

Now For Then - A Life of Joyful Generosity - Week 1

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Intro - As we approach Christmas, we remember God's gracious gift of Jesus to us, redeeming and rescuing us with generous love, that we would be a gracious, generous people who bring glory to God.

Joyful Generosity begins with our hearts and hope set on God – and for the next few weeks we are looking at generosity in the lives of those who trust in Jesus; this goes beyond talking about money and is more about our whole life response to Jesus. How and why do we give? How and why do we serve and love one another in authentic gospel community?

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)

What does a life of joyful generosity look like? In this passage we see some framework for how to think about generosity – and it begins with a clear reminder: set your hope on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. If we are to set our hearts and set our hope on God – how's that going for you today?

The Parable of the Rich Fool

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." 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 12:13–34)

Church – where is your treasure today? How is your heart?

Joyful Generosity begins with our hearts and hope set on God – and these words of Jesus remind us of how easily distracted we can be – and yet the solution to distraction is simple: worship.

What does it look like for you in this season to seek His Kingdom first – and trust “these things” will be added unto you.

I am a “words” person – it helps me have handles for major ideas in life, so if you think back over the life of this church, there have been numerous sermon series with phrases like this because when I think back, I won't remember it all, but I want to remember as much of God's word as I can.

This fall – we walked through Romans – and I'll always remember “In view of God's Mercy” because my whole life response to Jesus has everything to do with me remembering God's mercy... or last year when we walked through Luke, I'll always remember “So that you may know” – Luke wrote his gospel, so that people would know that Jesus is the Messiah. In 2023 – we are walking through the entire gospel of John, “that we would have life in His name”.

When it comes to Joyful Generosity – I want our church to be generous towards God and one another – and not begrudgingly but joyfully, and the reason we are thinking about “Now For Then” is because there is a principle here I want us to see together.

**Jesus says where your treasure is – there will your heart be also.
This could not be more clear – Jesus is to be our greatest treasure.**
If this is true – everything else gets sorted in its proper place.

Jesus – you are my treasure – so the Christmas season must be about you.
Jesus – you are my treasure – so my daily life must be all day with you, acknowledging your presence.
Jesus – you are my treasure – so when it comes to loving other people, I can do so with your strength.
Jesus – you are my treasure – so when it comes to doing good and being rich in good works, help me remember you have created me for your purposes and prepared in advance for me to do.
Jesus – you are my treasure – so when it comes to joyful generosity with my life – help me remember that you were graciously generous with your life to rescue and redeem me, so help me see the people around me and do so with generosity.

Jesus – you are my treasure – so when it comes to tithing to the church, giving towards the needs of others, and investing in your kingdom – help me do so with increasing joy and confidence in who You are and how You will provide for my every need.

Now for then. See this principle at work:

- I can worship You now for then I'll be ready in my heart for what today holds.
- I can face today with You now for then I am doing so with your presence before me.
- I can love others now for then I know I am walking in your purposes.
- I can be rich in good works now for then I know you have prepared them for me.
- I can be joyful with others now for then I am remembering your generosity towards me.
- I can be obedient in my giving now for then I am remembering your faithfulness to me.

Now for then – is the principle of sowing and reaping – and this is true for all of our lives.

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

(Gal 6:6–10)

Sowing and reaping / planting and harvesting / investing and stewardship

We reap what we sow. (what does life look like?)

We harvest what we plant. (what seeds are you putting in the ground? What is growing?)

We steward our investments. (what will be your legacy?)

Sow to the Spirit — reap from the Spirit. Do NOT grow weary of doing good...

Let us do good to everyone — and ESPECIALLY to those who are of the household of faith.

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)

Now for then. Who wants to reap bountifully? Think bigger for a moment than finances, because we will talk about that next week in greater focus — I want to stay focused on our hearts before God and one another.

What do you want your life to be about? What will you want others to celebrate about you? More importantly, what do you want God to reward and bless you with as you steward your life? What treasures are you storing up in heaven?

Illustration: IKEA - for us, a cemetery with a gift shop. A reminder of loaves and fish for us.

Why would it say God loves a cheerful giver? Where is our truest source of joy and cheer? It's Him. Generosity in all of life — flows from God's heart — and from our hearts as we seek Him first.

If sowing and reaping is a principle of life (and it is) — we DO reap what we so, then what are you sowing today (investing in, focusing on, planting)?

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 Cor 9:8)

God is able.

Are you willing?

God is able to make all grace abound to you.

Do you want that?

God is able to make all grace abound to you so that you will see His sufficiency in all things?

Are you willing to obey Him in order to see Him?

God is able to make all grace abound to you so that you may abound in every good work.

Will you walk in His plans and purposes today?

Let's go back to where we began:

¹⁷As 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. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹thus 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)

Church – do not set your hope on the uncertainty of riches. Take hold of that which is truly life.

Set your hope on God. Take hold of that which is truly life.

God has and will richly provide us with everything to enjoy. Take hold of that which is truly life.

We are to be rich in good works. Take hold of that which is truly life.

We are to be joyfully generous and ready to share. Take hold of that which is truly life.

When we walk in a “now for then” mindset – we are storing up a treasure in heaven.

When we walk in a “now for then” mindset – we are taking hold of that which is truly life = Jesus.

Jesus had a “now for then” moment for you

We see it as history – but there was a very present and real moment in time, 2000 years ago – where in a very real “now for then” moment – Jesus walked in perfect obedience, Jesus walked in perfect love, Jesus walked in perfect faithfulness.

In the greatest “now for then” moment – Jesus took on the sin and shame of all who would believe.

In that moment of “now” Jesus suffered punishment for our eternal “then” –

Now for then – so we could be forgiven, redeemed, justified, adopted, rescued, safe, and alive forever.

Jesus – NOW we give you our hearts for whatever THEN holds.