

Now To Him Who Is Able - Week 3

Pastor Matt Dean

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

(Eph 3:14–21)

I want us to think about our God who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask of think...and what He can do with our faithful stewardship of resources – what He can do with our Joyful Generosity in giving. Joyful Generosity is about our response to who God is — and what He has done — and what He wants in our lives.

Our cultural context —

- *Sales tax — we don't think much about this. On a humorous note, with 7 children I've been buying diapers for the past 20 years. I wonder what the sales tax has been on diapers alone. I calculated that I've spent about \$12,000 on diapers – so let's just say I'm somewhere around \$1000 on diaper taxes. We don't think about much taxes, we just accept that we are taxed on what we earn and taxed on what we spend.*
- *Tipping — our culture says 15-20%. Good service = good tip. Other cultures: good service = no tip, only honor. In the United States, our culture has normalized that when you eat somewhere where service is involved – tipping 20% is the expectation. We don't think about it (unless the service is bad) – we just do it.*
- *Taxes and tipping is not the same as joyful and thoughtful obedience in giving to God.*
- *Why is it uncomfortable to think, much less talk about, much less preach about giving 10% or more back to God.*
- *What we think when we think about God and money — has been affected by sin and WE ALL NEED HIS WORD to renew the way we view our faith and finances.*

My heart for our church is to encourage those of you who are experiencing the joy of generosity, you would be affirmed and further inspired. For those who are new to giving, or afraid of giving, or fear not having enough, that you would know We ALL have fear. We all understand that WE live in a broken world. We ALL can see how anything, including money, can become an idol in our lives.

Will you — along with me — honestly before God — seek to understand what He has to say for our lives?

The Bible contains more than 2000 references on wealth and money — because the way we handle our resources is connected to our relationship with God. Do we trust God to be our provider? Can you trust God's plan for giving to be better than your plan for giving?

Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:3-7) We see Able's more acceptable offering to God, and we see Cain's resentment and heart posture towards God.

Abraham (Genesis 14:1-24) We see Abraham give 10% to the priest of God — and the remaining 90% to his people — it's the first occasion of recognition that all the resources truly belong to God.

- **Levitical Tithe Numbers 18:20-24 -**
 - Levitical tithe was a 10% to support the Levites — these temple servants were supported by the rest of the Israelite tribes; the Levites would then pay a separate wage to the priests.
- **Festival Tithe Deuteronomy 12:17-19, 14:22-27, 26:10-16**
 - This was another 10% tithe used to host the Feast of Tabernacles to remember God's rescue of Isrealites from slavery in Egypt.
- **Charity Tithe - Deuteronomy 14:28-29**
 - Another 10% tithe on the 3rd and 6th year of a 7 year cycle for Egypt that was used to support foreigners, orphans, widows and additional resources to the Levites.

These three tithes (Levitical, Festival, and Charity tithe) indicate that Israelites gave 23% of their income.

Deuteronomy 26:5-11

5 “And you shall make response before the Lord your God, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. 6 And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. 7 Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. 8 And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror,[a] with signs and wonders. 9 And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10 And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O Lord, have given me.’ And you shall set it down before the Lord your God and worship before the Lord your God. 11 And you shall rejoice in all the good that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you. >> Here is a guiding principle: God I remember what you have done — so I’m bringing my first and best —

Other parts of the Mosaic law — speak beyond the idea of tithing.

- Exodus 22-23
 - Instructs Israelites to ensure provision, justice, and opportunity for the poor
- Leviticus 25
 - gives instruction to protect and support the poor, Year of Jubilee (debts canceled / indentured servants released)
- Deuteronomy 15
 - series of commons to care for the poor, and specifically the poor in one's community.

In the OT - we see other pictures of generosity

- Ruth
 - Boaz treats Ruth with generous kindness, and we see Lev 19:9-10 lived out where the poor can harvest from the margins of their fields as income; we see Boaz's wealth being used support someone in need
- Job
 - We see God's ultimate sovereignty over wealth and life itself, and we see that despite great suffering and loss, Job uses his wealth generously and does not place his ultimate security in what he possesses.
- Psalm 37 Righteousness is more important than wealth
- Psalm 112 Blessed is the man who fears the Lord — wealth and riches are in his house —He has a steady heart, is not afraid and distributes freely, gives to the poor
- Habakkuk — we are to trust God and rejoice — even with the olive trees fail and fields yield no food
“YET I WILL PRAISE YOU”

1 Chronicles 29:10-14

10 Therefore David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: “Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. 11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. 13 And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

14 “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. 15 For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. 16 O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is

all your own. 17 I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you.

Malachi 3:6-10

“For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. “

Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart

Proverbs 3 :1-12

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.

Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.

So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.

Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce;

then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine.

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof,

for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

===

Joyful Generosity is about our response to who God is — and what He has done — and what He wants in our lives.

The giving of first fruits made an important statement from the Israelites to God: We give our first and best to you, Lord, because we recognize all good things come from you.

Today, the term “tithing” is sometimes erroneously used of all giving — tithe literally means “a tenth part” — whereas “giving” is a different amount or percentage.

In the OT, tithing denoted the amount; first fruits was the nature of the offering.

For Israel, tithing was an act of obedience and offerings were a demonstration of love, joy and worship.

The idea of a freewill offerings was in addition to tithing / firstfruits (Exodus 22, Numbers 15, Deuteronomy 12) — “All who were willing brought the Lord freewill offerings (Exodus 35:29, Ezra)

In Exodus 25:1-9

25 The Lord said to Moses, ²“Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. **From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.** ³ And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, ⁴blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats’ hair, ⁵tanned rams’ skins, goatskins, acacia wood, ⁶oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, ⁷onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. ⁸**And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.** ⁹ Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.
(Ex 25:1-9)

The people of Israel were asked by the Lord to give back some of the very things God had given them upon their miraculous escape from Egypt. All that Israel had was because God had given it to them – and from hearts that had been moved, the Lord asked for specific things back.

In light of grace, why would we give less than those under the law?

- What is our common fear? Not having enough.
- What does it look like to put God first in your finances?
- Does our fear outweigh our faith when it comes to giving?

The Gospel -- the good news that sets us free, sets our hearts free -- now enables us to give with greater generosity with a promise of greater joy.

In light of grace, why would we not want to give more -- we are free to give beyond the tithe, and tithing is a starting point for joyful generosity. Joyful Generosity is about our response to who God is — and what He has done — and what He wants in our lives.

Tithing was already a part of Jewish culture; in fulfilling the law, Jesus does not negate giving in the life of believers. Jesus does not negate tithing. He actually affirms it.

Luke 11:42 (Jesus w/ Pharisees)

⁴²“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

These you ought to have done — while not neglecting justice and the love of God.

Being under grace does not mean living by lower standards than the law.

What if instead of asking what is required of me, or what should I do — what if we ask the question, in light of the Gospel, what am I now free to do, with even greater joy and confidence because of what Jesus has done?

Thus — we come back to who Jesus is — and what HE has done — and what HE wants in our lives; and clearly part of God's design for our good on earth — is that we give back to Him, freely, joyously, and generously.

Tithing (like any other grace empowered act of obedience) brings joy and peace in our lives. When we walk in obedience — we experience God!

Luke 12:13-21, 22-34

¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Do Not Be Anxious

²² And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

³² "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(Lk 12:16-34)

Acts 4:31-37 — powerful movement of the Spirit among believers, boldness and generosity

>>> Seeing God at work results in generosity

Acts 20:35 — Paul speaking to Ephesian elders, “In all things... remember Jesus himself said ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

>>> Generous people are blessed / experience joy in giving.

2 Corinthians 8:1-7 among churches in Macedonia, gave according to their means, and beyond their means, of their own accord... as you excel in everything... see to it that you excel in this act of grace also.

>>> Generosity is something to excel in; grace enabled / act of grace

2 Corinthians 9:6-9 — sowing / reaping — cheerful giving

The Cheerful Giver

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work

(2 Co 9:6-8)

>>> Cheerful giving is evidence of the grace of God upon your life.

1 Timothy 6:6-12a

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Fight the Good Fight of Faith

¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses

(1 Ti 6:5-12)

1 Timothy 6:17-19

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

(1 Ti 6:17-19)

Thus — we come back to who Jesus is — and what HE has done — and what HE wants in our lives; and clearly part of God’s design for our good on earth — is that we give back to Him, freely, joyously, and generously. We believe that He can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.