

Series: **“Being the Church in a World Gone Wild”**

CDOBC – beginning on 1/28/18

Today’s Title: **“Money Matters”**

January 27, 2019 - 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Objective: To help people understand the biblical view of money and giving.

Opening prayer

“Money Matters” – because money enables the ministry of the church.

And it’s vital for every follower of Christ to have a biblical understanding of matters concerning their money.

Money / giving has always mattered in the work of God.

God was pleased with the offering given by Abel (**Gen. 4:4**).

Noah sacrificed an offering to God after the flood.

Abraham gave 1/10 of the spoils from war.

David gave a sacrificial offering.

In the Mosaic Law – the O.T. Law – regular giving was codified in the Theocracy of ancient Israel.

In the O.T. books written by the prophets of Israel, we see a great tragedy – the people of God – who were redeemed out of slavery and utter poverty themselves – were treating the poor in their land with the same contempt and cruelty as the Egyptians had treated them.

Amos 2:6-7

Thus says the LORD: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals --

7 those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted...”

God has always come to the aid and defense of the poor – the disadvantaged.

Amos 4:4-6

“Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall,

5 who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp and like David invent for themselves instruments of music,

6 who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!”

Gluttony and excess – ignoring and oblivious to the poor in their midst!

God is a liberating, rescuing God who delights in liberating and rescuing the poor and marginalized.

Psalm 146:5, 7-9

“But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the LORD their God.

7 He gives justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry. The LORD frees the prisoners...opens the eyes of the blind...lifts up those who are weighed down. The LORD loves the godly...protects the foreigners among us...cares for the orphans and widows...”

This wasn't just a posture and practice in the O.T. but it carries through into the N.T.

Luke 4:18 – *Jesus begins / frames His ministry*

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed...”

In **Matthew 25** Jesus equates serving and helping the poor with their physical and tangible needs with helping Him.

In the early chapters of the book of **Acts** we see those in the Church selling some of their belongings in order to help the poor among them.

James 1:27

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

In **James 2** we have an indictment against those in the Church who give favoritism to the rich and set the poor people off to the side.

God is not against money...He’s not against wealth or against those who are wealthy.

He’s against the wealthy who have no regard for the poor.

He’s against heartless and selfish wealth.

He’s against those who use and oppress the poor for their own gain.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

“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 (*heaven*), so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

That is a brief survey of the bible's teaching on wealth, money and poverty.

In the early decades of the Church, many of the converts to the faith were poor. Many were slaves, servants, and those from the lower rungs of society. There were also rich people who put their faith in Christ, but the majority of the N.T. churches were comprised of poor people.

Perhaps the church that struggled the most was the church in Jerusalem. We often think of Jerusalem as a place of wealth and means, but it wasn't. The vast majority of Jerusalem residents were common laborers – workers – and they were in the lower economic levels of the city.

In those early decades the followers of Christ in Jerusalem were persecuted by the Jewish religious leaders (*Saul/Paul*) – and by the Romans. On top of that was a severe famine that hit the middle east.

Acts 11:27-29

“Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). (Roman emperor 41 AD – 54 AD)

29 So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.

30 And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.”

Turn to 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

This is the setting / backdrop to what we'll see in our passage today.

In a previous sermon I mentioned that this first letter from the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth is likely a response to a letter they wrote to him with various questions, which is why in the beginning of vs. 1 we have “Now concerning the collection for the saints...”

Remember, N.T. Greek doesn't have punctuation or chapter divisions. Those were added later to help Christians navigate the bible. So, Paul just finished with one of the most glorious and inspiring sections in all of Scripture:

1 Corinthians 15:55-58

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

16:1 “Now concerning the collection...”

Paul's letter (1 Corinthians) is written in response to their letter, answering their questions. He's moving from their question and incorrect view of the future, resurrected, glorified body of believers to their next issue: MONEY.

“Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.

2 On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he/she may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

3 And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

4 If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.”

The universal purpose for Christian giving. *vs. 1*

It's universal...for all churches. Paul states he directed the churches in Galatia with this same instructions as he's giving to the church in Corinth. This was not unique for the Corinthians – it wasn't unique for the Galatians. It's universal not only in geographical locations, but also in historical time-frames or eras. It was for the 1st century churches – and it's for our church in the 21st century.

So, what's the purpose for Christians giving?

I will say it's larger than what this verse states. I would say the larger purpose of Christian giving is giving to God...and His work – an act of worship, but this verse gives us a very important detail we must never forget.

God's work involves people.

“the collection for the saints”

Not spiritual superstars – not the holiest of the holy – not for those who have performed or witnessed miracles.

“saints” – Gr: *hagios* is used throughout the N.T. to refer to everyday, normal Christians. Its basic meaning is ‘*different*’ and it refers to those who have faith in Christ and are now *different* because they are not in Adam alone but they now are in Christ (15:22-23, 45-47).

The money collected from the Corinthians was going to help the Christians in Jerusalem (vs. 3).

When you give, you are giving to help real people.

You’re not giving to some theoretical thing – to a non-profit corporation – to a transcendent invisible unknowable deity.

You are giving to help “the saints”.

There are a few ways this happens.

First, your giving supports the ministry of this church.

The offerings collected enable us to continue ministry – sometimes by the exciting and spiritual ability of paying the electric and water bill so we can have lights, a/c and working toilets! But in reality, this enables the church to minister to people – to affect the way people think and live – to come alongside them in their time of need and confusion. Ministry is about people – and what you give enables ministry to take place.

Second, your giving supports the church staff.

For the most part, churches are volunteer organizations. The majority of ministry is done by volunteers – those serving and using their spiritual gifts to build up the Body of Christ. But churches also have paid staff which perform the necessary duties required each week to lead and support ministry and normally this work entails too much time for volunteers to realistically take on. Pastors, office staff, custodians, repair technicians, landscapers, accountants, etc.

Third, your giving supports missionaries / gospel work in various places around the world.

This church supports over 20 missionaries and 4 organizations through the regular budget. Some of you, in addition to your regular giving to the church budget, you designate some giving to ‘missions’ or to a particular missionary.

This is in part what was happening in our passage today. The churches throughout Macedonia, Achaia and Asia Minor were giving money to support the people – the Christians in Jerusalem as they lived out the gospel in that city and region.

This is what you’re doing when you give to Hope City Church. The community Hope City is in and called to serve is a very poor community. That

community desperately needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but they can't yet support the financial needs of the church – which is why our collection on the 4th Sunday of every month – the gift you designate above your normal giving to this church – is following right in-line with what Paul was talking about when he wrote his 1st letter to the Corinthian church.

When you give to Hope City – you're giving to “the saints” in that church and enabling them to bring the light of the Gospel and the love of Christ to those they serve in that community. Your giving will help make their church building a safer place - as certain parts of the building are brought up to current building code standards, and you are helping to create a spiritually and emotionally safe place for people to go.

The Van Buren House which is the former parsonage on Hope City's property will be a place for at-risk teenagers to go after school to get help with a variety of things is one of the ways this will happen.

The Christian's practice of giving should be regular. vs. 2

Your giving should be regular – “first day of the week” – Your giving should not be haphazard or simply based in your emotional responses. It should be thought out –

planned - a purposeful, intentional act of obedience to God and love for others. Your giving helps to keep your heart from coveting ‘stuff’ and from having a steel-grip on the things of this world.

Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and money.” **Matt. 6:24**

You’re giving should not only be a regular practice, but you’re giving should be to the church.

Some Christians don’t give to the church – but they give to other worthwhile causes. While this is not a bad thing, it’s not what we see as the example set forth in the N.T. – it’s not the best thing...and it’s not in-line with the biblical teaching in passages like this one which put the church – and it’s spirit-guided leadership in the position to bear the responsibility of spending God’s money in responsible, gospel-wise ways.

So, “first day of the week” signifies not only a regular practice of giving, but it also ties your giving to the church.

One additional point on your giving going to the church.

“each of you is to put something aside and store it up”

“store it up” is the Gr. Word *thesaurizo* – which is where we get the English word ‘thesaurus’ – which is a book with a collection of words. In Judaism – and in the ancient pagan religions, the temples had a treasury-box – a box / depository which would hold the money

worshippers would bring to worship. This money would be used for a variety of reasons – one of which was to help the poor.

This is the word Paul uses when he gives the command to “put something aside” – and he tells us to put it into the treasury box – which was very familiar to everyone in the Corinthian church – whether they came from a Jewish background or a Gentile pagan background.

Also notice this is something for “each of you” – nobody is exempt. If you have very little...then give out of the small amount you have. If you have a lot...then give out of the abundance God has blessed you with.

“as he/she may prosper”

You might wonder how much you should be giving. Here is the N.T. guide – as God has prospered you, you should give. We don't have a fixed % in the N.T.

Many will use 10% as a guide – as a tithe – and that's fine, but there's nowhere in the N.T. where it says our giving should be limited to 10% of our income.

If you're not giving at all, maybe you want to choose a % to start giving – and that's a good place to start – but the N.T. teaching is one of generosity, not of %'s.

Giving to the Lord is not just monetary issue...it's most importantly a spiritual issue.

Proverbs 14:31

“Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.”

It’s not a financial transaction...it’s much more than that!

Luke 6:38

“...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,

2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,

4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints--

5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”

So, the question is not *‘What % should I give?’* but rather: *‘How much blessing do I want from God?’*

This is not prosperity gospel – you don’t give simply for what you might receive back, but when you give to the Lord and His Church – and when you sacrificially give out of your abundance - with joy and love for others – then God will bless you.

Maybe it will be a spiritual blessing...not a bad deal!

Maybe when you prove you're a good steward with money God will bless you with more money – so you can continue to give more and more and thereby support and enable more and more gospel ministry which changes lives not only for this planet but for all eternity! “so that there will be no collecting when I come.” – Paul wants to make sure when he eventually arrives in Corinth, he doesn't have to take a collection. He wants them to give now, on a regular basis, so when he arrives, there will be a sizable gift ready to go to “the saints” in Jerusalem. Our giving should be a regular practice and pattern, not based on or motivated by guilt and emotionally manipulative appeals. This isn't to say the Holy Spirit doesn't convict someone of their lack of giving...or that emotions shouldn't ever be involved in giving, but your giving should be thoughtful, intentional – it should be a regular act of obedience and love.

3 And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

Church leaders must properly handle God's money. vs. 3-4

In the 1st century, sending someone – or a group of people on an important task – or when they would be delivering an important or valuable item – the sending party would produce a letter which would introduce the couriers and the importance of their work. This is what

Paul is alluding to when he talks about sending “...those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.”

By the time Paul would arrive in Corinth, he expected this financial gift for the Christians in Jerusalem to be a sizable amount, which would be in the form of coins (and very heavy), so the gift would need to be delivered by more than 1 person not only due to the weight, but due to the accountability and safety of having more than 1 person carrying the money.

It's amazing how many churches fail to take common sense, necessary precautions when it comes to the offering they collect. It's important to put safeguards into the handling of the offering – not only when it's handled and counted but when it's transported to the bank for deposit.

This is why our security team is involved with this – and why we have policies in place to make sure there are always at least 2 people with the offering when it's handled and counted.

Paul wanted to make sure the Corinthians would choose wise, honest and trustworthy people – godly people - to transport the gift to Jerusalem.

4 If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.”

vs. 4 is difficult to interpret.

Is Paul saying: *If the amount collected is big enough, then I'll travel to Jerusalem with the group.*

Or, is he saying: *I'm not sure I can commit to traveling all the way to Jerusalem – I'm not sure where God is leading me next.*

I think the point we can take away from vs. 4 is that Paul is committed to making sure their gift arrives to help “the saints” in Jerusalem. He understands how important this is because of the dire need of the Jerusalem church.

Apply it...

Giving to the church is giving to help people.

Give on a regular basis.

Give generously as a sign of your trust in God and your love for others.