

THE CORE: Giving All Things Generouslyⁱ Matthew 6:19-24

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Church Family! It is so good to see you this morning. For those of you that are our guests, we are especially grateful to have you join us today. We'd love to connect with you. There are a couple of ways you can help us do that. One, feel free to text, anytime, the keyword TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant to the number 94-000. When you do, you'll be sent a link where you can share with us basic contact information. I will then look forward to following up with you this coming week. Or another way you can connect with us is by stopping by our information center located in the main lobby area under the banner "Hope is Here." We have a gift there for you as a way to say thanks for joining us today. It is the highlight of my week to visit with those of you that are our guests. We are thrilled you have joined us today.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Well, today is a slightly different day than what is a typical Sunday at our church. It is what we call Annual Report Day. It is a day that we set aside, every year, to talk about all that The Lord is doing in and through our church. It is a day that we celebrate God's work and look forward to what's ahead.

If you are a guest with us, please know that it is typical that at this point we open God's Word and I preach out of a text. And we are still going to do that this morning, but it will be an abbreviated time of that. But for those of you that are our guests, I hope what you learn today is that God is at work here, and we have much to praise Him about in our church.

Having said that, I do want to take some time this morning and wrap up our teaching series we've called The Core. We have looked at the core values of our church. They are the beliefs that drive us to accomplish our mission, vision, and execute our strategy. To this point, we have talked about the core values of sharing the gospel relentlessly, modeling Jesus faithfully, and last week we looked at the desire to love others sacrificially. Today we are going to be talking about our final core value, giving all things generously.

So, I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the gospel of Matthew, chapter 6. We are going to be in verses 19-24 this morning. I want to briefly go over our core value of study and then go through our annual report.

Matthew 6 is in the middle of what is called the Sermon on the Mount. This is a sermon that Jesus preached as crowds of people began to gather around Him. We don't know how many people are in the crowd, Scripture doesn't say, but we would think at least a couple hundred. Jesus breaks His sermon into several small sections, each addressing a different topic. But, in each of the sections, Jesus is laying out the principles of His Kingdom.

We know Jesus to be the King of kings and His Kingdom, in His own words, is not of this world. It is greater than this world and is eternal. And the values, the principles, and ethics of His Kingdom are different than the kingdoms of this world.ⁱⁱ As a result, Jesus contrasts the dynamics of His Kingdom from what is normal, earthly thinking. That is His focus in teaching on generosity here.

In our culture, earthly kingdoms, we value acquiring and hoarding material possessions. But in Jesus' Kingdom, generosity and giving reigns supreme. And what Jesus is driving at is that as His disciples, we should value treasure in the Heavenly Kingdom over treasure in the earthly kingdom.

As Jesus lays out the principles of His Kingdom, we see that we are to give all things generously. Because that characterizes the Kingdom of Heaven, it characterizes us, citizens of Heaven. In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches that generosity marks a believer, benefits the believer, and focuses the believer. That is our outline today. Let's begin by looking at the fact that...

MESSAGE:

1) Generosity Marks a Believer.

The Bible teaches that being generous is a key characteristic of followers of Jesus. Why? Well, God is a generous God. He's provided everything we have. He's blessed us in every way. He so loved the world that He gave His Son. And as God said to Abraham, He says today, "We are blessed to be a blessing."

This key mark of a believer is what Jesus is getting at. Let's read Matthew 6, verse 19. ¹⁹***Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.*** Jesus makes this statement in a negative command. "Do not." It carries the idea of stopping something so that something else can be done. He says, "Stop laying up treasures on earth." Now, the context by which Jesus is speaking is to those that would follow Him. If we desire to participate in Jesus' kingdom, then we stop solely investing in

earthly possessions, and we start investing in eternal initiatives. Therefore, generosity is a mark of someone participating in Jesus' Kingdom.

Paul goes on to teach that when we come to faith in Jesus as Lord, we are new creations. We no longer desire the things of the flesh, but rather we seek to walk according to the Spirit. Our perspective changes. The world now seems upside down and backwards. When the way of the world is to gather possessions on earth, we see the way of the Kingdom of Heaven is to give. We are a people marked by generosity with our time, talent and our treasures.

From all accounts that we have in the Scriptures, generosity has always been a marker of a believer. In Acts 2:44 and 45 it says, *44And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.* The early church was marked by generosity with their possessions. We see the same in Acts 4, verses 34 and 35. *34There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.* Living with an open hand has marked believers since the beginning of the church. And it still marks believers today.

The early church was generous with their possessions, but also with their finances. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul is taking up a collection for ministry. He says, *1We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2for [even] in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. 6Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. 7But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace [this act of generosity] also.”*

The point is that a key characteristic of a believer in Jesus has always been made evident in the generosity they display. Generosity marks a believer. Second point that Jesus makes is...

2) Generosity Benefits the Believer.

Not only is a generous heart a mark of a believer, but it also benefits a believer. Jesus takes on the role of an advisor here in verse 19. He says, don't lay-up treasures where it denigrates and thieves steal. But consider a better investment.

Verse 20 of Matthew 6. *20but [in other words, instead] lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.* A couple things here.

First, Jesus says to lay up **for yourselves**. In other words, it's for you. Your benefit. There is a gain to being generous. Secondly, Jesus is talking about return on investment. He's asking us to consider the R.O.I.

Stop investing solely in earthly matters. When you do, you're actually taking a risk. Now, hear me, Jesus is not saying investing is wrong. In fact, the Bible is full of the wisdom of investing. To isolate this teaching and say that would be a mistake. You should be investing. But He is saying that just investing in earthly things is risky. And that there's a better return on investment in eternal things.

Remember March of 2020? We all do. The world shut down. In a matter of a couple weeks my 401k dropped drastically. Then again in 2022. I lost high 5-digit numbers in my 401k. I still haven't gotten back to 2021 numbers. We know the feeling in the pit of our stomachs when those drops happen, don't we?

Listen, 401ks are not guaranteed. Investing involves a risk. But Jesus is saying there's no risk when we invest in Heaven! Moth and rust can't set in in Heaven. Thieves can't break into Heaven. Economic turns do not affect it. Consider the better return, Jesus says.

But even beyond Jesus, did you know that our culture sees the benefits of generosity. I came across an article written by Michael Hyatt entitled, **"5 Research-Backed Benefits of Making Generosity a Habit."**ⁱⁱⁱ In Hyatt's words, "There's a lot of research demonstrating that generosity enhances our quality of life." He cites 5 ways being generous actually benefits someone.

Research says that generosity lowers blood pressure. According to a Stony Brook School of Medicine study, generosity quote, "lowers the risk of dementia, reduces anxiety and depression, and improves chronic pain management."^{iv}

Hyatt quotes another study that says, “Giving our time and money to others gives us an emotional boost.”^v I think we all know that to be true. Further studies have found that being generous lowers stress and improves relationships.^{vi} And the 5th way generosity benefits us is that it is linked to extending life.^{vii} Kinda sounds like Jesus knew what He was talking about!

We give all things generously because generosity marks a believer, and it benefits a believer. Thirdly, ...

3) Generosity Focuses the Believer.

When we give our time, talent, and treasures, it focuses our hearts on what is most important. In verses 21 through 24, Jesus talks about this. He says, *“²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²²The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! ²⁴No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

Jesus concludes this section of His sermon by saying that our treasure and our hearts can only be in one place. The word that is translated as “heart” in the original language means the inner self, the mind, and the intention.^{viii} In other words, our focus. He says that either our treasures and our hearts, our focus are on Heaven, OR they are on earth. And when we are generous, it shifts our focus to the things of Heaven. Our hearts, our minds, our focus will be on eternal matters, not earthly, temporary things.

Now, in no way is Jesus saying that having things is bad. That’s not the interpretation here. I say that for 2 reasons. 1) because the point isn’t the treasure, in Jesus’ sermon, it’s the heart. And 2) because the Christian view of material possessions is that God is the one that has given them to us. And He’s given it to us to steward, to manage in a way that honor’s Him.

The point is what we focus on. What’s is our heart position? What do we value the most? Is it our earthly possessions and the acquisition of more? Or do we leverage the earthly resources He’s given us for Kingdom investment? That is the real issue. It is a focus issue. Because treasure follows the heart. If our hearts are focused on the eternal, our resources will naturally follow our heart.

So, we desire to be a church that shares the gospel relentlessly, because it is the gospel that brings hope. We desire to model Jesus faithfully to a lost world but also to one another for discipleship. We passionately love others sacrificially because that’s what God has done for us. And we give all things generously because our hearts are focused on Kingdom impact.

ANNUAL REPORT

Alright, well, at this time I want to share with you a report on how we have leveraged temporary earthly resources for Kingdom Impact. On your seat when you came in, or in a seat near you, you should have had an Annual Report sheet. On the back of that sheet are numbers that talk through how we are seeing The Lord at work in our church. They are broken down by each of our strategy points. So, I want to walk through that here this morning.

TRUSTING JESUS THROUGH WORSHIP

The first category is trusting Jesus through worship. We have had an amazing year when we think about the worship ministry of our church. We’ve had significant growth in attendance with almost 32% growth in weekly attendance.

Counting today’s baptism, we’ve had 53 baptisms in the last year. Here’s why that’s significant. Each baptism represents life change. It is a demonstration of Jesus working in the lives of people bringing them to faith in Him.

What is not on that report is our IF Gathering. A women’s event where over 100 ladies gathered in worship and Bible study. We also continue to build a fantastic worship team both on and off the stage. This is a team of people that are using their talents to lead in corporate worship. Also, this year we were able to bring on a full-time worship leader in Micah Sullivan. What a blessing he has been. We are constructing his office in what used to be our reception area right now. Our Night of Worship was absolutely fantastic, and we are looking forward to more of those in 2024. Micah is also using his creative abilities and is working to write some music that will be unique. We look to roll out new music from our church in 2024.

In addition to corporate worship, we have also provided tools for you to enhance your private worship, your personal time with The Lord. Our Family Ministry Team has worked to provide really cool resources for you as you seek to raise godly families. It has truly been an amazing year in the area of worship.

TRANSFORMING LIVES IN COMMUNITY

The next category is transforming lives in community. We continue to see The Lord transform lives through the vehicle of community in our church. Along with our increase in worship attendance, we've also seen people get connected in small groups. That's so encouraging to me. It is in small group that you are known, loved, cared for, and disciplined.

Our groups are serving well, fellowshiping well, and discipling well. Our small group leaders are helping people find community and doing life together.

We've been able to launch new groups on a consistent basis and have added 88 new members to our church family this year! By the way, if you are new to our church and would like to learn more about our church or even join our church, mark your calendars for our next Starting Point which will be December 10 during the 11am worship service. You can sign up for that on our website at trinitytx.org.

Another area that we are seeing lives transformed is through Celebrate Recovery. We had initially planned to launch Celebrate Recovery in January of 2024, but The Lord worked in a way that we were able to launch in September of this year. We were able to make some sacrifices, free up some resources, and invest in this powerful ministry. They average about 40 people each week. 19 leaders are ministering in powerful ways. Each week newcomers attend CR.

Let me share with you some of the impact you are having in transforming lives by supporting Celebrate Recovery. Some of the issues that people have mentioned that CR is helping them with include: problems with relationships, marriage issues, just out of prison and trying to find a job and re-accumulate in society, overcoming addictions, spouse on hospice care, overcoming anger, has been attending AA but looking for a program that proclaims Jesus as the higher power, struggles with teens, struggles in dealing with a child with health issues, childhood dysfunction, overcoming spousal abuse, emotional trauma, homelessness, and much more. Church family, you are a part of people finding hope and healing in dealing with life's hurts, habits and hang ups! I'm so proud of you and excited about what The Lord is doing to do through CR in 2024.

God is using our church to transform lives and we all get to be a part of that!

TELLING OTHERS BY LIVING ON MISSION

The third category to our annual report is telling others by living on mission. What an incredible year it has been in the area of missions!

This year so far, we have mobilized 320 of you in serving our city and the world outside of our church. That doesn't count the incredible volunteers we have serving in ministries. One of the things we hear consistently is how much Trinity serves. We also hear about the quality of programming we are able to offer here at our church. That doesn't happen without you, Church Family, and your willingness to volunteer and serve! I am so proud to be a part of a church where people have a heart for others, a heart for ministry, and have found purpose and meaning in serving The Lord and others!

Through our partnership with the East Texas Food Bank, volunteers from our church served food to 4,839 families. That's families, not individuals! We are meeting a need in profound ways.

In January of this year, we celebrated Trinity's 40 years of ministry. It was an incredible week that included serve week where 179 of you served in our city. We had over 300 gather for the celebration dinner that was a blast. And we got to hear from our founding Pastor, Dr. Reggie McNeal. It was also at our 40th Anniversary Celebration that we burned our note as a result of having paid off all debt! Even though we celebrated the past 40 years of fruitful ministry, we are still on mission as we are developing, mobilizing, and launching ministries for the next 40 years.

We have several things planned for 2024 in the area of missions. We plan to take 3 mission trips this year. You need to get on your application and passport! Stop by and see our Minister of Missions and Mobilization, Brittany, for more details.

I'm also excited about Night to Shine in February. Night to Shine is a prom like experience for honored guests with special needs ages 14 and up. It is going to be a ton of fun. We will need folks to volunteer for that awesome event. If you know of anyone that would like to participate, either as an honored guest or as a volunteer, send them to trinitytx.org/nighttoshine. There you can register.

Church Family, we are pursuing excellence in Trusting Jesus through worship, we are working to Transform lives in community, and we are continuing to tell

others by living on mission. God is at work, not only in our church, but through our church! And He is using you to do incredible things!

FINANCIAL REPORT

What I want you to know that your generosity has fueled everything we've been able to do this year. And what I've been able to report is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what The Lord is doing. And when you give, you don't just give TO Trinity, you give THROUGH our church to be a blessing for the sake of The Kingdom of Heaven.

You'll see there the financial report for 2023. Our budget requirement, year to date, is \$987,746. So far this year, you have given \$910,898.10 to our operations budget. Much more has been given through designated receipts. But general budget giving is what funds our ministries and supports operations. Our expenses, year to date, matches what we have brought in. \$909,851.14. I want to challenge each of us to see that we finish the year strong financially. It takes all of us! And I am so very grateful for how you trust God with your finances and how you invest in the future of our church.

We also launched, this year, the Next40 Initiative. That is an initiative that we are desiring to position our church to reach the next generation for Christ by investing in programming, resources, and facilities that will serve as tools to achieve that goal. This year, you have given \$390,673 to the Next40 Initiative. As a result, Phase 1 is well underway and paid for. The playground, although still awaiting the fencing, is playable as of today! Kids are out there having a blast this morning.

Additionally, we are installing access controls in the Kids area that will provide added security. And we are renovating the Quad into a Kids Worship Center. That is coming along nicely as well. We plan to have an open house once it's all completed and invite all of our church to see the investment we are making in the next generation. So, be on the lookout for that.

We are now in the process of seeking bids on key aspects of Phase 2. That phase focuses on our Student Ministry by constructing a half court basketball court, audio, video and lighting upgrades in our student center, and more security measures across our campus. We hope to inform you on all that very soon.

Listen, it is The Lord's faithfulness to us, our church, this year that has me fired up for all that is in store for 2024! Together, we are making a difference on our campus, in our city and around the world. Let's continue to run after The Lord.

BUDGET VOTE

With our report behind us, I want to invite Josh Blackstone to join me. He is going to lead us in voting on the 2024 Proposed budget. Josh serves as our Deacon Body Vice Chair among many other hats he wears here at Trinity. So, I am going to turn it over to Josh to lead us in voting on the 2024 proposed budget.

CONCLUSION

Thanks, Josh. I appreciate you, man, and all you do for our church. You can continue marking your ballot and passing them.

But listen, I never want to miss an opportunity for someone to come to faith in Jesus as Lord. If you are here today, and you've never trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior, I want today to serve as a powerful object lesson to you. It is God that has established the Church. God has called a people to join in on what He is doing, all so that you can know that He loves you and desires a relationship with you. God has moved heaven and earth, and the heart of this church that you might know of His love for you.

If you are here today and have never trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior, I am going to stick around up here following our services and would love to visit with you.

VIDEO

As I have said, Church Family, we are a vehicle to ministering to people. We have put together a video sharing just a few of the stories of impact you've had this year. I hope that you are encouraged by this video.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: John MacArthur, "The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew," Moody Press: Chicago, 2001; Skip Heitzig, "Weekend of Generosity" sermon preached at Calvary Albuquerque, Sunday, November 6, 2022, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/304/sermon/4728>; Jack Graham, "Generosity," published by PowerPoint with Jack Graham, 2019, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGS0zKMLUTk>; David Guzik, "Your Treasury: Matthew 6:19-24," sermon published by Enduring Word, accessed online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qb5VI0LI_Fs; Chip Ingram, "The Genius of Generosity: Why It's Genius to be Generous," published by Living on the Edge with Chip Ingram, accessed online: <https://livingontheedge.org/broadcast/why-its-genius-to-be-generous/>.

ⁱⁱ David Guzik.

ⁱⁱⁱ Michael Hyatt, "5 Research-backed Benefits of Making Generosity a Habit," published by Full Focus, accessed online: <https://fullfocus.co/habit-of-generosity/#>.

^{iv} Terri Yablonsky, "Be Generous: It's a Simple Way to Stay Healthier," published by the Chicago Tribune, August 6, 2015, accessed online: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/health/sc-hlth-0812-joy-of-giving-20150806-story.html>.

^v Hyatt.

^{vi} Science Daily, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/10/141028101625.htm>.

^{vii} Elizabeth Renter, "What Generosity Does to Your Brain and Life Expectancy," published by U.S. News and World Report, May 1, 2015, accessed online: <https://health.usnews.com/health-news/health-wellness/articles/2015/05/01/what-generosity-does-to-your-brain-and-life-expectancy>.

^{viii} Strong's Concordance, 2588, kardia.