

ACTS 20:35

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- In a three-week series called *Generous*.
 - Considering how the gospel of Jesus makes us generous people.
 - And, I think, we all want to be generous people!
 - **Last week:** Mike spoke about how gospel makes us generous with **time**.
 - **Today:** We'll consider how gospel makes us generous with **treasure**.
- We don't feel awkward talking about money here at Cedar Springs. WHY?
 - Bc Jesus spoke about it all the time!
 - One pastor – **Randy Alcorn** – points out that 15% of everything Jesus says in the gospels relates to the topic of money/possessions.¹
 - Remember that Jesus wasn't some sleazy TV evangelist.
 - He was never rich, didn't even have anywhere to lay his head.
 - Certainly doesn't talk about money to try manipulate it out of us!
 - Instead, he spoke about it so much bc – as **Alcorn** puts it:
 - Jesus knew that our faith and our finances are inseparable.
 - There's a fundamental connection bt our spiritual lives/our money.
- But I do have one caveat as we start, and it's this: If you are not a Xn, I would ask you NOT to give to our church. WHY?
 - We don't want you to give until you've received from Jesus first.
 - Don't want there to be any confusion → Delighted you're here and not bc we want your money.
 - Our generosity is a response to the gospel...
 - We want you to receive that gospel before you give.

Transition: With all that in mind, let's go to Lord and **pray** for our time.

INTRODUCTION

- Here's your SIS: **It is more blessed to give than to receive.**
 - Comes straight from the Bible.
 - **Acts 20:35:** Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
- Do you remember when Jesus said this?
 - Our minds scroll through the gospels trying to remember the story.
 - Perhaps you can't remember and feel a little guilty → We should really know our Bibles better than we do...
- Well, it's a little bit of a trick question. WHY?
 - Bc this statement isn't recorded in any of the gospels → There is no story where Jesus says these words.
 - Does this mean we should be cynical?
 - Did Paul – who's speaking here in Acts 20:35 – say this himself and claim he was quoting Jesus to try and prove his point?
 - Like when your kids are arguing and one of them says, "Dad said..."

- Of course this isn't like that! **Jn 21:25:** Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.
 - The gospels are **sufficient** → Tell us everything we need to know for this life and the next.
 - But they're not **exhaustive** → Don't tell us everything Jesus ever said.
 - In heaven we'll learn all the other things he said and did on earth.
 - And we'll enjoy listening to him as he says new things as well.
 - But since these words are recorded in the Bible, we can trust Jesus spoke these words.
 - And I'm glad bc I think they're excellent! WHY?
 - Bc – to be honest – they don't make much sense!
 - Jesus does this: Says unexpected → Disarms assumptions → Turns things upside-down.
 - To be blessed surely means we're getting something.
 - A thoughtful word, act of kindness, generous gift.
 - Jesus says: There's blessing there, but there's more blessing elsewhere.
 - Not as you **get** something, but as you **give**.
 - The best blessings come by subtraction, not addition.
- It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Transition:

- We say: Well, okay... But **how** does that work? **Why** is it more blessed to give than to receive?? **Why** is it better to give than get?!?!?
- Delighted you asked.
 - Came up with 15 reasons – we could brainstorm more – do so in SS/small groups.
 - But since nobody wants a 15-point sermon, I'm only going to share 7.
 - **You say:** Pastor, I'm not sure anyone wants a 7-point sermon either.
 - **I say:** I'm sorry, but let's get on with it.
- That we might be generous – not just with our time but with our treasure – here are...

7 BIBLICAL REASONS WHY IT'S MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

1. Generosity yields the best return.

- **Mt 6:19-20:** Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...
 - X's argument against amassing material wealth on earth isn't that it's sinful...
 - His argument is that it's a poor investment!
- Imagine you're about to EMIGRATE...
 - From these shores to bonnie Scotland – the closest thing to the PL...
 - You're not going to buy a big house *here*.
 - You're going to invest in a home *there*.
 - Why would you store up treasure in a place you're about to leave???
- You are about to EMIGRATE...
 - From these shores to that true and greater PL...
 - Invest your money now in a way that will make sense when you land.
- Being generous now yields 10B-year returns...

That's why it's more blessed to give than to receive.

2. Generosity frees you from materialism.

- **Ecc 5:12:** The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep.
 - The more you have, the more you have to worry about.
 - **William Vanderbilt** inherited \$100M, doubled it in a decade, and concluded: *“The care of \$200 million is enough to kill anyone. There is no pleasure in it.”*²
- Do you know I much a worry about this \$10,000 watch?
 - Not at all bc it didn’t cost me \$10,000 → I don’t have a \$10,000 watch.
 - So I wasn’t that stressed when I inexplicably ran it through the dishwasher – which believe it or not I managed to do this week!
 - It’s a long story...
 - Certainly longer than a 7-point sermon allows...
 - But the point is this: Generosity de-clutters our lives enabling us to live simply, free from worldly concerns.

That’s why it’s more blessed to give than to receive.

3. Generosity focuses your priorities.

- **Mt 6:21:** Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- What do you want to care about?
 - A bigger bank balance, a bigger 401K, a bigger house, a better car...
 - That stuff is cool but it’s not what we want our lives to be about.
- Jesus says give your money to the things you want to have your heart...
 - The poor, the unborn, the unreached...
 - If you give your money to those things – or another priority – and you’ll find you care even more about it.
- Your heart invests where you invest your money:
 - Invest in priorities you won’t regret!
 - Give to those things you want your life to be about.

That’s why it’s more blessed to give than to receive.

4. Generosity gives you the clear conscience of obedience.

- Generosity is commanded in the Bible: **Heb 13:16:** Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.
 - If you feel guilty when generosity is brought up, there is a solution...
 - Be more generous...
- Great freedom and joy in living the way we’re designed to live:
 - Remember **Ps 1** says: Happy is the one whose delight is in the law of the Lord.
 - Obeying God is to live the best life that there is.

That’s why it’s more blessed to give than to receive.

5. Generosity helps you rest in the God who is in control.

- **1 Tim 6:17:** 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...
- Wealth brings an illusion of control:
 - Makes us feel like we can solve our own problems.
 - Makes us think that all is well.
- But in reality, there are many problems that money can’t solve.
 - Example, one study found 50 richest people in America have been married 72x.³

- 50% divorce rate, all of which have been plastered across the broadsheets.
- Money is fool's gold → It's much better to place our security in God.
 - He is the only one who will never leave us or forsake us.
 - He is the only one who is really in control.
- Generosity is spiritual discipline that reminds us of where true security is found.
That's why it's more blessed to give than to receive.

6. Generosity makes you part of something bigger than yourself.

- **2 Cor 9:6:** The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.
- God is doing all sorts of amazing things in this world.
 - Don't forget that for all the hardship/sadness...
 - This is still a great time to be alive.
- Consider some of the things our own church is involved in:
 - **[Church]:** In our church we're helping kids know what it means to follow Jesus, coming alongside adults struggling through divorce, grief, addiction, mental health issues, sexual shame, and abuse.
 - **[Local]:** In our community we're coming alongside the poor, homeless, orphans and widows in their distress.
 - **[Global]:** Across world we're planting churches, reaching unreached peoples, and loving refugees.
- None of these things would happen without your generosity.
 - When you give to this church, you participate in something much bigger than yourself → You join in God's work here and across the world.
 - Beautiful thought: That we – creatures of dust – can make choices that result in everlasting life.

That's why it's more blessed to give than to receive.

7. Generosity makes you more like Christ.

- **2 Cor 8:9:** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.
 - **WSC 27:** Christ's humiliation consisted in His being born and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.
 - He **gave** up everything so that we might **get** everything.
- Jesus never asks anything from us that he has not first done for us.
 - When he said these words – **It is more blessed to give than to receive** – I believe he considered them true for himself.
 - It made him happy to give up everything for us.
- Our generosity is a joyful response.
 - When we give, we become like him.
 - His words become true – not just for him – but for us.

That's why it's more blessed to give than to receive.

SUMMARY:

- Generosity...
 1. Yields the best return.

2. Frees you from materialism.
3. Focuses your priorities.
4. Gives you the clear conscience of obedience.
5. Helps you rest in the God who is in control.
6. Makes you part of something bigger than yourself.
7. Makes you more like Christ.

It's more blessed to give than to receive.

- Which one of those sticks out to you?
 - Maybe it's one of those reasons...
 - Or maybe they've sparked you to think of something else?

THE CLOSE

- Whatever the case, here's my invitation: Give.
 - Don't worry about the amount – Jesus isn't worried – this is about your heart.
 - Give what you can away – and just see if his words don't come true in your life.
- We want to be generous people → We want to be a generous church.
 - And we can be...
 - Today is a great day to start.
- The gospel frees you to live a compelling beautiful generous life.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said,
 “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Endnotes

¹ This statistic and the quotes that follow come from Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*.

² See [this article](#), accessed 3/3/24.

³ See [this article](#), accessed 3/3/24.