

Stewardship of money; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

III – What's the most outrageous thing you would do for \$10,000 cash?

A Chicago radio station held a competition that asked that question. The winner was Jay Gwaltney of Zionsville, Indiana, who completely ate an 11-foot birch tree sapling -- leaves, roots, bark and all.

Donald Trump once said: *"Whoever says money can't buy happiness doesn't know where to shop."*

Henry Ford said: *"I was happier when doing a mechanic's job".*

Andrew Carnegie, a man who gave away over \$500 million in his lifetime, said: *"Millionaires seldom smile."*

Does money bring happiness? Does our life revolve around it? Why does 10% of Jesus' teaching in the gospels talk about money? This week, we're going to ask the same three questions about our money that we asked last week about our time:

How much do I have?

How should I spend it?

How much should I give?

We started by defining a steward as:

PPT - "a person who manages the property or affairs for another entity".

Remember Psalm 24:1: *"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it"*

Everything in this world belongs to God. He's given us our life, our time, our possessions, and even our money – and he can take it all from us at any time he chooses. All that we have belongs to him.

So how much do you have?

Let's go around one by one! That's a personal question, isn't it? How much money do you have?

Well, actually, the answer is the same for every person in this room: You have as much money as God has allowed you to have! And he can take it all back at any time.

2 Corinthians 9, verse 10:

"10Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness."

God supplies the seed and the bread. God supplies it all, and he is the one who gives us more or less. But the real question of how much we have depends on how we put that money to work. Let's look at a well known example:

III – In John 6:5ff – Jesus feeds 5000 people.

Do you remember the story? A little boy had 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. He didn't have much. But when he handed it over to Jesus, what happened? Jesus took that fish and bread and fed 5000 people with it. So did that little boy have 5 loaves and 2 fish? Or did he have enough food for 5000 people, because he handed it over to Jesus?

How much we have depends on how we invest it.

A few hundred dollars invested in IBM a few decades ago are worth a fair bit more today! The same goes when we talk about spiritual investments:

Another true story example: A child puts 50 cents in a missions box. That 50 cents is used to buy a gospel tract which goes to Africa. The chief of a tribe in Africa reads that 50 cent gospel tract and is converted. Through him, his whole tribe is converted – 150 of them.

Did that child have 50 cents? Or did that child have enough resources to plant a church of 150 people?

When we put our money to God's use, we have more than we realise. The kingdom of God is the best investment we can make with God's money. And what verse 11 says (**PPT**) is that God gives us riches SO THAT we can be generous with them. just like that little boy with 5 loaves and 2 fish. So...

How should I spend it?

2 Cor 9: 12-14:

"12This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God... men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else."

In this passage, Paul says to this church that their giving has been able to supply the needs of both God's people and other people in the community. And the result of that giving is an outpouring of thanksgiving, praise and prayer to God.

This isn't the result of one or two people giving generously. This is the result of a whole church responding to the needs of people. This is the community God wants us to be! A church overflowing with generosity. We want people to *see* our faith through our generosity.

III – James 2:14 reminds us – *14What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*

God wants to see our church community showing our faith in our actions. Church giving isn't about meeting budgets. It's not about lifting the average giving. It's not about feeling guilty. It's about one thing: generosity.

It's encouraging to see all the great opportunities for generosity here at All Saints. Our giving to our missionaries in Nairobi, to our Scripture teachers at Asquith boys, at Asquith girls high schools, at Waitara public, our partners in Bush Church Aid, our fortnightly service at the Towers aged care down the road. There are exciting needs in our community – to supply a children's worker to grow our children's ministries, to supply our time and money, our buildings, facilities and maintenance to allow us to meet the needs of our community through ministries such as Kiddies Corner and English Classes, and a support group for new mums.

You see, with generosity, we as a church, can really supply the needs of God's people and the people in this community. And the greatest thing about that is when it results in thanks and praise and prayer to God. We can have a great ministry by allowing people to see God's grace through our generosity.

So let's ask the last question:

How much should I give?

2 Corinthians 9, verse 6:

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."

Giving is sowing! We take the money God has given us, like seed, and we invest it, we sow it, and we let it grow. And when we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly. If we only scatter a little bit of our seed in the ground, we shouldn't expect to see a huge crop! But if we invest big, if we generously ***pour*** the seed we have into the ground, God promises a great harvest. God ***will use*** His money, that investment, to grow **His** kingdom. Not ours.

So how much is enough? Is it the amount that is important? Should we tithe for example? If you're not familiar with that term, tithing is a term used a lot in the Old Testament. God commanded his people to

set aside a tenth, or a tithe, of their income and produce and livestock for looking after the temple and the priests. Leviticus 27:30:

30 “*A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.*”

Tithing, in the Old Testament, was the recognition of God’s provision in all things. Tithing was actually an **obligation** for God’s people. But in the Old Testament, just as in the New Testament, God’s people are called **beyond** obligation, **beyond** meeting budgets, **beyond** guilt, **beyond** tithing. We are, as God’s church, called to **generosity**.

Do you remember the story of the widow’s offering in **Mark 12:41-44**?

“41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.””

It wasn’t the amount. It was her generosity. 2 Corinthians 9:7 –

“7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

It’s more important to God **HOW** we give. Not with reluctance. Not under compulsion. But cheerfully. Generously. What is it that should motivate us to be cheerful and generous in our giving?

One thing. The one thing that motivates us in everything. The one thing that changes our motivation for every part of our lives. Verse 15:

“15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”

What is God’s indescribable gift? It’s the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. Words cannot express how amazing that gift of God is! His own son, laying down his life for us! Willingly. Generously. That’s our motivation for generosity. A response to God’s generosity.

God promises that he will provide what we need spiritually IN ABUNDANCE! Verse 8 – abounding grace. Verse 14 – surpassing grace. We have a generous God, a God who didn’t even hold back his only son for us. Our response is to imitate his generosity with all he has given us. Our response **as a church** is to be generous with everything we have – our time, our money, our staff, our buildings, our gifts – to serve God’s people and to serve our community so God’s name will be praised.

Let me encourage you to be obedient to God in your generosity. To be more practical, let me encourage you with three things:

1. If God has blessed you with a decent income, consider tithing, if you haven’t already, as a step towards increasing in generosity.
2. Consider being disciplined and regular in your giving – you might want to try the envelope system or direct debit to help you with this.
3. Finally, take the time to sit down and think through how God is calling you to generosity. There is a brochure in your newsletter that might assist you thinking through things. You might sit down with your family, or your friends, or your home group and look at some of these things.

But most of all, in all of your giving, in cheerful generosity, give thanks to **God** for his indescribable gift above all else!

Amen. (PRAY)