

Treasure (Stewardship) - May 22, 2022

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. All right, well, good morning, everyone. It's really good to see all of you.

Today, we're going to be wrapping up our three-part series on stewardship. You may recall that it's been said that as believers, you and I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

In other words, we are responsible to manage God's affairs and his possessions. And this is a privilege for the believer, for all of God's people.

It also means that all the things that we tend to call our own, they're really not. Everything belongs to God. They're on loan to you and I to do with them things that are good, things that are pleasing to him.

And this applies to every aspect of our lives. So we've been talking about our time. Our time is the Lord's. We've also talked about talents, the things that God has endowed us with, our abilities and so on, our gifts.

[1:12] These are for God's use also. Also, our treasure, our money. And so we've been looking at each one of these. And this morning, we're going to finish by looking at our treasure, using our treasure for the Lord.

And we're going to see this morning an example of a very generous church. And so, and more importantly, we'll see what God thought of their generosity.

So if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Philippians chapter 4. We'll be starting in verse 15. Paul wrote this letter during his first imprisonment in Rome.

And essentially, Philippians is a thank you letter for the money that they had sent him. Our passage also contains one of the greatest promises that you'll ever read in the Bible.

In fact, most of all of God's promises can fit into this umbrella. So let's read together. Philippians chapter 4, and I'm beginning in verse 15.

[2:18] You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone.

For even in Thessalonica, you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek the profit which increases to your account.

But I have received everything in full, and I have an abundance, and I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Heavenly Father, it is so good that we can be here today and to look at your word, Lord, and to see what you tell us about how we're to live our lives.

What is it that pleases you, Lord? What have you given us? What have you equipped us with? And Lord, we ask through the ministry of your word that we would be changed, Lord, as you promised to do, that you would continually change us in your image.

[3:43] Thank you for this, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. There was this dad, and he had, he gave two \$1 bills to his very young daughter.

He said, honey, he said, this first dollar is for you to buy some candy when you go to the store with your mom later on. The second dollar is the Lord's dollar.

And you can give it, you can place it in the offering plate at church this Sunday. So she was pretty happy with that. Later on that day, she's with her mom, and they go to the store together.

They pull into the driveway, and the mom parks the car, and the little girl jumps out of the car, and she's got both of these dollar bills in her hand.

And so she's skipping along because she's happy. Well, she falls down, and one of the dollar bills slips out of her fingers and ends up in this water drainage gutter.

[4:54] So she's looking down at it. She sees it. And then she looks at the dollar that's still in her hand. Then she looks back down at the dollar that's still in the gutter, and she says, Look, Mommy, God's dollar is down in the sewer.

Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. In our last study of stewardship, Teddy said that he couldn't remember a single study at Bethel here on giving.

Do you guys remember that? I looked it up. I wanted to see if that was true. And I think he's basically right. We've had a few things here and there, you know, from some of the sermons that have been given.

But I think the last time where we systematically looked at giving was in our Sunday school session when Dave Stow and Mark Manella did this series on money and giving.

And that was about seven years ago. So anyway, how could we have overlooked that? Giving. I'll tell you what.

[6:09] There are some churches where that's all they talk about is giving money. And I don't think that we want to be in that camp, you know, putting up thermometers on the stage and having all of these goals.

I got in the mail this thing called a prayer rug. And what it is is just a scam to get, you know, to give and give and give money. But we should not avoid the topic either.

I'd like you to consider with me that it's been said, I haven't measured this myself, but it's been said that Jesus said more about money than he did about the subject of heaven and hell put together.

It's also been said that there's approximately 500 verses on prayer. There's about another 500 verses on faith.

But there's some 2300 verses that deal with money and possessions. And I think it's because God wants us to be generous because he's generous.

[7:14] So this morning, just in way of context with our text, we see a generous group of believers. Philippi was a leading city in the region of what's called Macedonia.

And this is the first church that Paul founded on his missionary journeys. This is back in Acts 16. Beginning in Acts 17, we see that Paul left Philippi.

He left, he went to Thessalonica. He went to Berea. He went to Athens. He went to Corinth. He goes to Ephesus. But wherever he went, there were these unbelieving Jews that followed him.

And they would stir up the people against him wherever he went. And so with all these false claims they had about him. And so when he gets to Jerusalem, he finally gets arrested.

And he ends up in a Roman prison. And so here Paul is. He's in this house arrest. He's all alone at this point. You might want to just think about that.

[8:17] How discouraging that would have been. You know, maybe for yourself. That you're sitting in prison all alone. And you're doing what you believe the Lord wants you to do.

And so, and the people are responding. But you've got these enemies of the cross. Adversaries, if you will. Always there to try to shut you down.

But something happened along the way. And it has to do with these Christians in Philippi. And they greatly encouraged our brother Paul.

And they, because they remembered him. Look with me in our text, verse 15. Notice what he says. He says to them, Now we have to remember, this isn't a wealthy group of believers.

No, in fact, it's just the opposite. They were poverty stricken. And yet, they were big hearted toward the Lord. They were generous. And we can learn from them, brothers and sisters.

[9:30] In our text, I see three great truths about giving. If you have your handout, you're welcome to follow along with me. First thing is this. Giving can encourage others.

Have you ever been encouraged by getting a gift? Sure you have. Giving encourages both the giver and the receiver. In chapter 1 in this letter, we see what Paul thinks of this church.

He refers to them as partners in the gospel. Now you might want to ask, why would he do that? I mean, they didn't travel with him.

They're not in jail with him. No, here's the answer. They're partners because when you and I contribute to something, we become partners in it.

Not all of us can go out into the mission field, right? No, we can't. Not all of us can go out in a variety of settings. But when we get behind and support an effort like that, both prayerfully and financially, we become partners in that work.

[10:39] And ministry, it can be difficult. It can be discouraging. It's a battle. As we see here, there's enemies of the cross that are out there.

But it's encouraging to know that there's others who are standing alongside you, who are standing with you on the same team, if you will, as you.

The believers in Philippi, they had this reputation as being encouragers. In fact, when Paul wrote his second letter to the church of Corinth, he bragged about the Philippians.

Look with me on your handout here in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. This is to the Corinthians. And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.

[11:44] Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. What would you think to be known as a generous, giving church?

Maybe you'd ask this question. What will Bethel be known for in the years to come? Here it's 2,000 years later, and we're talking about the Philippians.

What will Bethel be known for? Giving can be an encouragement to others. But secondly, it can be an investment. Look with me, verse 17.

This is what Paul says. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek the profit which increases to your account. Now, what is he talking about here, about this account?

Well, we can picture each one of us as having a bank account, if you will, in heaven. Where God keeps a record of all the good deeds that we have done.

[12:49] Our good works. This shouldn't surprise anybody. In Mark chapter 10, Jesus is talking to his disciples about material possessions. This is where Peter makes this comment.

Lord, we've left everything for you. Look at what the Lord says in Mark chapter 10. Jesus says, Truly I say to you, there's no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms for my sake and for the gospel's sake, But that he shall receive a hundred times as much.

Now, in this present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecution, he adds, and in the age to come, eternal life.

Boy, what will that eternal life look like? What a blessing. You know, notice he says there are a hundred times. Somebody calculated a hundred times is 10,000%.

Do you know of any banks or anything that is offering 10,000%? No. I don't know of anyone that gives that.

[14:04] But here's the main point. You and I have an account in heaven. And God is recording everything and everything that we do. And every time you and I give something, it's recorded in heaven.

The Bible teaches that even a cup of cold water that's given in Jesus' name is recorded in that bank. And we benefit now even from that.

Also, when we're in glory, we will benefit all the more. We will be rewarded. And so, giving is an investment. We store up treasure in heaven by investing our time, our talents, and our treasure in things that, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians, things that have eternal value.

Last Friday, I don't know if this means much, but all of the stock market indexes dropped for the seventh consecutive week. I'm told that that's the longest stretch since 2001.

So, you know, people that look at that, they're just, you know, scratching their heads. How long is this going to go on? Well, friends, we know this. God's bank in heaven pays great interest rates.

[15:23] It'll never fluctuate. And it'll never go bankrupt. And you and I are going to spend a lot more time in eternity than we are here.

In chapter 6, Paul tells Timothy to pursue godliness. And notice what he says in chapter 6, verse 17. He tells Timothy, Now, you might just want to stop there.

Think about North America. And think about all the wealth that we have compared to other countries. Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on uncertain riches.

Does that speak to anybody? But on God. We are to fix our hope on God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

He says, Instruct them to do good. To be rich in good works. To be generous and ready to share. Storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future.

[16:32] So that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. Wow. What powerful words those are. What an encouragement to us.

That that's where life indeed resides. The Philippians encouraged Paul with their giving. Not only that, it was an investment for their future.

But thirdly, our giving can be an act of worship. Notice what he says in verse 18. Paul is speaking here. But I have received everything in full.

And I have an abundance. I am amply supplied. Having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent. Here it is. A fragrant aroma.

An acceptable sacrifice. Well pleasing to God. Apparently this man, Epaphroditus, who is also a member of the Philippian church.

[17:30] Carried the money to Paul while he was in Rome. So Epaphroditus is part of this blessing as well. But let me ask you this. Have you ever wondered what really pleases God?

Well, we know that our obedience pleases God. But so does our sacrificial giving. As long as it's done in faith. Because it's only things done in faith that please God.

Without faith, it's impossible. Notice Paul calls their gift a fragrant offering. What's that mean? Well, in the Old Testament, when they would have a burnt offering.

Somehow that aroma was pleasing to God. And I think it's because God's looking at the heart. It was a sacrifice. And Paul says that the gifts that you sent to me were fragrant offerings acceptable to God.

See, I think the key to notice here is that this. They sent the money to Paul. But God accepts it as a gift to him. How could he say that?

[18:39] Well, actually Jesus says that. In Matthew chapter 25. Jesus is talking about his return. And this would be after the tribulation. Jesus talks about how the angels will come.

And will sort out the believers from the unbelievers. And to the believers, the Lord will say, Come into my kingdom. Because you were generous.

You were kind to me. And they will say, Lord, when were we kind to you? Look at what he says here in verse 40. The king will answer and say to them, Truly I say to you, To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, Even the least of them, You did it to me.

In other words, When we just give even a cup of cold water to drink. When we clothe the naked. When we feed the hungry. When we visit someone in prison. When we make meals for one another.

All in the name of Christ and his gospel. Jesus says, It's just like doing it for me. What a great privilege that is. Maybe if there's something that you've been asked to do.

[19:52] And maybe it seems difficult. Think about maybe you're doing it for the Lord. That's who you're doing it for. And this is why it's so important.

That you and I would become givers. Do you know that the happiest people around are the givers? In fact, in this book of...

To this letter. Joy and giving. The two themes go together. And this is what generosity looks like. It encourages others. It can be an investment. Thirdly, it can be an act of worship. I want you to notice then what Paul says next. Because this is mind blowing.

Verse 19. He says, And my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

[20:48] Friends, what an incredible verse. It's all encompassing. Notice there's three aspects to it. First of all, notice the source here.

Verse 19. My God shall supply. God is a personal God. Paul says, He's my God. He can be your God too.

My God. He's not an impersonal force. No, he's a person. And each one of us was made to have a personal relationship with God through Christ.

We're told that God knows all of our needs. He knows our physical needs. He knows our spiritual needs. Our financial needs. Maybe our relational needs. The Bible says that our heavenly Father cares for his children.

All those who trust in him. Those who delight in him. Those who put their faith in him. Said, firstly, the source.

[21:49] How about secondly? Notice the scope of it. The scope of this promise. Verse 19. God shall supply all your needs. What does that include? Everything.

All your needs. He's not might. Not he may supply them. He will supply them. Now, we should not misuse that verse. Like, for example, it doesn't cover laziness.

God will meet all my needs just so that I can sit back and watch the hockey playoffs. No. It also doesn't cover all of our wants and our desires.

Those who teach the prosperity gospel. This is one of their proof texts. That God will grant us anything that we want. Friends, God does not guarantee that he'll provide all the luxuries that our hearts can think of.

There's two false ideas about money, even in Christian circles. The first one is that God wants all believers to be millionaires. That's the prosperity gospel.

[22:57] But the second one is that God wants everybody to be poor. As if there's a special holiness that comes from being poor. Both of those beliefs are wrong.

The fact is, God is much more interested in our character than he is our comfort. Well, if that's so, we may ask, well, what has God promised to take care of?

He's promised to take care of our legitimate needs. God says, I, as your father, I assume responsibility for my children's needs.

And what that means is that if you are a child of God, then he's made certain promises to you. And God doesn't lie. Thirdly, I want you to notice the supply here.

Verse 19. Notice it says, according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. It's not out of his glorious riches.

[23:59] There's a big difference there. Let me give you an example. When Jeff Bezos gave \$10 billion to fight climate change a couple years ago.

Jeff's coffers were diminished by that amount. But God's resources never diminish. They're never ending.

He will supply all our needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus. If you want a great example, think back when Jesus took those five loaves of bread and those two fish.

And he ends up feeding 5,000 people. He made that meal. A simple meal of a young boy to go further than anyone could have expected.

That's the kind of resources that our God has at his disposal. We've all heard similar testimonies where God took a small amount of money and he stretched it.

[25:01] If you were here last week, Noah Agnew was talking about that Joseph shed at Turkey Hill Bible Ranch. It's called Joseph's shed because the metal roofing is made out of different colors.

But he made this comment that out of about \$200 that was donated, ended up making a building that's probably worth about \$20,000.

What a great example. A great example of what God can do with a relatively small donation. I heard about a track, a Bible track that a girl bought with a penny.

And so, you know, what can you think, what can a penny do? The Bible track actually ended up going to the chief of this, in this village in another country.

And the chief ended up getting saved from it. And then all of the people in the town get saved. What a wonderful thing, the way that God works. Somebody may ask, well, is grace, are there any promises that are conditional here?

[26:11] What's the connection between the Philippians' generosity and God's promises to meet their needs? No, friends, grace is unconditional. You might want to notice in verse 19, it begins with the word and.

It's not therefore, which would indicate some kind of conditional statement. What Paul is saying here is that you Philippians gave sacrificially.

And so let me remind you that God is going to take care of you as well. Paul's describing here spiritual maturity. God wants you and me to use money wisely, but he mostly wants us to learn to depend upon him.

Not just for our salvation, but for our daily lives as well. And our giving, it does reveal our spiritual maturity. Let me put it this way.

It shows us how big we believe God to be. We're to place our trust in him, not our money.

[27:16] God wants you and I to grow in our dependence upon him, not our things. And I'll tell you what, not everybody likes to hear that. Here's a great story.

It's by the great English preacher Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon. He was invited one day to come and preach at this little country church for this fundraising event that they had to pay off a debt that the church had.

So this man writes to Spurgeon. And he says, while you're here, you're welcome to stay at either my country home, my penthouse, my town home, or you're welcome to stay at my home by the sea.

So Spurgeon writes him back and he says, I decided to cancel my trip to your church. Here's what you ought to do. Why don't you sell one of your homes and pay off that church debt?

I'm going to ask the musicians if you'd come up. There's some of you. Money itself is morally neutral.

[28:24] And it can be used for good or evil. The problems occur when it's from the love of money. Not from the amount of money, but from the love of money.

We can be just as covetous and materialistic over just a little bit of money than a whole lot. And so as we finish this series on stewardship, I'd like you to think of the things that you personally can become part of.

Whether it's giving your time, giving your talent, or maybe your treasure. Consider the ministries that are going on at Bethel. And if there's something that's not there that suits you, start one.

Seek the Lord as to how he would have you use your time, talent, and ability. Friends, it's not an accident that the book of Philippians has two major themes. Joy and giving.

And the purpose of this letter was to thank the Philippians for their giving. And it should remind us that the happiest people around are generous people. And that applies to businesses.

[29:30] It applies to families. It applies to churches. And I think that there's many Christians out there who have not learned the joy of giving yet.

Perhaps some of you give, but you don't get any joy out of it. If that describes you, I would say you shouldn't give anything. Don't give anything.

No one should give out of compulsion. God's word points us to spiritual maturity. And we give because God wants to teach us more and more to depend upon him.

I'm learning that more in every day. And so we encourage, we give to encourage others. We give because it's an investment in heaven. We give as an act of worship.

Render to God what's his. Even a dollar. That's his. You and I cannot outgive God. And I want to challenge you. Allow God to stretch your faith.

[30:33] Become a generous person. And watch what God does with your life. Maybe you're here this morning and maybe you don't know where you stand with God. If that's so, please stay and talk to somebody.

Talk with someone. Thank you.