s Andreas Kostenberger and David A. Croteau for some of the thoughts that I’m going to share with you.

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #2: Respond to His generosity with patterns of biblical giving (10 Min):**

My next encouragement is this: We should respond to God’s generosity with patterns of biblical giving. What I mean is this. There are characteristics to the approaches that we should take as we organize ourselves around the practice of biblical giving.

1. Give Systematically:
   1. For example, as Christians, we should give systematically – that is, we should give on a regular basis. It should be a normal rhythm of our personal discipleship as a follower of Jesus Christ. This routine may be weekly, or bi-monthly, or monthly – but there should be some kind of a routine.
   2. In his letter to the church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul is writes in the sixteenth chapter:
   3. *Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.* [1 Corinthians 16:1-2]
   4. He is encouraging them to practice benevolent giving through a collection that he is taking that will benefit believers trapped in poverty in Jerusalem.
   5. Notice the pattern that he encourages them to use – regular – in this case “the first day of every week”.
   6. There may be several practical reasons for this instruction. For example, it may be that it is easier to give small amounts frequently that larger sums done on a monthly or annual basis. But nevertheless, just as Christians should regularly gather for worship, it appears that Paul directed that Christians should regularly give also. It is worth noting that this direction was not only for the Christians gathered in Corinth but that He had also given this direction to the many churches gathered throughout the province of Galatia.
   7. For some of us, we give whenever we come to church or attend. Is that systematic? Perhaps. Perhaps not. When you are not physically here, are you still setting aside your wealth as an act of worship and then offering it when you do return? Then yes, that would be systematic.

* 1. I encourage you, like Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth and Galatia, to be prepared to systematically give in response to God’s generosity to you.

1. Give Proportionally:
   1. In this same passage, we can see that Paul also challenged Christians to give proportionally – that is, to give according to your ability or as he put it in verse 2 - “*as he may prosper…”.*
   2. This giving should be in keeping with a household’s income. The amount to be set aside depended upon the degree to which the giver had been prospered.
   3. This is echoed by Paul in a later letter to the Corinthians where he acknowledges their gift and remarks that they *“gave according to their means”.* (2 Corinthians 8:2-3)
   4. It is interesting to note that no percentage of giving is described.
   5. This would have been a perfect place for the Apostle Paul to teach about tithing and yet it doesn’t enter into the description offered *Why is that?*
   6. **Sidebar on Tithing:** If you’ve been around Jon Chasteen long enough, you’ve probably heard him walk us through the “Six-Act Drama of Scripture”. This is a way of viewing the “Story of Redemption” as a sort of play with Acts and Scenes.
      1. In Act 1 – God’s Kingdom is established in Creation.
      2. In Act 2 – There is rebellion in the Kingdom and through Adam & Eve, there is the Fall.
      3. In Act 3 – God begins His plan of Redemption. He chooses Israel as His people, gives them a home in Palestine, and creates a relationship with them that includes Sabbath, a temple, sacrifices, and tithing – all as foreshadows of the kingdom that will be ushered in by King Jesus in Act 4.
      4. In Act 4 – Jesus comes and accomplishes the Redemptive Story – God is reconciled to man through the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Those foreshadows, including the strict 10% and more tithing of the Old Testament, are fully replaced in light of the One who they foreshadowed. The Kingdom has come and the strict requirements of the Law are replaced by the generous responsibilities of Grace.
      5. We are in Act 5 – spreading the news of King Jesus throughout the world while we anticipate the Return of King Jesus and the completion of the Redemption Story with a New Creation in Act 6.
      6. And while we look back to the Old Testament to understand the lessons available about the coming King Jesus and the principles of His Kingdom, we no longer remain bound to the strict adherence of those elements of foreshadowing.
      7. We no longer maintain a strict Sabbath for Jesus is our Sabbath.
      8. We no longer go to temple for the Body of Christ is the temple of God.
      9. We no longer sacrifice animals for the sacrifice of the cross was all-sufficient.
      10. And, we no longer tithe 10% as a requirement for we are now free to be even more generous in our response to God’s grace.
   7. According to Paul, if anyone has been prospered greatly, he should give a large amount. He should not be limited by a mere 10%. And, if one has prospered only a little, a smaller gift is completely acceptable.
   8. As I state this, I do realize that some of you here this morning are in difficult circumstances. Perhaps, you are a college student and believe that you cannot give right now. Or perhaps, you are someone that is struggling with large amounts of debt – consumer debt, mortgage debt, or student loans. You just don’t see how you can give.
   9. Well, first, know that we are going to address principles for addressing these situations next week. For this week, this principle of proportionality should help you to think about giving.
   10. While it is true that you are under constraint, humble yourself before God and ask him what He might have you to share – given your current reality. It has been my experience that the answer is rarely nothing. There is most often at least a small, proportionate gift that when given releases the grip of anxiety upon us and declares God’s ownership and provision.
   11. I encourage you, like Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth and Galatia, to be prepared to honestly assess your bounty and then give proportionally in response to God’s generosity to you.
2. Give Intentionally:
   1. As followers of Jesus Christ, we should give intentionally in order to meet a genuine need.
   2. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he wrote that they had responded with generous giving to advance the kingdom of God through Paul’s gospel efforts:
      1. *14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 15 And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit* [Phil 4:14-17]
   3. Their efforts had not been borne out of guilt or merely to soothe a pressing request. Rather, their giving was deliberate – an act of partnership. They saw the “big picture” and they determined to put their money where there mouth was.
   4. This is the kind of giving that occurs when members and regular attenders of Redemption Hill Church grasp our vision to “reach Greater Medford, and Massachusetts, and North America, and even to world with the good news of Jesus Christ”.
   5. This is the kind of giving that occurs when we not only mouth the words that we “exist to glorify God by living out his mission as a community transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ” but we embrace that mission through the intentional giving necessary to support our budget and resource our strategies.
   6. Again, in his second letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul references this kind of giving when he highlights the giving of the churches in Macedonia. Those believers had heard about the relief efforts for the Jerusalem church and they determined to respond with intentionality. In fact, they were literally, *“begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-- 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. 2 Corinthians 8:4*
   7. They had connected the dots… followed the logic of a gospel need and a gospel respond. And so they gave with great deliberateness.
   8. The Elders of RHC applaud generosity offered to many noble efforts going on outside these church walls. However, we do believe that the local church should be the intentional priority of giving for it is as the gathered community of faith that we have the biggest impact upon our culture as we act together upon our mission..
   9. I encourage you, like Paul encouraged the Christians in Phillipi, to be prepared to give intentionally in response to God’s generosity to you.
3. Give Sacrificially (Generously):
   1. Paul went on to commend those Macedonian believers because not only did they give with intentionality but they gave sacrificially.
   2. As he wrote to the Corinthians about the example of the churches in Macedonia, he put it like this:
      1. *We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.*
      2. *3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means*… [2 Corinthians 8:1-3]
   3. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to give generously.
   4. And, part of the equation for determining our true giving potential is to equip ourselves with one very simple yet powerful question.
   5. When considering our lifestyle, as 21st Century North American Christians, “How much is enough?”
   6. Not “How much is enough to give?”. Rather, “How much is enough to keep?”
   7. Scholar George Davis puts it this way, *“Sacrificial giving is measured, not by what is given, but by what remains”.*
   8. I’m concerned to often the focus of our attention is on the wrong question.
   9. We assume that everything that comes into our possession has been ear-marked for our personal benefit.
   10. All-too-infrequently do we even consider that the wealth that God runs through our fingers may actually be for someone else.
   11. To borrow a useful image, maybe in our financial stewardship we have been called to be an Aircraft Carrier rather than a Submarine – maybe we are to hold our hands open as money comes in and money goes out – for kingdom purposes – rather than holding our hands clenched tight in fear of the unknown.
   12. When addressing the Philippians, the Apostle Paul understood sacrificial giving and he didn’t fear it… he was not anxious… Under the mighty hand of God the Father… God the Creator… God the Provider… he stated:
       1. *“For I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”*
   13. And so he was free to be sacrificial and he was free to encourage others to be sacrificial in their patterns of giving.
   14. I encourage you, like Paul encouraged the Christians in Phillipi, to be prepared to give sacrificially in response to God’s generosity to you.

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #3: Respond to His generosity with attitudes of biblical giving (10 Min):**

My third and final encouragement is this: We should respond to God’s generosity with attitudes of biblical giving. What I mean is this. There are characteristics to the heart-conditions that we manifest as we participate in the patterns of biblical giving.

1. Give Voluntarily:
   1. Giving should be voluntary. In other words, giving should be done out of one’s free volition.
   2. Again, in his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul addresses the gift that they are preparing for the relief of Jerusalem. He writes:
      1. *5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction. 6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 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.* [2 Corinthians 9:5*-8]*
   3. A willing gift… not as an exertion… sow bountifully… not reluctantly or under compulsion…
   4. What is one of the most common complaints that you hear about churches today?
   5. “They only want your money”.
   6. As a Pastor, I absolutely H-A.T-E that accusation.
   7. May it never be said about Redemption Hill Church.
   8. Week-after-week I stand before you as lead us our response to God in worship through giving.
   9. I hope that you never, ever, ever put one dollar into the collection basket because you felt guilted by me or anyone else into giving.
   10. Don’t get me wrong. I believe that the Bible clearly teaches that the rhythm of stewardship through giving is absolutely essential to real spiritual growth and worship of who God is…. But my prayer is that any giving is always done in with a level of willingness.
   11. If you feel any pressure, may it only be the conviction of the Holy Spirit convincing you of the marvelous work of Christ for you and for the world.
   12. May it never be guilt or pressure brought about through manipulation or coersion.
       1. Sidebar: Manipulation or Implied Guilt and Pressure
   13. Earlier in Chapter 8, Paul had insisted that just as the Macedonians had “begged” to participate in the Jerusalem relief effort, the Corinthians were urged to follow through in their giving but,
       1. *8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine*. [2 Corinthians 8:8]
   14. In fact, Paul told the Philippians that their infectious willingness to give left him, “
       1. *“…well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. [Phil 4:18]*
   15. Have you ever considered that each time you voluntarily release your wealth in generosity that its aroma is a delight to God himself?
   16. And so, I encourage you, like Paul encouraged the Christians in Phillipi and Corinth, to be prepared to give voluntarily in response to God’s generosity to you.
2. Give Cheerfully:
   1. Giving should be done in a cheerful manner. This does not mean that the giver is not aware of the many other opportunities that the monies could fund. Rather, this kind of giving responds with a deep appreciation of God’s grace. This deep appreciation in turn prompts us to give “cheerfully”.
   2. Again, the Apostle Paul links both voluntary giving with cheerful giving:
      1. *7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* [2 Corinthians 9:8]
   3. This echoes Proverb 22:8 - *“God loves [or blesses] a cheerful and generous man”.*
   4. It is always interesting to me when I run across a brother or sister in Christ who demonstrates tremendous cheerfulness and generosity as they give up their time in service to others but fail to transfer that cheerfulness and generosity to actually giving up their wealth. I often hear them say, “I give my time. God doesn’t really need my money. My time is my wealth”. It actually sounds quite pious. But let me be clear. The Scripture encourages cheerfulness be a characteristic of both forms of giving. We are to be cheerful givers of our time – yes. But we are to be cheerful givers of our wealth as well
   5. I encourage you, like Paul encouraged the Christians in Phillipi and Corinth, to be prepared to give cheerfully in response to God’s generosity to you.
3. Give Motivated by Love (Obedience/Love/Equality/Blessings):
   1. And finally, our motivation for giving should be love – a kind of love that recognizes the needs of others with an eye to pleasure from God as we obey His commands and reflect His character.
   2. To the Corinthians, Paul put it like this:
      1. *9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* [2 Corinthians 8:9]
   3. What is Paul talking about? Well, he’s talking about nothing less than the gospel itself.
   4. We know that Jesus Christ is the greatest gift of all; motivated by the greatest love of all.
      1. *16 "For God so loved the world, that he* ***gave*** *his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him* [John 3:16-17]
   5. God loved and so he gave – extravagantly gave! And just as Jesus died for the sins of others, likewise believers should give of themselves out of love. And this should rightfully include our wealth.
   6. We should give so that the needs of other people are met – either directly or indirectly through the church. In fact, we should pray that God would bless us more so that we can in turn bless others more with our generosity.
   7. Giving from a place of love reminded me of a story. Frankly, I’m not certain that this is a true story but it will definitely serve to make my point.
      1. A number of years ago, a volunteer at a local hospital got to know a little girl named Liz who was suffering from a rare and serious disease.
      2. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her 5-year old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness.
      3. With his family present, the doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and gently asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister.
      4. This volunteer saw the little boy hesitate for only a moment before taking a deep breath and bravely saying, "*Yes I'll do it if it will save her*."
      5. As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, reflecting the smiles of everyone present as the benefits of the transfusion became evident in his sister.
      6. Eventually, the little boy’s face grew pale, his smile faded, and he became somber.
      7. The little boy looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "*Will I die right away, or how soon?"*
      8. The room was stunned in silence as it became clear to all present that the boy had misunderstood the doctor.
      9. For that little boy had thought that he would have to give his sister all of his blood in order to save her.
      10. And, he was prepared to do it.
   8. That is the kind of heart that God asked us to bring to this grace of giving. As a practical issue, He doesn’t ask that we give it all away - anymore than anyone expected the little boy to give away all of His blood. It’s clear that he needed some to sustain his own life.
   9. But God does ask that we are prepared within in heads and hearts to do it – if asked.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS (7 Minutes):**

1. Final Exhortation:
   1. As the Worship Team rejoins me on the platform, I’d like to remind us about our Main Point for this morning:
      1. When we trust God as the owner and provider of all that we have, we are free to respond with the patterns and attitudes of biblical giving.
   2. We give because God first gave to us.
   3. Our giving is motivated by thanks to God for what he has done for us in the gospel.
   4. Thus, our giving is modeled after the gospel:
      1. We can be free from anxiety and stress knowing that we have a Big God and that we can trust Him no matter what.
      2. We can be free to give systematically and proportionally and intentionally and sacrificially.
      3. And, we can be free to give voluntarily and cheerfully and motivated by love.
      4. These should be the marks of our giving.
2. Invitation to Respond:
   1. Do you remember those envelopes that you received earlier during the sermon?
   2. I’d like you to take them out and answer this question.
   3. What did you do to earn or deserve those envelopes? Nothing, right? You simply came and it was provided to you.
   4. Now, I’d like you to open them. (Pause)
   5. You should find three $1 bills. I have personally given them to you voluntarily… cheerfully… and motivated by love. When God put this idea on my heart, I was thrilled to put this thought into action and as a result, you’ve been blessed with something that you didn’t strive for and didn’t even really expect.
   6. So let me ask you? “Who gets the First Dollar?”
      1. “Alex Reddy… Who gets the First Dollar?” (Pause) [Hold up a $1 bill]
      2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_... Who gets the First Dollar?” (Pause) That’s right….
      3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_... Who gets the First Dollar?” (Pause) That’s right….
      4. Redemption Hill Church… Who gets the First Dollar?” That’s right…
   7. If that is the response of your heart today…. If it is your desire to respond to God’s ownership and provision of all that we have, then after I pray, I want you to be bold… I’ll invite you to get up out of your seat, walk up to this platform, and deposit that dollar as an act of commitment, then return to your seat and continue to meditate in your heart about the implications of your response. Please note: This is not our regular morning offering. We’ll do that act of worship soon enough. Rather, this is a chance for you do something immediately based on whatever convictions that the Spirit of the Living God has stirred in your hearts.
   8. I encourage you, regardless of your past history of giving, commit yourself to the patterns and attitudes of giving that we’ve discussed this morning.
   9. As Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, “*6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”*
   10. Let us Pray: *Heavenly Father, ....*
   11. Invitation to Respond:
       1. If you desire to answer the question, “Who Gets the First Dollar?”.
   12. Worship Team plays lightly “My Reward”.
3. Transition to Final Song:
   1. When the “collection” is done, Micah and the Worship Team will go invite everyone to stand and join in on the fuller “Song of Response”
   2. “My Reward” – lead by Micah & The Worship Team
   3. Straight into the General Offering; by Jon Chasteen