Rob, I love that song.

It's pretty much every day of my life I try to remember that every good gift comes down from heaven above.

That there's nothing I am, that there's nothing I possess, there's nothing I own, whether that's money, relationships in my life, blessings,

It's not because of me.

It's all a gift of God.

God is so good.

And it's not just this season of the year that we celebrate Thanksgiving and his goodness.

It should be every day of our lives.

Well, we're in the Sermon on the Mount, yes, and it gets pretty particular.

Jesus gets pretty pointed.

A couple of weeks ago, he was talking about when we get really angry and he called it murder of the heart.

And then last week we talked about the fact that Jesus called lust adultery of the heart.

Let me ask you, how did your week go?

All right.

Did you find yourself, did anybody say no to maybe some food that you lusted after and you decided I don't have to have that?

Did anybody

say no to buying something on Amazon you really don't need because you were lusting after that and you told yourself no?

Did anybody treat a member of the opposite sex as a brother or sister in Christ rather than someone to objectify?

So how'd it go?

It's going to be a daily, weekly battle against different forms of lust in our lives.

today we're talking about something that's also equally pointed.

Jesus talked about this topic today more than he talked about hell.

Can you imagine that?

Jesus talked about generosity and giving more than he did about heaven or hell.

He knows what's going on in our lives and our hearts and how we struggle.

But today we're talking about generosity is the overflow of gratitude.

Don't you love

Just generous, giving, loving people.

When I graduated from Midwestern Seminary with my MDiv way back then, our first church was in DeQueen, Arkansas, Southwest Arkansas.

Now the church couldn't pay me as their youth pastor and senior adult pastor and activities pastor very much at all.

And so we kind of scraped by.

We couldn't buy a house, so we rented one on the corner, teddy corner across from the church.

I remember we moved in May and we had to move out in October because it had no heat.

And I remember it had a hole in the floor and it was carpeted over the hole, but there was no wood.

So you had to be careful and go around the hole in the living room floor.

And it was quite an experience.

But the church loved on us and were so generous towards us in ways of relationships and things like that.

And there was a deacon in the church named Dennis Smiley, Dennis and Katie Smiley.

And he and his wife decided to love on us.

And they did.

And they were generous toward us.

to be able to put money down with a low interest loan back then, it was called low interest, a government loan.

He gave my wife Susan a job working in his tire company in this little town of DeQueen, Arkansas, so we could make a payment on getting a house.

And

He would have us, it was a tire company slash gas station.

And if we were gonna go out of town, like going back to St.

Louis or somewhere, he would have us pull up to the pump and he would put gas in our car for free.

He was just generous.

And they loved on us.

And we visited them.

I mean, this is like 40 years ago.

We visited them in Dequeen, Arkansas.

Dennis is now like 86 or something like that.

And we stopped by their house and visit them and just told them how much they meant to us and the way they were generous with their lives and their love and the way they took care of us.

and just gave us a good springboard to be launched into the other ministries in the decades to come.

I love generous people.

Well, today we're talking about that generosity is really an overflow of gratitude.

It's not something you have to muster up yourself.

It's a natural overflow because God has been generous

to us.

The big idea today is this, that generosity to others and to the Lord is not for show.

It's A heartfelt response of gratitude for God's gracious generosity.

Well, we're up to Matthew chapter 5.

Open up your scripture to there.

Turn yours on.

Matthew 5, verse 38.

Because the first thing we're talking about, first thing Jesus talked about is generosity in relationships.

Do people look at you as a generous person, a loving person, and a person who overlooks false?

Are you a generous person in your relationships?

Matthew 5, 38.

You have heard that it said, remember Jesus quotes like traditional thoughts and religious rules.

and the authorities of his day, and he changes that on its end and says, but I say to you, because he's the real authority, you've heard that it was said, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, but I tell you, do not resist an evil person.

If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

Did anybody slap you on the cheek this past week in some way, in traffic or otherwise?

You have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?

Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

So Jesus talks about this generosity in relationships first.

What was going on in His day, it was an eye for eye.

tooth for tooth philosophy.

That was the Old Testament rule.

That was the Old Testament law.

And it was a civil law for the good of Israel back then.

It was not meant to be an eternal law to be carried out in the new covenant in which we're living.

Jesus teaches here in the new covenant a better principle that models itself after the grace and generosity of God the Father.

Agape love, unconditional love.

First Corinthians 13 love, love that doesn't immediately notice when it should be offended.

It's a love that can overlook some things in a spouse or a neighbor or someone on 435.

It's not taking offense when shots are fired first.

It's responding in love.

And by the way, that the Bible says that love will end

the end, keep burning coals on a person's lap when you respond to evil with love.

So God's gonna do his work through it.

Turning the other cheek requires sticking around, not running away, angry.

It's pursuing reconciliation and relationship if possible.

And Jesus gives some examples here.

Maybe this would be helpful to understand this, the Roman law of impressment

dictated that in a country where Rome had taken over, there was a law of impressment by a soldier.

A soldier could, in passing through your little town, say, carry my shield and sword, carry my backpack.

And the law was that you had to carry it for up to one mile.

That was the law.

Jesus says if a soldier asked you to do that, carry it two miles.

Showing that you're different.

Be generous.

Most people think of generosity in terms of money, and that's hugely important because whether it's Operation Christmas Child and doing some boxes that will make it around the world for Christ, what a great testimony we heard at 9.30 by a woman in the Philippines who came to Christ and received an Operation Christmas Child shoebox, the first gift she'd ever received in

her life.

And somebody here in America sent it.

So wait, what an opportunity to make a difference through our money, our tangible assets.

That's hugely important.

But what's the main thrust of today's message is not just money generosity, but generosity in relationships.

It's even with those who are not very nice to us.

I read this story.

I love

history you can probably tell, I just love reading history.

I read the story about a guy during the American Revolution and he was a Baptist pastor in Pennsylvania.

Peter Miller was his name.

And during the American Revolution, he was very close friends with General George Washington.

That's a big deal, right?

And there was a man in his small town named Michael Whitman who made it his mission to oppose

to ridicule to try to humiliate the pastor he didn't go to his church he just didn't like him he didn't like what he preached and so he tried every way possible to humiliate him well later on Whitman was accused of treason this Henry guy in town was accused of treason and sentenced to death Reverend Miller heard about it and

Listen what he did.

He walked 70 miles on foot to Philadelphia to beg for that man's life to General George Washington.

And Washington replied to him, I cannot spare the life of your friend.

And the pastor replied, he's not my friend.

He's my worst enemy.

What?

You walked 70 miles to save the life of an enemy?

And Washington granted his request.

And he walked with him back.

to the town from that point on, no longer his enemies, but his friends.

And I know that's a crazy historical example, but have you ever walked 70 miles for an enemy?

Not literally, but have you ever been nice to somebody who was mean to you?

Man, that's when Christ comes out.

It's you being generous with love.

It's showing the generosity of God through you.

Have you overlooked an offense lately and not gotten even on purpose?

Generosity in relationships.

And then Jesus goes on to what you would expect, generosity in giving.

That's the next chapter, chapter 6, verses 1 through 4.

It says this,

Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.

If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets to be honored by others.

Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your giving may be in secret.

Then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Now listen, that doesn't mean that you have to give anonymously to every charitable organization you give to, right?

When I give to this church or when I give to other mission causes,

I make sure my name is on it because I want a tax receipt, right?

give unto Caesar what Caesar's and God what's God's, right?

Jesus isn't talking about being afraid if anybody knows that you give something.

What was going on in Jesus' day was that in the synagogue or at the temple, they would give their offerings and they were coins.

I think we get an image of those coins

I've got a couple at home in my library from the time of Jesus, looked just like this.

And they would take coins like this and other ones, and they would put them in a metal chest box, but it looked like a ram's horn, a shofar, you know, that they would blow a trumpet with.

And you could put one in, clink, have it roll around there, go into the box, you know, you could make a show of it.

You could put them all in quietly or you could put them in one by one so everybody knows how many coins you're putting in.

And that's what people were doing.

It was for show.

It wasn't from the heart.

In Jesus' day, there was three main ways to put on a display of your piety if you wanted to do that, right?

Giving, prayer, and fasting.

And religious leaders knew how to do all three of those to make a big show of it.

They knew how to give their money publicly, so everybody knew how much they were giving.

They knew how to go out on the street corners and pray and make the spectacle of themselves to be heard from men.

When they fasted, they looked horrible on purpose so everybody would know that they were fasting.

That's what Jesus was pushing back on.

Instead, one day at the temple, you remember this story perhaps, Mark 12, Jesus was with his disciples and they were sitting down at the temple opposite where these offerings were made in the offering metal, ram's horn, so to speak.

And they saw, the disciples and Jesus saw rich people going and throwing large amounts of coins in the temple treasury.

Large amounts.

And then they spied this poor widow woman.

You remember this story?

And it's almost like she sneaks up there and she has two of those little copper, they're copper.

I didn't tell you that.

Two of those little copper coins worth nothing.

And she sacredly from her heart puts it in there.

And Jesus said, hey, did you see that?

woman put in more than anybody else today.

because she gave all she had.

In other words, she gave from her heart.

So there's some lessons about generosity.

Here's the first one.

It's not for public show.

It's for private worship.

Let me ask you, how will you worship today?

I could ask for responses.

I will.

How have you worshipped already today?

Give me some ways.

In song, singing, prayer, teaching.

Thank you.

What?

Giving.

Yeah.

I hope you're worshiping every day.

That's why you were put on planet Earth to bring joy to God through your worship of him.

How have you worshiped today?

You can worship in all those different ways.

You can worship through your work, yes?

You can worship through your loving relationships.

There's all kinds of ways that you can worship and it should be from your heart and giving is just one of those ways.

Giving is an act of worship.

It's not a duty or compulsion.

That's why the Bible says that God loves a hilarious giver.

Somebody who doesn't even count the cost perhaps.

but responds to a need by giving.

We are most like God when we give from the heart as an act of worship.

That's how God gave His Son to us for our salvation.

It was from His big heart.

I'm going to give you a couple living giving principles.

Here's the first one.

Before I give any,

of my material possessions to God, he first wants me to give myself.

Do you agree with that one?

He wants you more than he wants your money.

And by the way, your money is his money.

Let's make no mistake.

He wants you.

Before you give your money away, he wants you to give yourself to him.

I did that when I was an older child and I gave my life to Jesus Christ.

I committed my life to Jesus Christ

And he sent his Spirit in me.

I was born again.

I was born from above.

I received eternal life.

How about you?

Have you ever totally given your life to Christ for him to be your Savior, your God, the leader of your life?

If not, talk to him now.

Call out to him now.

Before I give any of my material possessions to God, he first wants me to give myself.

Paul gives us an example of that in 2 Corinthians 8.

He talks about the churches in Macedonia on the Greek side, and they were experiencing hardship, trial, persecution.

The dads were losing their jobs at the workplace because the owners found out that they were Christians.

And the Christians were put, like Apostle Paul in his preaching, was putting a dent in the guild trades of idol making and all that.

Guys were losing their job, unable to feed their family, and yet somehow they gave beyond what they were able to give to help themselves.

No, in that community.

No, they were sending it on to the mother church in Jerusalem because there was severe famine and poverty in the mother church.

That's what they were doing.

And the apostle Paul describes it this way in verse 5 of 2 Corinthians 8, and they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord before they gave their money.

They gave above and beyond.

Why?

Well, because they had already given, they had died to themselves.

They gave themselves to the Lord.

generosity is not come by determination or resolve.

It's given by God.

Here's the way I look at it.

We are saved by God's unmerited favor.

God's grace through faith.

Yes, that's how we're saved.

That's how you give.

You give by God's grace and then the channel is faith.

and you believe that God can allow you and bless you to give that much and that it truly can go around to places around the world where you can't go and it can change a life for eternity, that you truly will be thanked in heaven because you gave an offering to something somewhere and it ended up in somebody being in heaven later on and you'll get a thank you.

It's an amazing thing what God does when we imitate him in generosity.

Again, James 1.17 says that every generous act of giving and every perfect gift is from above.

It comes down from your heavenly Father.

It flows from the hands of a generous God who owns everything that you think you own and you worship Him by giving back to Him and His causes.

So

It's from the heart.

Second thing, prideful public giving brings only recognition, not reward.

Did you see that in the text?

So when you give the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogue and on the streets, be honored by others.

True, I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

Oh yeah, their money did something good.

It helped somebody who was poor, provided some food for somebody.

That's good, but that's all they get.

They don't get any reward in heaven for that.

Neither will you.

If you give your stuff for your money or your time or whatever, and it's just checking the box and you don't want to do it, it's not from your heart, yeah, it'll help somebody on earth, that's good, but you won't get the reward in heaven.

You've got to decide what you want.

Do you want the praise of people or do you want the pleasure of God?

I want the pleasure of my God.

I don't want the praise

of people.

You cannot have them both.

So prideful public giving brings only recognition, not true heavenly reward.

That's why I'm thankful for our church that on every single chair and table and piece of equipment and wall, it's not in honor of.

and in memory of.

You know, there's sometimes a place for those, but I've been in some churches where it's like, it's just recognition, recognition, recognition, recognition.

You know, have you been in churches like that?

Where nobody give anything unless they can be recognized.

That is exactly what Jesus was talking about was happening in his day, only it looked differently than that.

I'm glad that this

Church building is not named the whatever your favorite pastor was in past years, right?

This is God's house.

I'm thankful that in this church and in every church I've ever pastored, that the pastors didn't see what people gave, right?

We didn't look at contribution giving statements and rank people up and down by how much they gave.

I didn't know and I didn't want to know.

I'm thankful for that in this church.

Prideful public giving brings only recognition, not reward.

The third thing is this, the greatest reward for giving comes from secret, sacrificial generosity.

Listen to this, that cost something.

That's why David, when there wasn't a temple yet, you know, at Mount Moriah there, Jerusalem,

and David wanted to build one and he needed a place,

So he went to that threshing floor where the wheat and barley was being threshed.

And he thought this would be a good place on this mountaintop here, this hill for the temple.

And he bought it.

And the dude that owned that was just going to give it to David.

David said, what?

I'm not going to sacrifice to the Lord something that cost me nothing.

So grateful generosity is going to cost us something.

I like what the Bible exposition commentary says about this.

Listen to this.

He says, our sinful nature is so subtle that it can defile even a good thing like sharing with the poor.

If our motive is to get praise from men, then like the Pharisees, we'll find a way of calling attention to what we're doing.

But if our motive is to serve God in love and please Him, then we will give our gifts without calling attention to them.

As a result, we will grow spiritually, God will be glorified, and others will be helped.

But if we give it the wrong motives, we rob ourselves of blessing.

Remember the story of Ananias and Sapphira, right, in Acts 5?

They were giving land to the church, probably to be sold and the money to help the poor, and they made a big deal of it.

And they made a big deal by saying, we sold our piece of property.

We're giving it to you apostles to use for the ministry.

And it's, we sold it and we're giving it to you, right?

Anybody remember the whole rest of how that one worked out, right?

Number one, they were lying, right?

They sold their property.

They gave some money to the church, but they didn't give to the church what they got from the property.

So they lied to the apostles.

You don't do that to the apostle Peter and the other apostles in the age of miracles.

And so it was a big lie so they could promote themselves.

And then what happened?

Anybody remember?

I mean, like the apostles called down the authority and power of God on them, and the dude was struck down and died.

They carried him out, and then the woman came in.

She told that same lie, boom.

The man who carried your husband out, going to carry you out.

She drops dead.

Wow, that's scary stuff.

Right?

But it was all because they wanted to promote themselves.

It's going to cost us something to do that.

The second living giving principle is this, listen to this, I must be willing to suffer the loss of material things, in other words, become materially a bit poorer, in order that I or others might be made spiritually rich.

Are you willing to do that?

Give up a bit of finances or material possessions or something

so that somebody else can be made rich spiritually, like your gift can be sent around the world, can be used here in this church for ministries and staff and community outreach, so somebody else can be helped with things that really matter?

Are you willing to give up something that shouldn't matter to you very much at all?

That's

the living giving principle #2.

I must be willing to suffer the loss of material things in order that others might be made spiritually rich, something that's eternal.

Second Corinthians 8, 9, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus, and though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Paul's not talking about materially rich.

He's talking about, wow, you've got heaven.

You have everlasting life.

You have crowns in heaven.

You have privileges in heaven.

You have quite an inheritance from your dad in heaven.

That's what the apostle Paul is talking about.

And so I love it when others see the truth in this and I realize, I can do with a little bit less so that others can have a lot more in spiritual blessings like salvation.

I love stories of people who help others.

I'm going to give you some.

And listen, none of these, although I could say some of these from this church, I'm not going to.

I could talk about all the people I saw working Family Fest yesterday, giving away candy, playing with kids on their knees.

doing games with kids, working the little campfire thing, doing the hot dogs, all that stuff, setting up, tearing down, putting up, walking around, meeting people, all the ways that you serve, that makes a difference.

There was a lot of people and a lot of young people out on that parking lot and I met some.

I met a young family of five who said, we think we'll visit your church.

We think we're going to come.

We're looking for a church.

Another family just moved in the area.

Listen, that stuff pays off.

I could talk about ways that you guys serve in so many ways in this church, but I won't.

I'm going to give you some other examples.

I know a young family with four kids, mom, dad, four kids.

They don't make much money, but they sponsor four children with Compassion International.

And a woman who takes the leftovers when there is a, like a Christmas giving tree with gifts for, kids in need, whatever presents are or little tags of children's names are left on the tree, she'll take them all.

That could be 30 that she's got to buy presents for.

That's just what she does.

I know an older couple on fixed income who give their tithes to their church and other special offerings and yet also support a pastor in Africa, some missionaries and do oversee projects.

And I work with them on their budget and listen church, I don't know how they do it.

doesn't add up.

But God allows them to give that.

I love hearing stories like that.

A woman who wanted to bless some young

like college-age students who were taking care of her husband in a rehab facility had had a stroke she would go visit him and look at these young 20 something year olds taking care of her husband in shifts you know and thought wow they are blessing my husband how can I bless them back so here's what she did she asked permission from the director

in a shift change to meet with those young people one day.

And she said, I'm just going to take like 20 minutes.

And the director amazingly gave her permission.

So she went and she prepared a dozen gift bags.

Each gift bag had a $20 bill in it.

And that was a lot for this older lady.

A Bible that she bought with her own money and other things.

And the day came

And in a shift change, they all were meeting in one of the rooms there.

And she thanked them.

She encouraged them.

She spoke about the futures that they could have in their lives.

She just blessed them.

She gave them those gift bags.

She prayed for them and shared a brief gospel message with them.

Wow.

That's generosity.

It goes on and on.

People who have given up a new car, they got a used car instead of a new one so that they could support the church or the new day orphanage or a Christian school in South Sudan.

A member who came up with this idea, he was good with the internet, and so he made a website where he attempted to deal with tough questions.

And so it was an apologetic website about, yeah, like, I don't believe in God.

or I hate God because of this, and he would respond to people.

It was really great.

And to advertise his website, he paid personally, he didn't ask a penny from the church to rent a billboard for a month in downtown Omaha and to serve the Lord in that way.

And it advertised his website that was shooting for like homeless, fatherless young males.

It goes on and on.

You've got ways that you have given.

My point is that God works through a generous heart to do things that will change the world.

And really, there's five kinds of givers if we break this down.

Is this too practical?

Let's put this up on the screen.

I think I've got a slide for it.

Five kinds of givers.

Do you agree with this?

There's a beginning giver, right?

That's the lad who says, well, I got, you know, a sandwich and

some fish here.

It's Zacchaeus.

It's next to consistent giver, where you've learned, okay, there's something about planning giving.

Giving shouldn't just be.

I'm going to text because I see something on social media.

Oh, that's an ad.

I'll text 25 bucks or whatever.

Nothing wrong with that.

But to be grown up in your sacrificial giving, it requires planning, making a budget, preparing, disciplining yourself, right?

To be able to support God's kingdom though.

So it's a consistent giver.

That's Mary, Magdalene, who supported Jesus in his ministry.

Other women supported Jesus and the apostles as well.

It was Cornelius.

It was the tithing giver next, Abraham and Jacob, who gave the 10% tithe.

It's the expanding giver.

That's the good Samaritan, right?

Who not only took care of a beat up wounded Jewish guy who should have been his enemy, but paid for a hotel stay and extra money in case he needed it.

It's the expanding giver, David, who said,

I'm going to give out my personal funds to build this temple.

God told me I can't build it, but I can get the building supplies ready for my son to build it.

It's the extravagant giver.

This widow who gave those two copper coins, the extravagant giver.

It's Barnabas who gave a chunk of land.

See, what kind of giver you are reflects your heart.

So you decide, where do I want to be?

You don't beat yourself up.

Oh yeah, I admit, I'm just an occasional beginning giver.

Okay, all right.

Well, what would it take for you to get consistent?

How can you plan growth in giving to get where you want to be?

Nobody needs to beat anybody up about it, but how can you take a step of faith?

See, giving is discipleship.

We think that understanding the Bible is discipleship, learning how to share your faith, like we're going to help you do in a couple of weeks.

That's all discipleship.

No, that is, but giving is discipleship.

It's learning how to do it well.

It's the expanding giver and the extravagant giver.

It is being a disciple.

It's planned growth in giving.

Paul says it this way, see that you also excel in the grace of giving.

He said, you're excelling in faith, in speech, in knowledge of the scriptures, in your earnestness.

You're the real deal.

You're excelling in all that.

Your love for us.

You're excelling in that.

But see that you excel in the grace.

You can't do it on your own.

The grace of giving.

And then he describes for them in First Corinthians how to do it first day of every week.

You should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, not your neighbor's income, but your income, saving it up so that you can give it.

It's planned, proportional giving, purposeful giving.

It's first fruits before you figure up everything else you need to buy for the month and every other way you're going to spend the money on yourself and entertainment and eating out all that.

First fruits means you give it to the Lord first.

Because

He's the most important and giving it to him will change the world and change your life.

But it's all about the heart.

It's heart giving, not just hand giving.

God records the heart giving, not the hand giving.

We know it takes our hands to carry it out, but it starts

with the heart.

Proverbs 1125, a generous person will prosper, whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

So here's the application for the Monday Night Life group and for everybody here.

First of all,

Have I ever fully given myself to God?

Listen, your money is not going to go to God and his purposes and his kingdom if you haven't gone with God first, right?

Have you given yourself fully to God?

Do you see that he's the most important thing?

Second, am I willing to have a material loss so that others can benefit spiritually?

Third, in reality on that list, what kind of a giver am I?

just evaluate myself.

So what would be the next level I could take in giving discipleship?

And the last one is this, do people know me as a generous human being in my relationships with them?

Do they see me as a generous, generous of my love, generous of my forgiveness, generous with

my patience and my generous?

I'll close with this from Charles Spurgeon, morning and evening devotions, May 15th, morning reading.

Listen to this.

Our Lord Jesus is ever giving and does not for a solitary instant withdraw his hand.

He is a sun ever shining.

He is manna always falling around the camp.

He is a rock in the desert, ever sitting out streams of life from his smitten side.

The rain of his grace is always dropping.

The river of his bounty is ever flowing, and the wellspring of his love is constantly overflowing.

Who has ever returned from his door unblessed?

Who has ever risen from his table unsatisfied?

His mercies are new every morning and fresh every

evening.

O miserable tongue, how can you be silent?

Wake up and praise him.

Let's praise and give back to a generous God.

You find the way that works best for you.

We talk about it on Sunday morning.

We've got offering boxes every Sunday for connect cards and for offerings.

We have online giving.

If you go online to the website, you can see different ways of giving.

You can set it up through your bank.

You can help yourself be a planned, prepared giver so that when your heart doesn't really feel generous, it's already set up.

You can do things like that.

But the main point is to realize it's all going to spring from your heart, a heart of gratefulness that leads to generosity.

How can you be silent?

Wake up and praise Him.