

Today Is the Day

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

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Well, today is the day that we give it all away. Some of you may be here for the first time or you might be visiting. Maybe you're watching online or listening on the radio and this whole thing isn't going to make a whole lot of sense. And so I'll try to explain it a little bit to you, but I will only do that if you promise to keep a secret. I've said this for the last two weeks. I'll say it again this week. We don't want this to leave our family our church. We don't want others to know that we are doing this.

But today we are giving away 100% of our offering, whatever is given. We are giving away to local nonprofits to missionaries to others that are going out with the good news of Jesus Christ in order to help others take their next step towards him. I shared with you this is my third favorite Sunday of the year behind Christmas and Easter because it's like our Christmas. We get to give away. We get to help other nonprofits and to give them encouragement. And when we give this money, we give it with no strings attached.

You need to know that that there's no strings attached. Many times for local nonprofits, one of the most difficult things for them is to find funding for operations and maintenance and things like that. You can find a lot of grants and people that want to pay for, you know, like building constructions, things like that, you know, very specific things, but it's very difficult just to find operational expenses. And so when we give them this money, we tell them that there are no strings attached.

They can use it for whatever they want to do. I will tell you now in case you're wondering all of these organizations that we give money to, the missionaries we support. We have vetted all of them, and they have a same the same mind that we have of helping people take their next step toward Jesus. And so that's their goal. And so we participate in that with them. That is our goal. It's why we partner with them. And some of you might be here asking the question, why would a church do that?

Why would a church give away their entire offering? What is their goal? What is their motivation? The simple answer is this. One of our core values here at the church is that we believe you are never more like Jesus than when you give. We are never more like Jesus than when we give because we are followed to follow the example that he has left for us. And so as he gave everything for us, we simply give back in return. And so at fairview, we like to say we want to be weird.

We want to be weird. We don't want to be average because average stinks. If you look at statistics across the country, the average church in America gives away 3% of their budget. To organizations to missionaries to things like that. And so as a church, and again, this is secret. It's not to toot our own horn. It please if you're watching online, listening on the radio, don't share this. This is just for our family. You all know that our goal as a church is that we give away 25% of our budget every year.

And this is part of that, that we want to make sure that we are supporting organizations. And again, it's not about pride. It's not about us. It's about what God has done for us. It's us truly trying to be like Jesus so that people will surrender to him. Now I've been telling you for two weeks, this is now the third week that I was going to share with you some of the organizations that we are going to support. I don't have time to go through all of them. There are more than what I'm going to mention here, but let me just list a few of the organizations and the missionaries that we are going to support with our give it all the way offering.

The first one is project help. Many of you are familiar with project help. It's just down the road. Project help was started over 20 years ago by the ministerial association of Steuben county. And so at that time, the pastors got together and they said, man, we have people coming to our church that have needs. You have people that are coming to your church that have needs. Wouldn't it be great if we just had one place where we could help these individuals? And so project help was birthed out of that vision out of that dream. And so project help still exist today.

And they help with what I would call tier one needs in our community. So what our tier one needs, that's literally the necessities for life. Clothing, food, trying to find affordable housing, things like that. Project help does an amazing job providing for those tier one basic needs of people in our community. And so people can go there and get help. And so we support project help. The second nonprofit I want to talk about is turning point.

Many of you may know turning point as turning point homeless shelter and they're trying to get that name to be out of the community and just be known as turning point and let me tell you why. They don't want to just be a place that you drop somebody off at that maybe doesn't have a place to stay. They are trying to help with what I call the tier two needs in our community. This is helping those individuals not just what often we find ourselves doing. I always when I talk with people in the community, I don't want to put a band aid on a hemorrhage.

I don't want to just put a band aid on something that needs a lot more help and a lot more work to be fixed. And so turning point is trying to do that. And so they have a program that when people enter their program, there are all these different aspects to it as they try to help them. Budget and get a job and figure out all of these things. There's a spiritual aspect to it. So there's a whole program to help people truly take that step out of being under resourced or as some people would list it as poverty.

And so we support project help and turning point as we do tier one and tier two of trying to help people take their next step toward Jesus. The third organization I'd like to bring to your attention is called the vine, early learning center. Some of you are familiar with this. This is a child care center that has run out of sunlight here in our community. Our own Brittany Smith is the director of that. And their whole goal is to raise this next generation. It's a faith-based child care center where they're teaching them about Jesus and helping them.

Many of these families aren't even in our community as they're looking for child care. If you didn't know, Steuben county is what's in called a child care desert. Meaning that there is not nearly enough child care for all the families that need it. And so for us to be able to provide that and then to have it faith based is just an amazing opportunity for us to do that. We have some wonderful ladies that work at the vine. The fourth one is a new one this year, so I want to spend a little bit longer talking about this one. This is called image of hope.

And this is new this year. They have had a ministry that's exist down in the auburn area, but now we have one here in Steuben county. I'll tell you where it is. If you drive out on metro road, heading east of town, it's the last property on the left before you get to Ohio, all right? So it's a little distance from us. It's a very corner of Steuben county there. But we have somebody actually the lady that's the director attends our church. And this is an opportunity for kids with special needs as well as just other children to work through some of their anxiety, stress, and other issues that they have by working with horses and riding horses.

It is a beautiful property and amazing opportunity. It is faith based. And so they have a program that they work through. But just an awesome thing. If you've not driven out that way, I encourage you. Go check out image of hope. It's a beautiful opportunity for us to love others. Next one, I want to talk about is Christian campus house. This is here on trying university's campus. They ministered to the college students there. They have programming every Wednesday night throughout the school year where they basically have a college age youth group.

The last I heard there were over a hundred students that were attending every Wednesday night. Here on shrine's campus. And so they have an amazing ministry there to those students. And we've been able to be blessed by some of those students that attend here throughout the school year. Our last intern that helped with youth actually came from trying and was invested in that. And so we love supporting the Christian campus house. Another ministry in our community, women in transition. This is a ministry that helps women that find themselves in a difficult situation.

There may be coming out of prison or jail and they're transitioning back into society. And this is a house that they can live with with other females with a director there that will love on them and pour into their lives as they transition. We have the TLC house, which is loving women in our community. We have the four county transitional living, which is a similar program to the women in transition, except for men. Some of you don't even know that we have a camp here in our district for the missionary church. It's called Prairie camp. Let me just see. I didn't do this first service.

A raise of hands. How many of you have ever heard of Prairie camp? That's a lot more than I thought. Okay, that's good. So Prairie camp is a camp. It's out in the Goshen Elkhart Napa knee area and it's our camp for camp ministry during the summer. There are teen camps and family camps, some of you have been going for a long time. Like I said, some of you don't even know it exists. I have a soft spot in my heart for camp ministry because I received my calling to ministry at Brown city camp in brown city, Michigan up north.

And so it's just an opportunity to gather people, get them out of their comfort zone and the spiritual emphasis during that week is huge as there's morning chapels and evening chapels, there's fun things to do for me growing up, you know, going to Brown city camp. It was literally a camp in the middle of a cornfield, and it just smelled like horse manure. That's what I remember growing up, okay? There's just something about being there that God just speaks to our hearts. And so we have Prairie camp and we are going to support them. One of the difficulties of a camp like this is you have buildings that are used and they get built and they don't get maintained very well.

And so a lot of their structures need to be redone. And so one of the big ones they're doing right now is totally revamped their kitchen. And so we want to give them a lump sum of money to help as they build their kitchen. They're on camp. And so we're going to support Prairie camp. Another camp that many of you may be more familiar with is camp sila up in reading Michigan. We have had a partnership with them for many years now. Many of our teams and children have gone to Prairie camp. I have been blessed with the opportunity to speak at their team camp multiple times and some of their winter camps. And again, I just love how God works in camp ministry.

You just get them away, do that, and God does amazing things. So we support camp Selah. So that's some of the organizations. That's not all of them because of time that some of our organizations, if I left yours out, if you're here today, I'm sorry, we're still going to support you, all right? But there are others in the community. I want to talk about some of our missionaries. These are the people that we support that are halfway around the world, as well as some that are in our community, some that are elsewhere in the United States. These are people that we support as they do various things to help people take their next step towards Jesus.

The first couple that I want to talk to you are Brian and Susie. They're in São Paulo, Brazil. They've been there for many years. They came out of this church out of fairview and so we've supported them. Some of you may remember in 2012, I had the opportunity to take a group of teenagers down to Brazil for a mission trip for a couple of weeks in God did awesome things down there. We met some amazing other missionaries down there that I still have relationships to this day with. And so they're down there doing ministry, loving people in Brazil. Some of you know Carl and Rachel Anderson, they are in Uganda, Africa now.

They were in South Sudan for a long time, but there was some civil unrest there. And so they had to move. So now they're in Uganda, loving the people there, helping them. Karl has a heart to just teach them, not just

about faith in Jesus Christ, but they're trying to teach them how to farm and how to do all lots of stuff. I mean, he's just doing amazing things there. My wife and I had the privilege to go out to eat with them just a couple of months ago at Casa Azteca as they were back in the states. And they were excited to get back. We have a partner, a couple that's in the Middle East and I intentionally don't mention their names because this is online and so I can't mention their names for safety reasons.

Many of you know who I'm talking about, but they continue to do ministry in the Middle East and we love them and support them. And they're actually going to be back here in a little bit. And on a Wednesday evening, you'll have an opportunity to hear an update of what's going on where they're located. So I will inform you of that. It's in July. So we have that. Many of you are familiar with Donnie and Melanie Riley as we support them and love them in Liberia Africa. We've built a school there. Many of us have sponsored children there. And so we support them. We have Andy and Cassie Miller, who were in Kyiv, Ukraine for a while.

And of course, they have moved back from Kyiv. And so now they're back here in the states and they are ministering and on college campuses to recruit missionaries to go around the world to share the love of Jesus Christ. We have Jacob and Shireen Hodge who are with navigators. They've moved around a little bit to multiple college campuses. They're now in Missouri. We have Katrina Larose, which that name might sound familiar to some of you, Anthony, was raised in our youth ministry. They're down at Bloomington, Indiana, with crew.

Some of you are familiar with that organization. And so they have a ministry there on the campus of IU, which is a little difficult for me as a Michigan fan, but we still love the IU people, all right? And so we support them. Levi and Anna Marty are with a ministry called the base ministry and they go around and do summer sports camps like we do here at the church. It's where we got the idea. Some of you may know that Anna is the oldest daughter of our former worship pastor Glenn Flint, and so we continue to support them. They were here just a couple of weeks ago.

It was fun to see them as they do ministry. George and Karen Bella again grew up here in the church or came from our church. They are doing ministry in turkey. They often do online ministry from Arizona to turkey, lived there for a little bit. With the earthquakes that happened just recently, some of you are familiar with that. He did go over there and was able to deliver some things for them and try to help out. Nancy McNeil, who is the wife of our facilities manager here at the church.

She does a ministry up in reading Michigan called crossroads farm. It's an amazing ministry to the rural teenagers. Many of those rural churches are not large. They don't have a youth group. They can't afford a youth pastor. And so this organization, I think they have three or four different locations now that they become the youth group, for the rural teenager. And so they have hundreds of teens that minister there. It's an awesome thing. If you've never been up there and checked it out, I encourage you to do that. And again, there are many more, but because of time, I can't share it all.

I know I'm talking fast because I have a lot to say, all right? These are all of the people that we get to impact that we get to love, that we get to partner with. Through these organizations, I know you guys don't get to hear all of the stories. I can't share all of the stories, but lives are being changed. Because of your generosity, these organizations and missionaries are loving others in the name of Jesus Christ.

The great thing about this is I've always said is it's a win win win when we do this because not only does your support help others not only are those ministries continuing to happen, but it is also a huge encouragement for the nonprofits and the missionaries. If you know anybody that works in the nonprofit world or missionaries, you know that they often can feel very alone. Very lonely, the enemy will attack them in that way.

And so when a church or a body of believers will get alongside of them and minister with them and support them financially, it is just a huge encouragement to them to keep using the gifts and talents and abilities that

they have in order to help others come to know Jesus Christ. This is the reason why I shared with you last week that we as a church have made a decision to support all of the nonprofits and Steuben county that we know of that are faith based because we don't want any of them to feel left out or as if their ministry is not important.

We could choose one or two and really back those, but instead we want them all to know that we love what they're doing. So because of your generosity, those who are hungry will eat. Those who are naked will be clothed and those who are lost can be found. I love that God allows us to play a small part in his plan of helping others take their next step towards him. Now you may be here today or watching online or listening on the radio and you might be saying, why do you do this?

What's the point behind this? What is your motivation? What motivates you to give money to organizations and individuals? And so I just want to take a moment and talk about our driving force. I want us to do this with the correct motives and the correct intentions. And so we're going to look at scripture here, momentarily. And we're going to, it's going to be shorter. I know this was a long introduction. I promise I'll get you out on time. All right? But I want to share with you from scripture, our motivation, why we do what we do because that is important.

It's about our hearts. It's about what God wants to do inside of us. So let me pray and then we'll jump into that. Heavenly Father, we are truly a blessed people. We thank you for that. And my prayer is that we would just use some of that blessing to do the work that you have called us to do. That lives would be changed and transformed that people would come to know you that they would proclaim you as their lord and savior. That we would be your hands and feet.

We asked this in Jesus name. Amen. Every once in a while, I like to take a moment before we jump into scripture and I just want to clarify something for people that are new. Maybe you don't know, but I want you to be aware that here at fairview missionary church, we take the Bible seriously. What do I mean by that? What I mean is that we believe the Bible to be the inerrant word of God. So every once in a while, I just want to clarify that. That means that we believe the Bible is without fault without error.

We believe that is God's word that he has given to us. And so because of that, we believe that the Bible is good for teaching and rebuking and correcting and righteousness. Our standard for life comes from this book, my standard for life, we believe, as it says that the word of God is living and active and that it changes lives and we believe that not just based on the promise that it gives us, but because of personal experience. That the Bible radically transformed us. And so we believe that it can transform everybody else as well.

We believe it is truth. We believe it does not change. We believe that the Bible is the standard for living. Therefore, we do our best to do what the Bible tells us to do while at the same time recognizing we aren't perfect. As a church or as individuals, we don't always get it right. But it is our goal to allow scripture to be our guide. And so with that as the foundation, let's jump into what John says and first John chapter four, starting in verse 16, John says this.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment. For in this world, we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. For the one who fears is not made perfect in love, we love why?

Because he first loved us. What is our motivation? Why do we do what we do? We respond the way we respond because of the love that the father has shown to us. Our motivation behind loving our motivation behind giving is the love that God has given to us. As we continue to realize and understand and comprehend the love of the father, that realization spurs us on to love others in the same way.

You see, it's easy in our world to use our mouth to use our words and to say, oh, I love so and so or I care about something, but that's not true love. Love requires action. Love requires action. First John, chapter three 16, again, John says, this is how we know what love is. This is love. This is the definition. What is John tell us that Jesus Christ laid down his life for us?

And so because of that, we also ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. These are some strong verses. Jesus modeled what it meant to love one another. He proved that it wasn't easy. He proved that love requires sacrifice. When you love others, you open yourself up to being hurt. Jesus could have just said, yes, I love them. I created them.

I care for them, but instead, Jesus showed his love by laying down his life for us. Unfortunately, we all know that loving requires sacrifice. We know that to be true. When you love, you are eventually going to get hurt. There's not a person here today who hasn't experienced a broken heart because they decided to love. Let me just give you some quick examples. Start with some not so serious ones. When you care passionately about a sports team and they lose, it hurts.

That's why we're called fans. You're a fanatic. It hurts. Not so serious, but you care. And so then it hurts when they lose. Maybe a little more serious. You have a pet. An animal that's been in your life for multiple years, and you have memories with them and that pet passes away. And for some, that's a broken heart. It hurts because you cared because you loved, getting a little more serious. We've all experienced breakups, relationships with other people.

Loss of friendship because of miscommunication or because of things that have happened, maybe even divorce. You understand what it is to love and then to lose that. And the broken heart that comes along with it. If you choose to love, then you are choosing to care. And if you choose to care, you will be let down because we live in a fallen world. And yet we have quotes like this.

It is better to have loved and lost than never have loved before. Because we all have experienced what that true love feels like. What it means. In fact, you and I were created to love. God has put it inside of our very beings. It's part of our DNA. John says in first John chapter three versus 17 and 18, that if anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need, but has no pity on them, doesn't love them, then how can the love of God be in that person?

Dear children, let us not love simply with our words or with our speech, but with our actions and in truth. Love, compels us to action. God's love doesn't allow us as his followers to see other people who are being mistreated. Other people who are in need and just sit on the sidelines and watch and not do anything. Love forces us to act.

And I tried to think of an analogy to explain this because those of us that are followers of Jesus, we've had this feeling inside of us when somebody is hurting when somebody is in need. There's something inside of us. It's the power of God. It's the spirit of God that just, it calls us to action. It forces us to do something. We can't just sit there. So I thought of this analogy. This is the closest I could come.

It's like when you're sitting in a meeting, maybe it's at your job, it's a staff meeting or something like that, or maybe if you don't have that kind of kind of meetings at your job, maybe it's a conversation with your spouse or with a really close friend or a family member, and there's something that you want to say so badly. There's something inside of you that is just trying to bubble out and you're trying to be patient. You're trying to wait for your turn, right? With your spouse or with, you know, in the meeting, the words are bubbling over, and you get to the point where you can't really even hear what others are saying anymore, right?

Because you just have this word that's so strong inside of you, and you're waiting for the smallest opportunity to jump in. And so finally, your spouse or the other person takes a deep breath and you just blurt it out, right? They weren't done talking, but they took a breath and that was enough of an opening for you. And

when you're done, and after you shared everything that you want to share, you just feel better. And it's like, you go, oh. I can breathe again. This is what love does inside of us. It compels us to act.

We try to make a difference. We can't just sit there and watch. It's that feeling that burns inside of us. And if we try to hold it in, sometimes we feel like we're going to explode. So here's another image that I got in my mind when I was thinking about what is it like when we have that inside of us and it just wants to come out. And some of you have seen this on Facebook, maybe some of you have even done this. You put the Mentos and Coke. Have you guys seen this? And it just splits up. Like, that's the image in my mind like, oh, it's just inside of me. It just has to come out.

I wanted to try to do that today, but I didn't think I'd get approval, so I didn't, I just give you a picture. You see, today, we have that moment where you and I have an opportunity to finally take that breath. You and I know that there are people that are hurting around us. We know that there are brothers and sisters that are in need. And we want to help, but so often when I have conversations with people, we don't know how to help. We don't know what to do. We don't know what's best.

Can I lay it before you that today is that moment that you can express your love? It's that moment that you can relieve that pressure inside of you to say, I want to help, but I don't know how I fully understand. We're not going to fix all of the world's problems with a given all the way offering, but it's something. It's being obedient to what God asks us to do. This is why we give because we must. We have to. We're compelled to because of our love or rather because of the father's love for us.

You see, we also believe that as human beings, we are created in the image of God. Imago dei. Which we believe about every other human being as well. And this belief makes every single person worthy of our effort and our time. Every person doesn't matter. Every person because they bear the image of my king has inherent value. And when God's love shines through us, we want to recognize that and help those individuals.

Let's look at just real quickly one more section of scripture. James chapter four verse 17. James tells us if anyone then knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. When we know what the right thing to do is, and we don't do it, it's sin. This is interpreted by theologians as a sin of omission. As I was reading about this for the first time, I remember thinking, I already fail enough at sins of commission.

The last thing I need is another category, right? I already make enough mistakes of things that I do. Now you're telling me that I can sin if I'm supposed to do something and I don't do it. And James says yes. You see, when we proclaim Jesus as our lord, and as our savior, his love is to flow through us. And we gradually are transformed to become more and more like him. His desires become our desires. His thoughts become our thoughts. In one of his desires is to take care of the poor, the orphan and the widow.

James chapter 5, I'm just going to show you. Now listen, you rich people. He's speaking to us, by the way. I know not all of us feel rich, okay? But you heard about the graduation parties I went to, right? We're rich. We are. We've been whale because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted and malls have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded, they're corrosion, will testify against you in each year flesh like fire. You have hoarded your wealth in the last days.

Look, the wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the lord almighty. Now, I hope nobody pauses it or turns it off at this point because I am going to tell you it is not a sin to be rich, okay? Please hear that. I'll say that loud and clear. It is not a sin to be rich. It is not a sin to be wealthy. What James is addressing here is the issue behind the issue.

How they became rich and where they've put their faith and trust, issue number one is these rich people have put their faith and trust in their possessions in their wealth. That is sinful. Our hope, our promise, our faith is to be in our lord and savior, Jesus Christ, not in a bank account, not in anything here, because all of

those things will fade. That's problem number one that he's addressing here. We are rich people. We all have the ability and the temptation to put our faith in our bank account, our retirement, whatever else we should not do that.

The second thing was how they became rich. They became rich by taking advantage of others. They became rich by hoarding the wealth and not paying others what they were supposed to pay. So it was at the expense of other people. They watched as other people suffered while they themselves had plenty. You see, when we give to others, we are reminded to keep our faith in Jesus, as well as to use our extra to benefit others that carry his image.

We have two young men that are going to be getting baptized here. You guys can go ahead and head around back, and those that are going to be baptizing them can head around back. We get to end a wonderful service with something even more amazing, isn't it? It's great. Today, we give because we love. We give because we care, today we give because we are commanded to, because we want to, I hope, and pray that over the last few weeks, you've had time to talk with your family and say, you know what?

What do we want to sacrifice? What do we want to give to be a part of this? Again, if you're visiting, you don't need to join us today. We're not going to pass an offering plate. We don't want to make you feel weird or awkward or anything like that. We have the boxes that are out in back. We've not passed the offering plate since COVID. And so you can drop your offering back there. Now, you all know we do not have a financial goal today. We don't have a dollar number that we're trying to come to. We have a goal that everybody would participate something.

While at the same time, I'm going to say this. If you're giving because you feel guilty, or I've somehow manipulated you, don't give. Don't give. And that's hard for me to say, because these nonprofits can use guilty money just as much as they can use cheerful money, all right? But I don't want you to give. If you're going to give, I want you to give with a cheerful heart. I want you to give joyfully scripture says to give with that cheerful heart. It's almost like laughing. Like I'm giving it, ha ha, it's so fun.

I love it. If you can't give that way, don't give. I want it to be something that's bubbling out of your heart. As to why you give. It is fun doing this together. So I'm going to close in prayer and then we're going to watch the video testimonies of these two young men as they make their public profession of Jesus Christ as their lord and savior, so let me pray. Heavenly Father, we come before you today, and we thank you for who you are.

We thank you for your blessings. Thank you for the opportunity to gather together. Thank you that here in a moment, we get to hear the testimonies of two young men that are publicly standing before the body of Christ and saying, Jesus is my lord and savior, and so as we baptize them and we have this beautiful image of being crucified with you and being raised back to life, I thank you for the symbolism that is represented there. God, I certainly pray that you would receive the praise. We ask this in Jesus name, amen.