

Called To Give

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

June 4, 2023

So we are leading up to one of my favorite Sundays of the year. I have what I would say are three favorite Sundays here at fairview missionary church. The first two will not surprise you. Probably my favorite service out of the whole year is Easter Sunday. Again, shouldn't surprise you as a pastor. I love as we gather and we celebrate the resurrection of our lord and savior, Jesus Christ. I love the excitement that is in the room that day as we gather with that celebration and with that truth to proclaim, I also love it because it's around springtime.

And so we know that we're getting out of winter and we're moving into spring and summer, which I obviously love and enjoy. My second favorite service is our Christmas Eve service. There's something about standing outside the doors that evening on Christmas Eve, the excitement of the next morning, as we're gonna get up with friends and family and spend time opening gifts as we celebrate the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ.

One of the things that I wanted to bring back when I became lead pastor was the candlelight service that point in the service where we have our candles and we sing silent night and it just brings back amazing memories of growing up with my family, standing beside my mom and dad doing that. And so I love those two services. And my third favorite service is the service that we are going to have next week that we call give it all away. This is my third favorite service of the year. And the service is a secret, okay?

You guys know that. Again, if you're watching online, listening on the radio, this is a secret that we don't want to become known in the community. That's part of the fun. And so again, if you're new here visiting your welcome to be part of this conversation, obviously you don't have to get up and leave, but we do ask that you would keep this a secret. That is our goal. Next week, we are going to give away 100% of our offering. That's why we call it our give it all away Sunday. We want to model as a church.

What we believe God is asked of us as individuals in our lives. We believe one of our core values and beliefs here at fairview is that you are never more like Jesus than when you give. You're never more like Jesus than when you give, not just talking about finances because obviously Jesus gave his life. He served others. He gave of his time, his talents, his abilities. And so it's our desire to become more like Christ.

Over the years, we've changed from having a financial goal to now having a participation goal because financially, everybody's at a different spot. And so we say that our goal is 100% participation. We want everyone to be involved. We want everyone to give whatever they feel God has laid on their heart to give, and to give with a sense of joy. One of the neat things that has happened over the years as we've done give it all away Sunday is the following day, Monday.

I begin getting emails and texts and people are saying, what's the final total? How much did we give? And there's just this excitement. And so I want everybody well, not everybody, 'cause I won't be able to respond, okay? But I want to get those emails. I want the excitement of people saying, hey, I was part of that. Maybe I even only gave a dollar or whatever else. But I want to know what did we give? You see, for some people, giving \$10 next week to give away might be the hardest thing they've ever done.

They've never stretched this muscle of giving, and so to the idea of giving something might be hard, that's okay. It might be a step of faith. For other people, giving a check of \$10,000 wouldn't change your life one bit. Nothing would stop. You wouldn't miss a beat. And so for you, there's just different levels there. And neither one is greater or less than, no matter what you give, I want to remind you it will be given away, and we also believe that we can accomplish more together than we ever could apart.

We can accomplish more together than we ever could apart. Now, some of you may be visiting this week or didn't make it last week and you wonder, where do we give this money? What is this money go to? And so I want to clear that up a little bit. We support missionaries with this money. So we have people that are literally spread around the world. People that we give this money to that are sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. We support food pantries here in town. We support homeless shelters.

We support youth organizations that are spreading the love of Jesus Christ with teens, as well as organizations that are training a child up in the ways of the lord, to know who God is, and how much he loves them. As a church, we have strategically partnered with organizations and people who are using their gifts and talents to take care of the orphan, the poor, and the widow.

In the past, we've tried to use some of these funds to do some of these things ourselves, and we quickly came to the conclusion that these organizations are better at doing it than we are. They have more knowledge. They have more expertise. They have more experience in helping these people. They have systems in place. And so as a church, we have intentionally chosen to organize and be partners with those that have the same goal that we do of helping people take their next step toward Jesus.

And so we've intentionally chosen to support those organizations, another model that there's no biblical mandate for. We just had to make a choice, is that as a church, we made the decision to support every single nonprofit organization in our county that is working with that goal of helping people take their next step toward Jesus.

Now, let me tell you the two options that you have here as a church, we could have adopted one or two or three organizations and just given them a large amount of money that really would drive them and allow them to do amazing things, or this is the other option that we say, okay, it's a smaller amount. It's a smaller check, but we want to support every nonprofit that is doing work in the name of Jesus Christ. We chose option number two.

Let me just tell you why in case you have this conversation, we don't want any nonprofit to feel that they are less than another nonprofit that is doing the work in the name of Jesus Christ. All right? We don't want one nonprofit to feel like, oh, well, what they're doing must be better than what we're doing because we don't get any help and people don't support us. And so we have intentionally decided that we are going to help all Christian nonprofits as they are helping people take their next step toward Jesus.

You see, at fairview, if you're visiting us today, we want to be weird. We don't want to be normal. We want to be weird, because normal rarely seems to get it right. I'm going to share with you some statistics that you've all probably heard before if you've ever been a part of give it all away, but these statistics still amaze me because this is normal. This is average. The average church in America gives away 3% of their budget. 3%. Now, that's better than nothing. Don't get me wrong.

But I don't think that's something I want to aim towards. I don't want 3% to be our goal. Because we so strongly believe in this idea of giving. And we want to model it as a church because we believe it's what God has called us to do at fairview. We give away 25% of everything that comes in every year. 25%. That's our goal. That's our desire. Yes, that's because of you guys.

Now, please know, again, if you're listening on the radio this whole thing got a little more confusing when COVID hit and we started doing things online and on the radio. We want to keep this a secret. This is not

tooting our own horn. So if you're hearing this and you're not part of fairview, just erase that part that you just heard, all right? But as a church, those of us that are here, those that are joining us online that are part of our family, I want you to be proud of this. That you are proud of a group of people that are doing our best to model what Christ has called us to do.

You are the ones that allow us to do this. This is us as a group as an organization. Now, I want to share something with you that breaks my heart. I've been in the community now for 19 years. I'm in my 20th year of being in steuben county, living in Angola. And so I have lots of conversations with lots of different people. And I often will ask people what they feel about our church. You know, what do they hear about our church? What do they think about our church?

Not because I want us to be lifted up, but I know that we are supposed to be modeling Christ to the community we live in. And so one of the ways that I can find if we are doing a good job is by asking people in the community, how do you view the church, asking the mayor, asking other churches, business people, those that are under resourced? How do you view fairview missionary church? Can I tell you that one of the number one things that I hear over and over again when they describe fairview missionary church is you are that rich church on the corner.

That's what I hear. It breaks my heart. I hear people say that we are the church that hoards everything for ourselves. I can tell you that humanly speaking on the inside. Now, those people that will personally tell me that don't know I'm the pastor here, obviously, you know, they wouldn't tell me that. I often hear this through other people that say, hey, I was talking about so and so, and they made this comment, and I say, yep, I've heard that plenty of times. They think that we hoard everything for ourselves.

I can tell you humanly speaking, that when I hear that, my initial instinct is to want to defend the church. I want to defend the church. I want to share about everything that we give and everything that we do, but I believe that the spirit that God has put inside of me tells me that that's not my job. My job, our job, is simply to be faithful with what we have been given. Be faithful to what God has asked us to do. And that we remind it.

I have to remind myself about this all time all the time. It's not about the giving as much as it's about the heart behind the giving. It's about our hearts being transformed, recognizing that we give our motivation forgiving is because of what he has given to us. Since I've been in this position as the lead pastor of the church, I try to make this the only time that I talk about money throughout the entire year. I shared with you last week. I know that this is a sensitive topic.

I know it's hard for some people, but we truly can't avoid it if we are going to teach what Jesus taught. I shared with you some numbers last week. I want to share some new ones with you. The Bible actually mentions prayer, a little over 500 times. The Bible talks about faith, a little over 500 times, but did you know that the Bible talks about money over 2000 times? That's shocking to most when they hear that for the first time.

Money is a topic of conversation, in scripture, we probably should talk about it. It means it's important as a follower of Jesus Christ. I should be able to articulate my view of money and what the Bible teaches us about it. And I believe that we can be adults. We can have discussions. We can have conversations about this. You also, if you don't know me that well, you need to know that I am okay if you have a different perspective. I'm okay if you want to talk about that.

My goal in talking about finances and talking about money is not to shame you or make you feel guilty. My goal, my ultimate desire is that as we talk about finances, as we talk about money, that it would draw us all closer to Jesus. The goal is to help you live your best life possible, and we believe that that only happens

when you are following what God has asked us to do. So let's find out what God is asking us to do. We're going to look at scripture, I'm going to choose one of the 2000 today to look at.

All right? Let me pray and then we'll jump in there. Heavenly Father, again, we know that it takes money to live. We understand the system that's in place here, but at the same time, we know that you are so much more concerned with our hearts. And so my prayer this morning, for those of us that are here, those that are listening, those that are watching online is that our hearts would be transformed to look more like you.

That we would be obedient in all areas of our life. All areas of our lives, including the money area, which sometimes can be the most difficult. And so we ask this in Jesus name, amen. Luke, chapter 12, verse 32, Jesus says, do not be afraid, little flock for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. So, sell your possessions and give to the poor, provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out.

A treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. And here is the conclusion of the matter for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Jesus is teaching us something about what it means to be human, how we are created, how we are made. He makes the statement that wherever your heart is, your treasure is probably there, where your treasure is, your heart is there.

You think about those things that are important to you, your treasures are where you spend your time. It's what you think about. And in order to just drive this point home, most of us remember when we first fell in love with our spouse. We first had that love that feeling that emotion and when that happened, they became our treasure. And so since they were our treasure, our heart followed. We wanted to spend time with him or her. You thought about that person all the time. You wanted to make that person feel special.

They were your treasure, your heart followed. You even would go on luxurious dates that you couldn't afford because you wanted to impress them, right? It's what we do. Our treasure will follow what our heart longs after. And so since this is how we are wired, every single one of us is wired this way. It is crucially important that our treasures be in the correct place, or we will suffer greatly. And every one of us has experienced this as well. We treasured something that wasn't lasting.

We treasured something that didn't continue. And so our heart began to get wrapped up around whatever that treasure was and that treasure was lost in our hearts were broken. Here, Jesus tells us to sell our possessions and give to the poor. Some people have asked the question I've asked the question when I've read this. Does this mean that we shouldn't own anything that we literally should sell everything we have and just give it away? I don't think that this is what Jesus meant.

I think that he knew if we were to give, and we were to keep that in the forefront of our mind, it would help us to have a spirit of gratitude, a spirit of Thanksgiving. And when we give that money would somehow lose its grip on us. When it comes to money, and you may agree with this or not, but I believe this is true when you read scripture. We will either worship money or we will worship with our money.

We will either worship money that will become the most important thing, or we will use our money to worship. God. There's no middle ground. I truly believe that money will be the greatest temptation that most people will face in their life, which is why it is addressed in scripture. So often, like it or not, there will always be a connection between your money and your faith. Money and the management of that money will always be a valuable tool for discipleship.

I have found in my own life that God will use the surplus of money or the lack of money to draw you closer to him. Now, we enjoy the surplus a lot more, don't we? When you have that surplus, you say, okay, God, I want to be responsible with this. What am I supposed to do? And so you're drawn to him in that way, but we've all also experienced the lack of money where you have to develop that faith and trust and say, okay, God, I don't know how I'm going to pay my bills next week. God uses money to draw us closer to him.

One of the largest struggles that I find with money in my own personal life. And as I talk with others, is that we are always dissatisfied with what we have. It doesn't matter how much we make. We are always dissatisfied with what we have. We always feel that we should have just a little more. And that doesn't make it doesn't matter if your family makes 20,000 a year, 30,000 a year, 200,000 a year. There's always just a little bit more. Why?

Because there's always that new house, that new car, that new boat that's coming out. There's always that new power tool that's coming out. You guys now know my problem, right? It's just crazy the marketing and the advertising that we have in our world today on TV and with technology and magazines and billboards, we are constantly being bombarded, saying you need the newest and the greatest and the best. And I am surprised at how often I can fall trap to that.

And I buy a new tool, and then all of a sudden they release a new tool that is a different color that somehow makes it better. And I think I got to have that new tool, right? Or they release a new drill that can drill in a screw in half the time, and I tell my wife, I got to have that drill, and she says you already have one. I said, yeah, but this one's a lot stronger. We struggle because there's always that something else that we somehow believe is going to fulfill or satisfy us.

But the problem is, when we get those things, whatever they are, the new car, the new house, the new boat, whenever we get those things, it's only a matter of time until that satisfaction dries up. And you got to have something else. You got to have that next thing. And we lose our contentment. And so as followers of Jesus, we must fight to be content. And you know a good way, a good tool, a good resource to fight and being content.

It's giving some of it away. It's a great resource that we have. If I struggle with being content, then I need to learn to give away even more. Let's look at just a couple more scriptures about money. Psalm 37, 16 and 17, the soma says, better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked, for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the lord upholds the righteous, righteous. Philippians four 19, Paul says, and my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory and Christ Jesus.

We are given that promise over and over and over again in scripture. He will meet our needs. Because we struggle with money and finances at such a great level. You will see in scripture that God has put up some pretty large guardrails around our lives to protect us that we should follow on this path. Proverbs chapter 13:11 says, dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.

When I read this verse, I'm reminded of all of the documents and documentaries and stories about people that win the lottery or athletes and they have all of this wealth and they lose it right away. And you watch these documentaries, you read these stories and it shocks you and you think to yourself, well, I would never do that, but the truth is, we probably would. That's what it says, right? Wealth that comes immediately, this has dishonest money, but there's other scriptures that wealth that comes immediately that's not earned at just dwindles away.

It flies away. We've all heard those stories. Acts chapter 20:35, Paul says in everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work, we must help the weak. Remembering the words the Lord Jesus said himself, it is more blessed to give than to receive. What is scripture saying here? Scripture is saying that they're actually will come a point in your life where you will get more joy out of giving money away than buying something new.

Now, it might take some time to develop that muscle. It might take some time to work through that, to build that muscle up where that is true where you can say, you know what? I get more satisfaction out of giving than out of receiving. And giving protects me from my greedy heart. Last verse, proverbs, chapter 28:22. The

stingy are eager to get rich and are unaware that poverty awaits them. Next week on June 11th, we're going to have our give it all away offering.

Again, our desire is to see everybody participate in this. I say this every year, but if every person just gave 39 99, we could give away over \$32,000. Notice I have never raised that for inflation, which is now even crazier, right? Some of you look at that 39 99 and you say we can't do that. Our family just can't do that. That's fine. I'm just joking. I'm just giving a number. Some of you other people might look at that and go 39 99. We can do way more than that. We just want you to be involved.

We want you to give something, start somewhere, and give with the right heart, I say this every year and I mean it from the bottom of my heart. If you can't give cheerfully, then don't give. If there's any part of you that is like, man, I got to do this because I feel guilty. Everybody else is doing it. The pastor asked me to do it. I should do it. Don't do it. You won't receive the blessing that comes with it. If you can't give cheerfully, don't give instead my desire is that you would give it as an act of worship.

You would give it as an act of obedience, that you would use this as an opportunity to talk with your kids, your family, about finances. This is the one time that I actually talk with my kids about actual dollar amounts. You know, this is how much we want to give. We talk about sacrificing. What does this mean we're giving up? What do we want to give? What do we want to do? It's a great opportunity to teach your children. About giving, and about God's provision, let me end with just three reminders because I can't say this enough.

Remember, this is a secret, okay? I can't say that enough. This is a secret a reminder number two. This has more to do with your heart than anything else and reminder number three. We are giving it all away every penny. I had somebody ask me. Before first service, pastor, I'm not going to be here next week. Can we give online? Is there a way that we can do this online? The answer is yes. Any any check that you give just in the memo line, give it all away.

If you give money today, because you're not going to be here next week and you want it to be part of this, give it all away just write that on a memo line, put a little note if you give online, if you're not going to be here next week and you're not prepared, so you want to do it the following week, the 18th, the 25th, people always give later, just make sure it's designated, give it all away, and it will be put in that bucket, and we will give every penny away. That is a promise to you, okay? So it doesn't have to just be the money we collect next week. If you write, give it all away, we give that money away.

And so I want to make sure that you guys know that as well ahead of time. This is an exciting Sunday. I get excited about next week. So I hope you guys are excited with me. Hopefully, as some of it has rubbed off on you and you're not thinking, when is a series going to be done about money, okay? Well, we're going to move on. Let me pray. How many father thank you? Thank you for blessing us so richly. The overwhelming majority of us give out of our surplus, not out of our need.

We are truly a blessed people. And so God help us to be faithful with what we have been given, that we would be responsible, that we would love others in the name of Jesus. That through our giving, we could point people towards you. It's some would take their next step. Maybe even their first step towards you. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.