

The Generous Giver

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Date: 03 November 2024

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[0 : 00] The family went to their church one Sunday as usual and as they went to the mum and the little girl, the dad came out and he was complaining after the service he said the minister was hopeless and the sermon was far too long and just so dull and boring.

And the mum complained as she came out the door and she said the music was poor and the songs were badly played as well. But the little girl who'd been the one who put the money into the offering plate as it was passed round said, well, you've got to admit it wasn't a bad show for a pound.

Today we're going to think about giving and thinking about giving because it is part of our vision series as we think about what it means to be a church that is loving God and loving each other and loving Glasgow.

And so part of loving God is worship and devotion and we're saying it's also giving, giving to God, giving generously. So we're going to think this afternoon about giving.

Now, giving is a sensitive subject, but we need to consider why we give. Now, the Charities Aid Foundation, CAF, they asked their donors what motivates them to give to charity.

[1 : 18] And do you know what the top motivation for giving was? It was duty. Duty was the top answer. People said that they gave to charity because they felt a sense of duty.

They wanted to give something back to society using their own good fortune to help others. Now, giving out of a sense of duty is not necessarily wrong or a bad thing, but it is a far cry from giving because we delight to give.

Because it's only when we give with delight rather than out of duty that we will be actually more generous in our giving. And that's what we see today in Psalm 112.

That's what we're going to look at. Psalm 112, as we said, mirrors Psalm 111. They're both acrostic poems, which means each line begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet all the way down.

You don't see it in English, but it's there in the original. And the two Psalms also complement one another in terms of their content. Psalm 111 speaks of God and his works.

[2 : 26] And Psalm 112 speaks of God and his blessings. And so if we want to be blessed, if we want to be godly, how do we experience this blessing?

How do we cultivate the character of godliness? How do we give generously? Because we all want that after all, but how do we get it? Well, only in and through Jesus Christ.

Because when you think about it and you read Psalm 112, you discover that the only human being who has perfectly kept Psalm 112, the only one who has matched the description of Psalm 112 is Jesus Christ.

And so he's the only one who can fully appropriate the blessings that are described in Psalm 112. And so it's through Jesus Christ that we also experience these blessings.

And so the point of the message today really is experiencing Christ's generosity towards us empowers our giving. Experiencing the generosity of Christ, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and his work for us is what will best empower us to be more generous people.

[3 : 41] And so that's the main point of the application of our passage. And we're going to push that home today as we go through this talk. So when it comes to our giving, the self-giving of Jesus Christ is our chief motivation.

So let's think about this under three headings. First of all, the blessing of the giver. Secondly, the character of the giver. And then thirdly, the fearlessness of the giver. So the blessing of the giver, one to three.

The character of the giver, four to six. And the fearlessness of the giver, seven to ten. So first, the blessing of the giver. Let's just read those verses one to three again. Praise the Lord.

Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands. Their children will be mighty in the land. The generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in their houses and their righteousness endures forever.

That's a picture of blessing, isn't it? But it's worth noting here, just as we begin the psalm, most of the psalm is in singular in the original Hebrew.

[4 : 47] And it's kind of hidden in the NIV. So verse one reads, blessed is the man. Speaking of an individual. And it actually echoes Psalm 1, verse 1, which also starts with the words, blessed is the man.

And so the psalm is talking about one person who is blessed because they fear the Lord and find great delight in his commands. And this person has a character that is marked by righteousness that endures forever.

Now, righteousness is a theme that comes up throughout the psalm. It's there in verse one. It's there again in verse six. And again in verse nine. Sorry, it's there in verse three, six, and nine.

And the righteousness here parallels Psalm 111, where verse three of Psalm 111 says, glorious and majestic are his deeds and his righteousness endures forever.

So it's the righteousness of the Lord God in Psalm 111 that endures forever. And now in Psalm 112, it's the righteousness of the one who fears the Lord and those who are his that endures forever.

[6 : 00] And so the people of the Lord in Psalm 112 are the generation of the upright. They're in verse two. And they're also blessed.

It's not just the man who is blessed, but it's his people who are blessed and they're called upright in verse two. And so the one who fears the Lord in Psalm 112 resembles the Lord's nature and the Lord's character there in Psalm 111.

And so Psalm 112 is presenting the God-like man to us. Who is the God-like man? Well, we should see how Jesus perfectly personifies the description there in Psalm 112.

Jesus is the fulfillment of its words. He is the one alone who matches its description. And that's why we should read this Psalm as we should read every Psalm in a Christ-centered way.

Because if we don't recognize Christ and the blessing that only comes to us in and through him, then we'll tend to read this Psalm and other Psalms in a moralistic way.

[7 : 11] In other words, we think we've got to be like the person described in the Psalm in order to procure the blessing. Rather than realize that Jesus is the blessed man and it's in Christ that we inherit the blessing.

And so it's Christ's church that's the large and prosperous family described there in verse two and three. This family will inherit the ultimate blessing forevermore.

Now this is as Paul describes it in Ephesians chapter one when he says, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

And so the blessing belonging to the blessed man, Jesus Christ, also overflows and comes to all of those who are in Christ. So we might not be materially rich in the eyes of this world.

We might be. We might not have loads of money in the bank. We might not have a massive home or a flash car or a high paid job. But we have got the ultimate wealth and the ultimate riches if we belong to Jesus Christ.

[8 : 24] Because God is the generous giver who blesses us beyond our wildest dreams, both now and forever. Which means every Christian is one of the wealthiest people in the world.

We are all wealthy as Paul says there. Every spiritual blessing is ours. And so the Sunday Times Rich List, which is published every year, I think May or June time, it actually calculates wealth in the wrong way.

Because it's those who belong to Jesus who have got the greatest riches and who have got the most secure investment. We are on top of the Rich List and we're never going to drop down in the ranking.

Which means we don't need to envy anyone else's wealth or their money or even their status.

Because through the good news of Jesus Christ, our status is as a child of God.

We're part of God's family. And that is something that money can never, ever buy. And so when Jesus gives us his wealth, he gives us his security, he gives us his status, then when we've got that,

we've got everything basically, then we're free to give our money away.

[9 : 41] We're free to be generous. Because if we have been blessed with everything for free from God, then we can freely give back. But if we're afraid to release what we've got or give away what God has first of all given to us, I guess it proves that our money is acting like a functional saviour and a functional lord.

What do I mean? I mean that we're placing our trust in our money for our status, for our security, and thinking that we need it in order to be safe in this world.

It's like our saviour. It's like our Lord. So that's the first thing. The blessing of the giver. Verse 1 to 3. Secondly, the character of the giver.

In verse 4 to 6. Let me read those verses. Even in darkness, light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous. Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

Surely the righteous will never be shaken. They will be remembered forever. Now these verses describe the righteous character of the man in the psalm. His gracious nature and his generous actions reflect the attributes of God himself, as God's described in Psalm 111.

[11 : 05] And so we're reminded again of how the blessing upon the righteous man, there in verse 1 to 3, extends out to his people. In verse 4, it's described as light dawning in the darkness for the upright.

One commentator, Andrew Boner, says this. He says, All the darkness of the upright, his trials, sorrows, temptations, will end in light. It is a precious clause applicable to Christ's day of sorrow and applicable to each member's telling us of present deliverances prepared for the righteous and of the grand deliverance when the light of the day of God appears.

In other words, what he's saying is this alludes to how the death of Christ not only delivers us, if we're a Christian, from the power of sin in this life, but ultimately it delivers us from the presence of sin in the life to come, where all the darkness of this world will be dispelled by the light of Christ.

This is like the seed of a promise that will be fulfilled by what Christ will accomplish for his people.

Because the next line of verse 4 describes the character of God.

What does it say? It says that he is gracious and compassionate and righteous. These are attributes that are used in the Bible of God himself.

[12 : 32] So God says in Exodus chapter 34, verse 6, The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness. That's a description you hear of God all the way through the Old Testament, isn't it?

And then here in Psalm 111, just across the page, it speaks of God in verse 4 and says, The Lord is gracious and compassionate. And so Psalm 112 speaks of the blessed and righteous man.

He is compared to the Lord himself. Not because he's trying to be like God, but because he is God, God the Son, the Christ, the Messiah, the one who'd come as God incarnate in this world.

That's who he is. But what will he do? Well, his description here says that he is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice.

So he's gracious, he's generous, and he lends freely. Now that word lends in the context of the law suggests alone, alone without any interest.

[13 : 41] Now I've started getting emails from my mortgage provider just this month, telling me that it's time to review my mortgage rates. Because my current rate of interest, which I think is very good, is due to expire on the 1st of January.

And they're trying to sell me some new rates, which are pretty bad and much higher. So I'm looking at different interest rates and I'm thinking to myself, how good would it be if you could get a loan and you didn't have to pay any interest on that loan?

It hardly ever happens. But here we're being told of a generous giver who lends freely, who is gracious in what he gives.

And so it's telling us here how Jesus displays the character of God for us. Jesus conducts his affairs with justice because he's perfect in all he does.

He is righteous and he will never be shaken and he will be remembered forever. And so it's the generous character of Jesus Christ that is presented to us here.

[14 : 44] I was reading about Alexander the Great and there's a story told that Alexander the Great had a general who came to him one day and this general had worked for Alexander the Great for many, many years.

And he came to him one day and he said, he asked the question, he asked Alexander the Great, could you pay for my daughter's wedding? And so Alexander agreed straight away and he said, just go to the treasurer and ask for the funds that you need to pay for the wedding.

And so soon afterwards, the treasurer came to Alexander and he was complaining that the general who wanted Alexander to pay for his daughter's wedding, the general was taking advantage of Alexander's generosity.

He said, the general was asking for an exorbitant amount of money. It was enough money to host the largest wedding Greece had ever seen. And so Alexander thought about it for a moment and he said to his treasurer, grant him his request in full.

The treasurer just looked bewildered and Alexander continued. He said, my general pays me two compliments. He believes that I am rich enough to afford his request and that I am generous enough to grant it.

[16:01] And assuming these two things, he honors me. And so can you see that when it comes to God, we honor God by recognizing that God has infinite wealth and he is astonishingly and astoundingly generous and he wants to give.

And he has given us all that we need, his greatest gift in Jesus Christ. And with Jesus Christ comes all the blessing that flows from him.

And so that's our second point, the character of the giver. It is generous. The blessing of the giver, the character of the giver, secondly, and then thirdly, the fearlessness of the giver in verse 7 to 10. What we see here is that the blessed man has got nothing to fear. And again, this should be read in the singular rather than the plural. So verse 7 to 8, he will have no fear of bad news.

His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure. He will have no fear. In the end, he will look in triumph on his foes.

[17:07] So the blessed man who fears the Lord has nothing to fear because he is trusting in the Lord. Now, Jesus Christ perfectly lived out these verses during his life on earth.

And then in the end, Jesus did look in triumph over his foes. But his fearlessness transfers over to those who belong to Jesus.

Because through the cross and through the resurrection, Jesus has defeated our greatest foes of Satan and sin and death. And so our antidote to fear, the fear perhaps of feeling insecure, of giving too much away, the antidote is to trust the Lord.

Because when we trust the Lord and truly trust him, then we're not trusting in ourselves and we're not trusting in our wealth to keep us safe. We're trusting in the one who has already blessed us with everything we need for life and for death.

Which means there should be nothing in this life that can shake us. Absolutely nothing if we trust in Jesus Christ. Because we are secure. Secure in this life.

[18:20] Secure through death and secure for all eternity. We've got all that we need. And it's not because we've got lots of material possessions, but we have all that we need because we trust in the one who gives us all we need.

And only when this sinks in can we freely give what we have, knowing that we'll actually never lose out. And there is a fear to giving, thinking, if I give away, I will have less for myself.

But the psalm is pointing us to Christ. And Christ reminds us that because we have everything, whatever we give away means that we never ultimately lose out.

And that's what verse 9 points towards. Psalm 112 is emphasizing our giving results in us gaining even more. So verse 9 says, Again, in singular, he has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor.

His righteousness endures forever. His horn will be lifted high in honor. So the emphasis here is on the generosity of the righteous man described.

[19:42] Generosity that's displayed in freely giving gifts to the poor. Remember, as the Christ, God's chosen king, everything belongs to him.

And that's why his horn being lifted high in honor is a picture of his strength, a picture of his victory, a picture of his exaltation because he is God's king.

And because he is king, then there is nothing to fear if you belong to him and you're part of his kingdom. Because as his righteousness endures forever, so does his kingdom endure forever.

And when we bow to Jesus as our king, then we become part of that kingdom that lasts forever.

And it's the only place of safety and security in this world is in Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

And that's what verse 10 basically makes clear. The wicked will see and be vexed. They will gnash their teeth and waste away. The longings of the wicked will come to nothing.

[20 : 51] So in contrast to those who belong to the king, we read that the king's enemies will perish. They're vexed. They'll be destroyed. Their longings will be unfulfilled.

And you see, that's why life only makes sense when we acknowledge that Jesus is king and we yield our lives to him.

Because he is the generous giver who gave himself for us. So it's in Christ alone that we find true riches that are beyond measure.

And it's because of his grace towards us when we receive these riches that our hearts are melted and we want to give to others. And that's why Paul, the apostle, quotes verse 9 of Psalm 112 when he is emphasizing the blessing that comes to believers who delight in giving.

And so if you'd like to turn to 2 Corinthians 9 I think the words are up on the screen. I'm going to read these verses together. 2 Corinthians 9 6-15 and read the context where Paul picks up on Psalm 112 verse 9 So remember this whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

[22 : 17] Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly so that in all things at all times having all that you need you will abound in every good work as it is written.

And he quotes Psalm 112 They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor. Their righteousness endures forever. Now 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.

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. The service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

Because of the service by which you have proved yourself others 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.

And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.

[23 : 44] So can you see here how the wider context of the Psalm 112 quotation is the grace that the Corinthians had received in Christ and Paul reminds them of this grace as the motivator for them to give.

So Paul doesn't force them to give by saying listen Corinthians don't be stingy I'm the apostle I'm telling you to give so you better give. That's my command to you.

He doesn't do that and he doesn't make them feel guilty by saying see these people in need they will suffer a lot if you don't reach into your pockets and give money to them.

He doesn't do that because simply being told to give wasn't going to make them generous people was it? Just like me telling you to give isn't going to make you a more generous person.

Now a guilt trip might work for a short while people do tend to give when they're made to feel guilty but it won't make us more generous people.

[24 : 52] So what will make you and I more generous people? Well listen to the motivation Paul gives to the Corinthians and this is just in 2nd Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 9 at the beginning of this long section where he speaks about giving.

He says for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich.

So what does Paul do? He brings the gospel of Jesus Christ to bear on the issue of giving because it's the only thing that's going to make the Corinthians or you or me a more generous person.

Why is that? Well because it points us to the radical generosity of Jesus on the cross where we read that Jesus was infinitely rich yet he became poor.

He gave up the riches of heaven and he took on the poverty of this earth. Jesus held nothing back from us. He even died on a cross for us so he gave us everything himself.

[26 : 04] And only when we have experienced the grace of Jesus Christ towards us will it reproduce his graciousness in us in our hearts.

Because we will be far more ready to give generously because of all the blessings that we have received generously. And so it's no wonder that Paul ends this section in 2 Corinthians chapter 9

with these words.

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift. The indescribable gift is Jesus Christ. And so our giving ought to be in response to the gift of Jesus.

There is no better way than to calculate how much you should give than to look to Jesus. And so you don't need a calculator to evaluate your giving.

You need the cross. We all do. Because as we see what Jesus did through giving his life to pay for my sins then I'll want to give out of gratitude.

[27 : 10] And so can you see how Jesus Christ personifies the generosity of Psalm 112 in an extraordinary way. It's speaking of him.

And Psalm 112 therefore provides a model for us and for our giving when we are in him. When we are in Christ we then should be generous people.

Because the righteous freely giving to the poor in Psalm 112 speaks of our responsibility in Christ to practically give.

So we should note the theology of Spider-Man because with great power comes great responsibility. So with the great blessing of the infinite riches that comes to us so does the responsibility to be a generous giver.

We are responsible under God for what we choose to do and with what we fail to do with our money. Our giving is part of our relationship with God.

[28 : 17] Because as we are generous what we discover is that God enriches us in many ways. And that's what Psalm 112 is saying to us. The generous giver is blessed.

I wonder if we believe that. The generous giver is blessed. But don't misunderstand this is not prosperity gospel here in the psalm as if it's some kind of penny in the slot transaction where well if I give more then God ought to bless me with more.

No. It's rather we give because of all that we have already received from God. And when we do give we actually discover that God does bless us.

And the blessing might not be material or financial blessing. Maybe it will be. But that's not the only kind of blessing there is, is it?

But God will certainly bless us in lots of ways as we are generous with what he has first of all given to us. So we never lose out when we give of our time or of our treasures or of our talents to God and his work.

[29 : 33] And so if this is all true, what the psalm is saying and what Paul is saying and what the Bible is teaching, then why would we not want to give even more? And please hear me on this.

This is not some kind of emotional manipulation to make you feel guilty to get you to give. I had a great story the other day in our community group of a pastor who decided that he wanted his congregation to give and at the end of the service he said the door is going to be locked.

Nobody's getting out until we reach the amount of money that we need so you better start giving. Now this is not emotional manipulation to make people feel guilty.

Although I hope it's obvious and clear that we do all need to give to God's work if we're one of God's people and if this is our church then this is where we give. But I'm not saying this for my benefit and I'm not saying this even for the benefit of Christ Church Glasgow.

I'm saying this for your benefit. This is about your giving and my giving before God. Because the more generous we are in our giving then the more blessed we will be.

[30 : 48] And I want you to be blessed and I want to be blessed and we all want to be blessed. So don't give out of a sense of duty. Find delight.

Delight in giving through the one who gave himself for you. And because he gave himself for you, give generously and give freely to him and to his work.

Let's pray. Let's Let's Let's