

Sermon 10-19-2025
“Living Generously” – Rev. Markus Wegenast

Luke 6:36

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Proverbs 11:24-26

*²⁴Some give freely yet grow all the richer;
others withhold what is due and only suffer want.*

*²⁵A generous person will be enriched,
and one who gives water will get water.*

*²⁶The people curse those who hold back grain,
but a blessing is on the head of those who sell it.*

1)

Right now I’d like to be able to read your mind, but I’m not licensed to practice mindreading in Ohio yet! I’d just love to know how these two passages from holy scripture resonate with you. I mean, take a look at them:

Give, and it will be given to you ...

Some give freely and still grow richer anyway ...

I can’t read your mind, but I could imagine that two things are going on in your mind as you heard these statements from the Bible:

On the one hand you might think that rationally this really doesn’t make sense. How can you get richer if you give away freely – don’t you have to try to hold on to everything to accumulate more and get richer?

That is one way we might think about this. But I believe there is another reaction. On the other hand, you may say: Well, yeah, it’s kind of true, if I give freely people might appreciate what I do and give back to me in return.

“Living generously” is the third of our four vision statements that I want to discuss with you today on this all-in Sunday. Kids, I hope that you are getting something out of this as well today.

Give, and it will be given to you ...

Some give freely and still grow richer anyway ...

This is not a random side aspect in the Bible – this is a message that we see all over God’s Word. It is fair to say that it is indeed a biblical principle.

We are a church, not a social or self-improvement club. So it’s not my purpose to argue how this principle that you see here on the screen can be sociologically and psychologically justified. I want to explore the deep spiritual, Christian truth of it with you.

The reason why I'm so confident that this is really a biblical principle is because this is exactly what God did in Jesus.

Jesus freely and generously gave. He gave his life for us and died on the cross for our sins. That is generosity God-style. And because Christ was generous in giving himself freely he won a victory – a victory not for himself but for the whole world. Because Christ was generous and gave himself up for us he won as a victor and changed life in this world.

That is that divine spark that is in this world, it's the light of God's presence in a world that otherwise runs quite the opposite. If this world was left to us without God's goodness we could indeed go with our first train of thought and say: *"Well, if I want to grow richer; if I want to make it and gain - I can't waste anything by giving it away freely – there has to be a return of value expected."* But God shows us a different way.

God shows us that living generously is not wasteful but cheerful.

Please don't understand me wrong: I'm not promoting an old-fashioned prosperity gospel. I'm not saying that the more you give to the church the more God will reward you. This would not be a sincere way to honor today's passages from scripture.

If that was the case then faith would no longer be needed. All we would do is just expect that the world always rewards good behavior and generosity, but the thing is: The world does not always reward good behavior and generosity, God does! The world may turn against us when we are generous and so may our checking account, but God will not!

2)

Let's look at our passages from the Bible one more time. Can I invite you to read today's passage from scripture together with me out loud?

Read Proverbs and Luke...

That is wonderful, powerful generosity. That is living generously, isn't it? You realize this truth can be applied to many arenas in life. You can be generous and give freely of your love, or of your energy, of the way you spend your time:

- For example, you can be stingy with your time and say: I'm such a busy person – my family calendar is crazy – time is one of my most treasured possessions. I can't give it away freely. I have to be very careful with how I spend time and not waste it. Of course, most people cannot afford to waste time but God's generosity principle invites us to give time wisely – even when we feel we don't have it! – and see how good things happen.
(Ajalón...)

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement found that living generously helped him in how to deal with his finances. He once said this:

Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can. – John Wesley

This is not a quote that fits well into a time in which we can buy almost everything for money. Why would I want to save when there are so many wonderful, delicious, and exciting things that I can spend my money on?

But there is a deep satisfying truth in living a bit more like JW did. *(repeat)*

Can I share another quote with you? Completely different man but equally in love with God as John Wesley. This comes from Desmond Tutu, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town.

I'm coming to believe more and more in the truth that everything we do has consequences. A good deed doesn't just evaporate and disappear. Its consequences saturate the universe and the goodness that happens somewhere, anywhere, helps in the transfiguration of the ugliness.

—Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time* (Crown, 2003).

When we live generously, when you live generously, whether it is your time, your love, your labor, your finances... you influence this world. This is not new age stuff, this is divine stuff – this is the character of God who showed us generosity first when he shared his son with us. Not just a little, but fully – to the death, to the grave but then also to the sky!

3)

Alright kids, how are you hanging in there? Are you bored? I know it's hard to listen to someone talk for a long time – but you know what: being bored is not a bad thing – it is an important part of life and growing up.

I want to tell you a story now that I hope is not boring to you. This is the story/parable of the long spoons. Maybe you've heard it before – it's really special and I hope it will help you connect with our theme of living generously today:

A group of people woke to find themselves in a windowless room. No one knew how they got there. The air was warm, and in the center of the room stood a long wooden table, set with bowls of fragrant, steaming food. The smell made everyone's stomach growl. Each person had a long wooden spoon strapped to their arm. The spoon was so long that while they could reach the food, they couldn't bring it back to their own mouths — the angle was impossible. They twisted and contorted, trying every method they could imagine, but all attempts ended in spilled food and mounting frustration.



Hours passed. People grew irritable, then angry. Some hoarded bowls in front of them, though it made no difference. Others sat silently, clutching their spoons in defeat. Then, a young woman quietly dipped her spoon into a bowl of stew and turned — not toward herself, but toward the man sitting across from her. Carefully, she extended her spoon and fed him. He looked at her in shock. Then, slowly, he smiled. He returned the gesture, feeding her from his own spoon.

Others watched. Slowly, awkwardly, they began to do the same.

One fed another. That one fed someone else. Soon the room, once full of groans and shouting, was filled with laughter, conversation, and the clinking of spoons.



The food had been there all along. They just had to stop thinking only of themselves.

They had to start loving and trusting each other. They had to discover that only if they lived generously and would give freely they would also receive back. They had to learn that God has a reason for us to give freely and generously because that's how life works better.

Kids, was that a boring story? Was it helpful? Does it help you understand that God wants us to be generous with each other?

Friends, the big deception in which we live is that we think living generously is only something that can be done by people who have surplus money, or surplus time, or surplus love — that is a dangerous lie. We should not postpone generosity until a time when we feel we can be generous out of our leftovers — we have to learn this lesson as early as possible — otherwise we may never learn how to do it and if we don't learn how to live generously, we can't learn how good it feels to also receive.

Let's pray...