

SERMON: IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN RECEIVE!

TEXT: Acts 20:35

Introduction: The habit of giving touches the heart of the Christian life. Our life in Christ is possible because "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Love is at the center of our life in Christ but giving is the first and most direct result of love. Love is proven in a willingness to sacrifice for another. Jesus expressed the importance of giving when He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). And, though we tend to measure everything in terms of dollars, the giving to which Christ refers is much more than just money. It includes all we are and all we have.

Discussion: In this lesson, I want us to remember the habit of giving! The NT is filled with instruction and teaching on giving. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, 1 out of every 6 verses deals with money. Of the 29 parables Christ told, 16 deal with a person and his money. Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure; where your treasure is, there is your heart; where your heart is, there is your happiness. **IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, LEARN TO GIVE!**

1. Christian Stewardship involves...

- Stewardship of **TIME!** Eph. 5:16.
- Stewardship of **TREASURES!** Matt. 6:21.
- Stewardship of **TALENTS!** 1 Pet. 4:10.

2. Privilege of Giving! God expects us to give as we have **PURPOSED & PROSPERED** (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

- **EXAMPLE:** Philippians, "an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God."
- **EXAMPLE:** Macedonians, "that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality."
- *God loves a **CHEERFUL giver** (2 Cor. 9:7).*

3. Promises of Giving! God promises we will have an abundant abundance (2 Cor. 9:6-10).

- **Sowing (v.6):** In this context it speaks of one seed producing many seeds as a way of referring to abundance. But first the seed must be given away (i.e., sown)!
- **Sufficiency (v.8):** Christian giving affects all of life! God provides for all needs (cf. Matt. 6:19-34).
- **Seed (v.10):** Giving is the natural result of salvation. A stingy Christian is a contradiction in terms!

4. Practice of Giving! God identifies giving to be **PURPOSEFUL** (2 Cor. 8:3).

- **We give out of ability (8:3a):** Giving is out of what you have, not what you do not have!
- **We must give sacrificially (8:3b):** Giving always pinches; it is a sacrifice!
- **We must give willingly (8:3c):** No one should give under pressure. We must give with an open heart

Conclusion: Read Luke 6:38 & Malachi 3:10. Giving is a responsibility, accountability and duty of every Christian. It is the way Christians demonstrate their faith, hope and love.

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PULPIT PREVIEW

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SERMON: *Are you a Faithful Christian Example?*

TEXT: 1 Timothy 4:12

Intro: Example is powerful! We learn, listen and live by example. People copy what they see others doing. Notice two illustrations. ❶ In the 1934 film, *It Happened One Night*, Clark Gable removed his shirt and he wasn't wearing an undershirt! Every man wore an undershirt! It is said that

the sale of undershirts in the United States dropped by 75% as a result. People copy. ❷ The makers of the 1982 film *E.T.* approached the confectionary maker, Mars, about having M&M's used in the film. Mars, for some reason, said "no", so the film makers went to Hershey's. The result was that *E.T.* ate Hershey's *Reece's Pieces* which were relatively unknown at the time but sales went through the roof. People copy (borrowed). Notice Great Bible examples: Abraham had great faith (Rom. 4:20), Joseph was great in forgiving (Gen. 50:20), Moses was a great leader (Exod. 14), David was great at courage (1 Sam. 17) & Jesus is our perfect example (2 Cor. 5:21). Notice 7 Habits of Highly Effective Christians (1 Tim. 4:12-16).

1. **Model Christian Morality (v.12).** Our words, conduct, love, spirit, faith and purity must be demonstrated in our thought, words and deeds. The greatest message we will ever preach is the one we preach with our life. Cf. 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9.
2. **Biblical Foundation (v.13).** "Devote yourself" (verb) is *proseko*; it is present active indicative, which means to be continually devoted to the Word.
3. **Using God given Ability (v.14).** Timothy had received miraculous powers by the "laying on of hands." The miraculous age ceased at the end of the first century (1 Cor. 13:8-12). Thus, it is by application we learn to use our God given abilities. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25) stresses using what God gives us and not squandering it. What God has given, let us use to His Glory! Cf. 1 Cor. 10:31.
4. **Purpose Driven Life (v.15a).** We must be entirely committed to Holy living. Our purpose will determine our direction and outcome. Paul was clear about his purpose by saying, "*For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain*" (Phil. 1:21). Cf. Galatians 2:20.
5. **Let your Light Shine (v.15b).** Christianity is not a passive mistake, but a committed determination. Christians must Stand Strong, Shine Bright and Live Faithfully. Our life must be a sterling example of holiness for others to see and copy. Cf. 1 Peter 1:13-16.
6. **Dedicated Perseverance (v.16a).** We must exercise endurance by examining the two great areas of life: self and scripture. Thus, we will be a powerful example as we are seen to endure! Cf. Hebrews 10:32-37.
7. **Clear Goal (v.16b).** Salvation is our greatest need! As we examine ourselves, endure and think eternally, our focus will be right.

Conclusion: Thomas Jefferson, in writing to John Adams once said, "*As Christians, we must realize the world is judging Christianity by us!*"

-Mark N. Posey

SERMON: How to dissolve doubts!

TEXT: Romans 4:20-21

Intro: We must be like Daniel (Daniel 5:16).

1. We are to believe without doubting (Mt 21:21; Mark 9:24).
2. We are to pray without doubting (1 Tim. 2:8; Jam. 1:6).
3. We are to obey without doubting (Acts 10:20; 11:12).

Con: Faith comes by hearing God's Word!

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The Glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ

2 Cor. 4:4 describes the gospel as, “*the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.*” This is a remarkable description of the Gospel. The gospel is the good news which tells of the glory of Christ in Whom we can see God. It is the mighty and powerful message from God that penetrates to the deepest place in the soul. Notice how Paul described the glory of the gospel in Rom. 1:16, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*”

1. **ORIGIN of the Gospel:** “*the gospel of Christ.*” The gospel is the Good News that Christ died for our sins, entombed and raised from among the dead. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-7. His resurrection distinguishes Him from all other spiritual leaders. Others have lived, taught and died. Jesus Christ is the only One Who died for our sins, has been raised, and now lives as the Savior of the world. The Bible—Redemption of God in Christ (Lk. 1:68).
2. **OPERATION of the Gospel:** “*the power of God.*” Religion is the story of what sinful man tries to do for a Holy God; the Gospel is the story of what a Holy God has done for sinful men. The phrase “*power of God*” occurs 12 (Mt 22:29; Mk 12:24; Lk 22:69; Acts 8:10; Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:5; 2 Cor 6:7; 13:4; 2 Ti 1:8; 1 Pet 1:5) times in the NT using the word *dunamis* (i.e., power).
3. **OUTCOME of the Gospel:** “*to salvation.*” If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. But since our greatest need was forgiveness, God sent us a Savior. Cf. Mt 1:21; Lk 19:10; Jn 1:29.
4. **OUTREACH of the Gospel:** “*for everyone who believes.*” The Gospel is for All! Paul told Titus, “*the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all people...*” (2:11). Jesus died for “*the whole world*” (1 John 2:2); He died for your sins and mine! That’s amazing and wonderful! Thank God for His unspeakable gift (2 Cor. 9:15). This belief (faith) is living, active faith; obedient faith.
5. **ORDER of the Gospel:** “*for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*” The salvation of Jesus began with Israel, but was always to be extended beyond Israel. It was first preached in Jerusalem, then all Judea, Samaria and to the remotest parts of the earth. The Gospel is for all time and all people!

Conclusion: God’s graces reaches me and of THAT I am not ashamed!

- Mark N. Posey

SERMON: AFTER ALL ELSE FAILS, WHAT REMAINS?

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 13:13, “*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*”

INTRODUCTION: Some spend their life pursuing miracles, power, and gifts; however, the great pursuits of life are faith, hope and love. Since these are so important, we see them emphasized over and over in scripture (e.g., 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; Gal. 5:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:21-22; Col. 1:4-5; 2 Tim. 1:12-13). What is the focus of your Christian life? What do you really want more than anything?

1. **FAITH MAKES THINGS POSSIBLE.** The word “faith” is from *πίστις*. Faith is belief and trust; it’s believing in the facts of the gospel and trusting in them to save. Paul tells us that “*faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). Faith and character are intimately related. Faith in the power of obedience to the commandments of God will forge strength of character available to you in times of urgent need. “*Substance*” (Heb. 11:1), from *ὑπόστασις*, means, “a setting or placing under, thing put under, substructure, foundation, undergirding.” It’s the same as the rock upon which the “*wise man*” built his house (Matt. 7:24). By faith, Abraham stood strong (Rom. 4:20), Moses led strong (Heb. 11:24-28), Elijah spoke strong (1 Kings 18:21), Joseph lived strong (Gen. 39:12) and Joshua chose strong (Joshua 24:15). Faith makes all things possible.
2. **HOPE MAKES THINGS BRIGHT.** The word “hope” is from *ἐλπίς*, which means, “anxious expectation.” Hope is the confident expectation of divine blessing; it is also the fear of offending God’s love and incurring punishment. Hope is singular in nature (“*one hope of your calling*” - Eph. 4:4). Also, hope has its reasons (1 Pet. 3:15). Peter tells us that was have been born again to a “*living hope*” (1 Peter 1:3). If you have hope for the future, there will be power to live each day. SONG: “*When the days are weary; the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares.*” The blessing of hope on this side of eternity is that it serves as the “*anchor for our soul*” (Heb. 6:19). The stability that hope gives us in this life is characterized by the words “*sure and steadfast.*” Therefore, hope makes all things bright.
3. **LOVE MAKES THINGS EASY.** The word “love” is from *ἀγάπη*, which means, “affection, good will, love, benevolence, brotherly love.” As my father always preached: “In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, love.” Homes will grow strong when love leads the way. Friendships will blossom when love runs deep. Churches will shine bright when love leavens the whole lump. It has been said: “*The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved; loved for ourselves, or rather loved in spite of ourselves.*” **What is love?** It is silence--when your words would hurt. It is patience--when your neighbor's curt. It is deafness--when a scandal flows. It is thoughtfulness--for other's woes. It is promptness--when stern duty calls. It is courage--when misfortune falls. **NOTE: I remember the morning that I first asked the meaning of the word "love. . . ." Miss Sullivan put her arm gently round me and spelled into my hand, "I love Helen."** - Helen Keller.

CONCLUSION: One day we will close our eyes and sleep, but when we awake faith will be sight, hope will be reality and love will remain.

- Mark N. Posey