

Text: Matthew 6.19-21
St Stephen's

June 4th, 2006
Sun AM

Keys to the Treasure

This summer we are going to look at the **issues of giving**, all kinds of giving – giving of our treasures and our talents and our time. We are going to have some exciting special events along through these weeks where we can get out and give... And I think God is leading us to start a special new mission in the city of Pittsburgh – more on that in the weeks to come. This is **a summer of giving**. And it is going to be an adventure.

We're going to call the series through the summer... **New Message Series**: "He Gives, We Give Back." Because giving always starts with God. Always. Did you know that giving is mentioned in the Bible over 2300 times, far more than other famous words like love and believe and faith and hope. Interesting, isn't it? Because God is a giver, the best giver in the universe. So every week we talk about giving we are going to **start with God's giving, His grace-giving**. Let's start with this verse...

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

2 Co 9:10-11 (NIV)

Look at the words, 'supply', 'increase', and 'enlarge'. Look at the phrase, 'You will be made rich in every way...' From the beginning to the end of the Bible you have this said about God. He is a giver. He always gives. He gives good things, natural gifts, daily supplies, supernatural gifts, lasting for eternity. Now look at the 'so that' in vs 11. There is a purpose to his giving. He gives so that we might give back. "so that you can be generous on every occasion". God gives; you receive. You give back; He receives. And He gives more, multiplying the gift back to you in the form of additional supply. Look at the graphic on your outlines...



Say "He Gives, We Give Back." **This is the circle of giving** and giving back. It is a circle of life, a circle of love, a circle of joy. **God** is the one who always **launches** the circle. Always. Because it is a circle of grace. You could never deserve to get into this circle. You could never earn your way in. But from the moment you open your heart to Jesus and give him your life, He pulls you in. You want to live in this circle. Inside this circle of giving is the only place you can live. If you step outside it, you will die. Say "He Gives, We Give Back."

This is **a summer of giving**. These next few weeks we are going to talk about your **treasures** – and then later in the summer we are going to talk about our **time** and our **talents**. And we are going to invite you to live inside the Circle of Giving. And it is going to be an adventure. These first few weeks we are going to follow along a bible study written by Pastor Randy Alcorn, a small, powerful book called: **The Treasure Principle**. The Vestry has read it, so have I, and the staff is reading it. We have bought 400 copies of it, and you can get yourself a copy and read it in your family or by yourself or in your small group. We're reading it in our family. It's available for "A Buck a Book" in the lobby after worship. Would you get it and read it?

Did you know that 15% of everything Jesus said was linked to the subject of money – more than all he taught on heaven and hell combined! Why? Because there is a fundamental **connection between our faith and our finances**. So Jesus taught a lot on money. **Famous parables**: about invested talents, lost coins and buried treasure. **Personal encounters**: w. rich young rulers & widows giving copper coins. **Famous one liners**: like 'you can not serve God and money' and 'It is better to give than receive'. Again and again he taught on money. When

you ask what the Bible teaches about money, you always have to start with this...

Everything is Given by God and Belongs to God

Psalm 50

"For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine... the world and all that is in it is mine." Psa 50:10-12

King David:

"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all."

1 Chron 29:11

The Open Hand *"Yours, O Lord..."*

There is a very powerful thing that happens when you take all you have and hold it in your hands before God and say, "Yours, O Lord". You acknowledge him as the rightful owner of all you have. You stop saying, 'mine!' It lightens the load on your shoulders. It changes your perspective. Bp Stanway used to say to us, take all you have and hold it in open hands before the Lord... so he doesn't have to pry your fingers off it if he wants it! Anyone else have a few broken fingers around here?

Well, if we are not owners, than what are we? We are servants...

We Are His Stewards

We have been entrusted by God with the care and oversight of what is his. Jesus said...

It will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them... 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things...'

Mt 25:14, 19, 21 (NIV)

That is our charge, our task, and our opportunity. If we do well, he says we will be put in charge of many things. Wow! As we go through these

next weeks we are going to note **6 Keys to God's Treasures**. All of them come from Randy Alcorn's Bible study. Here's the first:

Key #1: GOD OWNS EVERYTHING. I'M HIS MONEY MANAGER.

We are the managers of the assets God has entrusted – not given – to us.

So how do we do that? We are going to listen to Jesus today on some **investment strategy on these assets God has put into our care**, and look at one of the paragraphs from the Sermon on the Mount... Matt 6:19-20

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Let's look at it carefully. *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.* Why not? Well because they **won't last**. And they **don't satisfy**. It is the **impermanence** and the **undependability** of wealth that makes trusting in it so dangerous.

R Alcorn, “It's not just that wealth might be lost; it's because wealth will always be lost.”

Analogy: living in the south at the end of the civil war with a lot of Confederate money. It will only be good for a while. What do you do? If you are wise, you will invest it or exchange it for something that will be of value after the war is over. You have to switch investment vehicles. How do you do that?

store up for yourselves treasures in heaven

Here's how I would phrase it: **Use what won't last to build what will last.**

My lifestyle **won't last**.

My cars, my clothes, my stuff...

My looks...

My bank accounts...

Don't be heavy investors in these things.

What will last?

People last. **Friendships** last. **Love** lasts. Invest in them.

The **gospel** lasts. Reaching out to lost people lasts. Forever That's a good place to be a heavy investor.

God's purposes last.

God's family will last

Mercy and compassion for hurting people lasts.

John Wesley said, "I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity."

C.T. Studd, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last."

Use what won't last to invest in what will last, to build what will last.

But right there we have a **'heart check'**... There are a lot of **heart-blocks to giving**... We love money. (Politician caught taking \$25,000 'I love money...') We think money will give us power and fame and influence. We think if we give we will lose control of our lives. We don't believe God's promises or trust his word... People think we are crazy if we are generous. We have real **fears** about giving. It is so easy to want to live with open hands, but to almost automatically close your fingers again.

Story: Young boy who was going early to Sunday School at church just down the block. His Mom sent him off with 2 quarters, one for the offering and one for some ice cream after church. As he ran across the road, he stumbles, fell and dropped a quarter, which rolled over a storm sewer grate and fell in. Gone. "Darn!", he said. "Lord, I dropped your quarter.!" **How quickly those fingers close.**

Did you notice that giving issues are heart issues? That is what Jesus taught. Heart issues are real, and are at the very center of our lives and our faith and our finances.

My Heart, My Faith, and My Wallet are Linked

So how do you begin to get past these heart issues? From our passage in Matt 6 Jesus says this...

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matt 6:21 (NIV)

Or, looking at your outline, let's say it like this...

Key #2 MY HEART ALWAYS GOES WHERE I PUT GOD'S MONEY.

Watch what happens when you reallocate your money from temporal things to eternal things.

When you take the resources God has put into your care and begin to invest it in what will last - God's love and God's gospel and God's purposes, your heart changes. You change...

- You become a **worshipper** – serving God with your money.
- You **draw closer to God** – because you take a great barrier to faith (money) and make it a servant of your faith. I know people who have been converted by tithing!
- You **become more like Jesus** – because the greatest giver who ever walked the earth is Jesus and when you give to him and for him you become more like him
- You find **freedom** – because giving breaks the hold of covetousness
- You experience the giving of your real Father – the greatest giver in the universe has promised us we can't outgive him, and he promises to supply all your needs
- You begin to **value true riches** – the things that can never be taken from you
- You find a **rising tide of joy in your life**

Because with open hands you receive from God. With open hands you give to God. You are living inside the Circle of Giving.