

Give It All Away: Introduction

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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So I know some of you are new today. Many of you, we welcome back the Lakers, which we refer admiring way, those that come between Memorial Day and Labor Day, and I also know we have people watching online. Today I'm going to share a secret with you. It is a top secret. And so you have to promise that you will not share the secret with anybody.

Over the last 8 years that I have had the privilege of being on the stage and sharing what God lays on my heart and even for the past 11 years before that, I have done my best not to talk about money from the stage, except during this series. So those of you that attend here, you may be recognized that, that I try not to talk about money. And that is actually a very hard thing to do. Let me tell you why.

Because in the New Testament, Jesus actually talked more about money than he did about heaven and hell combined, right? Money was a topic of conversation and it's not because money was super important or because it's what we need to talk about. But because he knew, because he created us that money would lead a lot of people away from following him. I also tried to limit talking about money because just like you, I have people in my own family that believe the church is just about money.

It's all they ever talk about. It's all they ever want to talk about. It's all about the money that they can raise. It's just a business. And now whenever I hear this, you need to know that it's saddens my heart. It's not true. Certainly of many of the churches that I know and the ones that I've been a part of, I understand that there are some bad apples out there. We've all heard of the stories. We all know of some of the things that have taken place. But mostly, churches, it's not about the money. It's about the heart.

Now, it obviously takes money to live, but the idea of money is so much more than just money. If you have been here for a while, you may even notice that we don't pass the offering plates anymore. Pre COVID, we did, but since COVID happened, we've not done that anymore. We just have the boxes out in the foyer and we never even make mention of it or talk about it. And we believe that giving financially, as well as of our time and our talents is very important to our spiritual journey.

You see as a church, we have certain guidelines that we allow to direct our living and what we talk about and why we do what we do, and here at fairview, we believe that nothing makes you more like Jesus than when you give. Nothing makes you more like Jesus than when you give, and we're not talking about just money. We're talking about time. We're talking about talents. We're talking about the gifts that God has given you. And so over the next few weeks, we're going to spend some time talking about this.

Through your giving, you have taken care of the sick, the orphan, the poor, the widow, those who are in prison. You have actually done more good for more people than you could ever know. But there are some of you here today or some of you that are watching online or may even hear portions of this on the radio that ask yourself the question, why would you ever give money to people that you don't know? Why would you do that? That seems crazy. And it's a very good question. It doesn't make sense.

Just like in the lyrics of the song we sang, God's kingdom sometimes seems backwards to what the world says is important. So I want to answer that question for you. Why would you ever do that? Why would you give away money to people that you don't even know? Why would you serve people that you don't even know?

And here is the quick and easy answer. We do this because of what Jesus has done for us. That's our motivation. That's what causes us to give of our time and our talents and our gifts.

We know that we are not worthy of God's love for us. We're not worthy of his care for us. We have earned that, but it's a gift that he freely gives to us anyway. And so we are simply responding in kind. We are doing what he has done for us. And by the way, it's fun. That's also why we do it. It's fun. And Jesus receives the praise. But what's the purpose behind this? What is the goal really of this series? Why do we talk about this? What do we want to accomplish?

Well, you need to know that even though I can have an optimistic personality, I fully understand that from what we can do here as a church, you and I are not going to solve world hunger. We're not going to solve poverty. We're not going to fix all of the struggles in the world. I fully understand that. The word says that you are always going to have the poor among you. It's just always going to exist. It's part of living in a fallen world.

As much as we would like to, I know that we won't be able to give every nonprofit that we know and every missionary that we know, everything that they need to fulfill their goals. I know we won't be able to support the missionaries. All of those that even we know at a 100% of their financial need, though I know we would love to do that. I understand that financially, we are not going to be able to do that. But I do believe that we will get to play a small part.

In supporting some of the nonprofits in our community that are taking care of the poor, the orphan and the widow, I think we can play a small part and supporting our missionaries, not just financially, but with prayer to be an encouragement to them. Many of you don't have the privilege that I have of talking with the missionaries talking with these nonprofits. Sometimes handing them the check personally and saying, you know what? We just want you to know that we appreciate what you're doing. We believe God has called us to do this.

And so we want to play a part in that and how much of an encouragement that can be. I believe that if we give together that we can accomplish way more as a group than we can individually. I also believe that in giving, we are blessed. We are reminded to grow in our journey and our relationship with Jesus Christ. We're reminded that nothing is ours. That it all belongs to God. I know that when we give from personal experience, our hearts are changed.

And that's what it's all about. You see, I believe that there is going to be a day when we are going to stand before our loving, Heavenly Father, and he is going to look at us and he's going to say, Joel, what did you do with the riches that I gave to you? How are we going to answer that question? What did we do with the riches that God has given to us? So let me pray and then we're going to answer that question together. Heavenly Father, I know that talking about money is not fun for me.

I know that there are some that are maybe even here today or watching online or listening on the radio that today is just a confirmation. Look, I finally decided to go to church. I finally decided to tune in and they're talking about money. I knew that's what they were going to talk about. Father, I pray that we would see behind the money conversation to our hearts. That you are concerned about our hearts. That we would be softened to hear from you, to hear from your spirit today, and also that we would be challenged.

To love others the way that you have loved us. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Now, before I prayed, I left you with this question. What did you do with the riches that I gave you? I believe that one day we're gonna be held accountable for that. And for some of you, maybe you're like me, and you've heard that question, you say, well, pastor, I'm a little offended by that. I'm not rich. What are you talking about? The riches that I have given you. I don't have all of this money.

You're not talking about me. You must be talking about somebody else. I want to share with you some statistics that if you've been here over the years, these haven't changed. They're not new, but at least for me,

they're a good reminder. To understand where we actually live, what we have and how we kind of fit in with the rest of the world. So listen to some of these statistics. If you make \$30,000 a year, which I don't think many people would say that makes you wealthy in our country.

If you make \$30,000 a year, you are in the top 5% of money earners in the world. That means you make more money than 95% of other people. If you live in a house that has electricity, running water is heated in the winter and cooled in the summer, you are actually in the top 2% of the world.

The top 2%, if you just have those things that we would consider our normal things in our world, if you have a vehicle, a cell phone, a TV, just one, a microwave, and a bed to sleep in, you are considered rich. Just those things. Many of the things that we take as the basic, what we would call necessities of life, but they're not necessities. It's hard for me to believe this, to understand this and to comprehend this, but the statistics continue to be true.

I've looked it up many, many times and tried to try to improve it wrong, but I just can't. Over half of the world lives on less than \$2 a day. Over half of the world lives on less than \$2 a day. Now I know I could have saved a lot of time in this message and just said, trust me, you're rich, okay? You might not feel like it, but you are. The problem is we all compare ourselves to the wrong people, don't we? We often look to those people that make more than we have. And you say, you know what? I'm not rich.

You may not fly in private jets. Drive around in a Lamborghini, have two or three or four vacation homes, but you are rich when compared to the rest of the world. You are, at the very least, blessed financially by having the opportunity to grow wealth simply because you were born in America. You're blessed simply because of that. Now, I don't share these statistics with you to make you feel guilty. That's not my goal. I share these statistics with you to empower you.

I share them with you so that you can be prepared for what am I going to do with what God has given me. I want to prepare you for that question. What did you do with the riches? I gave you. And some of you might think to yourself pastor, you're just making all of this up. Why are we talking about money? What does this have to do with my faith and with my life? Did Jesus ever really talk about this? And I want to look at a section of scripture in Matthew chapter 25 that can be a very concerning section of scripture. Jesus is going to use a parable.

He's going to use a metaphor to share what the end is going to look like. What that conversation is going to look like between us and him once we pass from this world. And so we're going to begin in Matthew 25, starting in verse one, and Jesus says this. When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne, all of the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people, one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Now, if you're like me and you were raised in the city, this makes no sense to you so far, right? Jesus is going to come back and then he's going to separate people like you separate sheep from a goats. I don't know why you do that or you should do that, but apparently that's something that they do. So he's using this analogy for us. And we read that he is going to put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. So we see, this is what I can understand from what's taking place so far in this parable. The story that when Jesus returns, he's going to come in his glory.

The angels are going to come with him. And at that time, human beings, you and I are going to be separated into sheep and goats. We're going to fit in one of these two categories. Now, I'm not sure either is a good option. Again, being raised in the city, I'm really hoping this is just a metaphor because I think both of them stink, all right? So I don't want to be a sheep or a goat. But what is going to be the deciding factor? That's the question that I ask when I read this, well, how do I know if I'm a sheep or I'm a goat?

What's going to determine the separation? There's only two categories. And as you continue to read through this, trust me, you are going to want to know what allows you to be a sheep or a goat because the destiny of each is very different. So this is important. So we go on in verse 34. Jesus tells us that then the king will say to those on his right, the sheep. Come, you who are blessed by my father, take your inheritance, the kingdom, which has been prepared for you since the creation of the world. I go, okay, this sounds pretty good.

This is a good beginning. I definitely want to be on his right. I want to be one of the sheep. I want to be that person that can inherit this kingdom that has been prepared for me since the beginning of the world since the creation of the world, something has been prepared. How do I get there? That's my question. Okay, that sounds good, Jesus. That's what I want. I want to be a sheep. What do I got to do to end up there? That sounds like a good destiny. So we go on in verse 35. This is his answer. For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.

I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me. And at that point, I just paused. I remember reading this for the first time. I said, okay, so when Jesus comes, I gotta take care of him. When he's hungry, when he's thirsty, when he needs clothes, I gotta be there to watch out for him. When he's a stranger, I have to take care of him. And when he's in prison and I just was like, wait, pause, that doesn't seem right. Why is Jesus in prison?

He's supposed to be good. What is he doing in jail? I'm supposed to take care of him. What does that even mean? How am I supposed to do all of those things? And I'm glad that Jesus is going to address that. They're going to ask the same question. Those that were there, the righteous, the sheep, those that were on his right are going to look at him and they will answer him. Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes? And close you, clothe you.

When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? It's a logical question. And then the king will reply. Here is the answer. Truly I tell you whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. I remember reading that story for the first time and it was like a lightbulb moment in my life. Jesus has a heart for the under resourced. Jesus has a heart for those who live in poverty.

I can't tell you how many times I've had conversations with people that come into the church with neighbors with friends with family, and they were talking about God and we're talking about faith and why I believe what I believe and why they believe what they believe, and there's often the struggle that many of them deal with and they'll say something to me like this. If there is a God, why does he let people go hungry and starve and die of malnutrition? They'll say if there's a God and you say he's a loving God, why do I turn on the news and look at the Internet?

And I see all of these bad things that are happening. Why are people starving? Why is it that people are sick? Why is there malnutrition in the world? I'm not God. I have my own failures and thoughts, but I'm at least loving enough that if I wouldn't allow people to starve, I wouldn't allow people to have that happen. And I oftentimes want to tell them and I don't. I just reminded myself of this. That this isn't on God. It's on you. He made a plan so that wouldn't happen.

He made a plan so people wouldn't starve. They wouldn't die of malnutrition. The plan was that you would use your wealth to help them, but you didn't. And so now they suffer. That's hard to hear, isn't it? We are God's answer to the hungry and the downtrodden in our world. That's not set in a prideful way. Like, oh, look what we have and look what we can do. God doesn't need us to fulfill that. He could do something else.

But we are God's plan. What happens if we aren't obedient? People starve. People go hungry. There's malnutrition. Jesus goes on in verse 41. Then he will say to those on his left, these are the goats. Depart from

me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink.

I was a stranger and you did not invite me in. I needed clothes and you did not clothe me. I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. And I'm sure with a little more trepidation in their voice, a little more fear in their voice. Those that were on his left will answer. But but lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger and needing clothes or sick or in prison and did not help you? We didn't witness that. Had we seen you, we would have taken care of you, but Jesus will reply.

Truly, I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. And look at the consequence. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. I remember reading that and thinking, I don't want to be a goat, right? I don't want to be on Jesus left. I don't want to be that person. If we don't take care of the hungry and the thirsty, if we don't take care of the under resourced scripture says, Jesus is saying we will be thrown into the eternal fire.

Now, another quick side note here, I just have to take a break. So we hear the right thing. As we read that scripture, did you notice who the eternal fire was prepared for? Was it prepared for you and me, or even for those that don't take care of the hungry and the sick? Is that why the eternal fire was prepared? No, it was prepared for who? The devil and the fallen angels. That's why hell was created. You see, again, I have conversations with people. I just talked to too many people about faith and religion. So I hear all this stuff.

There are even churches now that don't believe in hell. They just say there's a loving God. Why would he send people to hell? Why would a loving God create hell so that human beings could end up in hell for all of eternity? That doesn't sound very loving. And again, I have to point out these verses and say, no, hell wasn't created for human beings. How was created for the devil and for the fallen angels? And the people that end up there are those that choose to go there because they don't want to make Jesus their lord. And so they want to do their own thing.

And so God says, fine, you go ahead and do your own thing, and you will get to spend an eternity without me because that's what you want. And they don't realize how bad it is until after they're there. That's what hell is. Now let me also take a moment and explain something so we don't get the wrong message. You and I do not inherit eternal life because we help the poor the orphan and the widow. All right? That's not what allows us to gain our Salvation. It is not our actions that save our souls.

It is the change in our heart that saves us. It's submitting to God as lord and savior. It's about our faith and it's about our trust. What happens is our changed hearts as God's spirit enters into us, spurs us towards good deeds. It's always all about the heart. It is our changed heart that then causes us to have compassion. For others. That's why sometimes his kingdom seems backwards.

You see there are some people that I run into that I have conversations with that are passionate about humanitarian efforts. I run into those people as you do mission work and as you talk to nonprofit organizations, they have a heart for the under resourced, but some of those people's hearts are still hard towards God. It is not our efforts that gain us our Salvation is a softened heart towards the Holy Spirit.

It is our heart towards God that matters, but the natural outflow of outflow of our hearts will be to be concerned about what concerns God. So what do I want you to do with all this information? This is just the beginning. We're going to talk next week about this and then June 11th is actually our given all the way Sunday. This is what I want you to do as we prepare for June 11th. I want you to take some time and I want you to reflect on the condition of your heart. That's what I want you to do.

Do the things that concern God concern you. Does your heart break for the loss? Does your heart break for the under resourced? Do you think about the poor, the orphan, and the widow? Do you do your best to love

the under resourced and long to use the riches that God has provided you to provide for them? And if you do help the under resourced, what's your motivation? Is it for recognition? Is it out of guilt?

Is it just because you feel like it's the right thing to do, even though you don't want to do it? Motivation matters. It's important. In a few weeks, again, on June 11th, we're going to have our give it all away Sunday. And I need you to know if you're new here. We don't have a dollar amount goal that we have. Instead, we have a participation goal. We want everyone to be involved. We want 100% engagement. We want you to give because you understand what God has given to you.

We want your hearts to be in line with God's heart. Our whole goal as a church is to help people take their next step towards Jesus. And we believe this is just one of the ways that he does that because he's done it for us. He's done it for me. I also want you to know that talking about money is not easy for me. It's not easy for me to be the person up front talking to you about it because I have all the conversations. I know the stereotypes. I know that the people that are hardened by these types of messages.

And this is the only time that I talk about money. And even though I remind you, we give away a 100%, it's the only reason that I'm okay talking about it. Because we don't keep a penny of it. So when I ask you to give, it's not to this. It's to help outside of this. And I need to remind you it's a secret. Should I tell you that again? It's a secret. It's a secret. If you're watching online, it's a secret. As we interviewed some candidates for some positions that we had open at the church, some spots, ministry positions.

We've had people in the community that we have interviewed that don't attend fairview missionary church and one of the questions that somehow came up of conversation. And I asked them, have you heard about give it all away Sunday? And every single one of them said no. And I said, good. I'm glad. I mean, you guys are doing a good job. Keeping it a secret. Other churches don't know about it. Other people don't know about it. And that is the goal is that it's done in secret because it's not about a pat on the back. It's not about pride. It's because we believe you are never more like Jesus than when you give.

Why? Because of what he has given to us. I always get excited about this week. Just spend some time in prayer. Maybe as your family, if you have young kids, this is a great opportunity to teach them about giving and loving others. Again, we're all born selfish. We're all born just thinking about ourselves. It's just a good opportunity to begin to think outward and about other people. Let me close in prayer. How many father again, I know it's a difficult topic.

I knew it would probably be quiet in here today. It's hard. Father, I need to be reminded of this often. You know that. And so every year, it's why we take time to say, you know what? Let's think about others. Let's not get caught up in all of the things of this world and that this world has to offer that are fleeting that are temporary. Help us to make sure that our hearts are in line with your heart. What's saddens you with sadness? What gives you joy would give us joy?

Continue to transform us into your image and into your likeness. So that we can point others towards you. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.