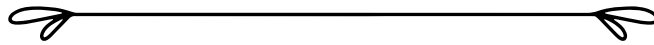


firstfruits



Jesus talks about giving to the poor at least nine times in the gospels. In Proverbs, Scripture commands us to “honor the Lord with our wealth and with the firstfruits of all our produce.” Matthew 25:35-45 teaches us that giving to the poor and honoring the Lord are one in the same: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink... Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

With mass layoffs, record-high inflation, several failing banks, high interest rates on mortgages, stocks and 401ks in the red, student loan payments on the horizon, and much more, giving just might be the last thing on our mind. *“Lord, rent is already so high;” “Don’t you know how high my house’s property taxes are?” “Do you know how much student debt I have after med school?” “I’m already helping my parents out;” “My wedding was so expensive, maybe later;” “I’m behind on my retirement savings according to this calculator;” “My company won’t give me a raise!” “But I’m having a baby soon.” “I don’t even have an emergency fund, and you expect me to give my firstfruits?”*

The firstfruit offering, instituted in Leviticus 23 and detailed in Deuteronomy 26, requires us to give back to God the first (and best) of what He’s given us. And we can’t forget that generosity is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Even if you’re serving on three different ministry teams at church, leading a connect group or journey group, reading and praying every day, and being an excellent spouse, if Jesus were to observe your daily behavior, heart, and attitude, what would he notice? “And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell all that you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure; and come, follow me.’”

You don’t have to go and sell all that you have right now. Just reflect on what or who you really trust in – Do you trust in the available balances of all your savings and retirement accounts? Does that provide you with an unspoken comfort and assurance at the end of each day? Or, does your blood-bought, eternal salvation and future glory secured by Christ ‘s death and resurrection give you peace? May the good news of the Gospel and the joy and friendship Jesus gives you be your motivation for generosity, rather than a mere command in a vacuum to donate your money and resources. After all, can’t take it with ya.

Freely you have received; freely give. – Matthew 10:8