

Good morning.

A preacher told me this story, so, whoa. It has to be true, right?

I'm getting a lot of comments back there. I don't know. So one day the church phone rings, and the secretary answers. And on the other end of the line is a very countryfied voice that says, I want to speak to the head hog at the trough.

Secretary said, excuse me, sir? I said, I want to speak to the head hog at the trough. She thought for a moment. Then she realized what he wanted. He wanted to speak to the pastor.

And she was a little more than indignant. And she said, sir, if you want to speak to our pastor, then you have to address him properly. You certainly may not call him the head hog at the trough.

Oh, I'm sorry. I just wanted to donate \$10,000 to your church. So she quickly replied with friendly enthusiasm, can you hold, please? I think the big pig just walked in again. Somebody told me that.

But you know what? It plays right into the stereotype that churches are after money, and they will do maybe even things that compromise who they are to get it.

Have you ever wondered why we meet on Sundays?

The Jews, they met on Saturdays, right? Still do. They meet on the Sabbath day, which was the day that God rested from his creating and the day that he set aside and told his people to rest. And it was designed to be a blessing, and it was also a move on the part of God for his people to trust him. He would provide.

But Christians, from the beginning have worshipped on the first day of the week, which is Sunday, which John in Revelation 110 calls the Lord's Day. So why do we as Christians, meet on the first day of the week, Sunday the Lord's Day? Well, the answer is, it's the day that Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday morning. And then, what's more, exactly seven weeks after that, on the Lord's day, on a Sunday, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God is poured out, and the church begins.

So we meet on Sundays because it's the day of the resurrection, it's the day of the church's inception, it's the day the church began. And so that's why we meet on Sunday. So the Church begins with this wonderful rhythm of Sunday worship. The ups and downs of the previous week are brought into the presence of God on the first day of the week, on Sunday, on the Lord's day, to remember the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, especially in the Lord's Supper or in communion. That seems to be why the early Church primarily met, and that was to take communion together.

Luke says in Acts 20, says, on the first day of the week, which is Sunday, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord's Supper. So if you read the New Testament carefully, and then there's some very fascinating documents from the second century that talk about these things, too. And what we believe is that the early Church gathered every Sunday to worship. And when they gathered to worship, they would pray, they would sing, they would share in the word, they would listen to preaching, they would talk about it, they would commune, take the Lord's supper, and they would give. And so the rhythm of worship, which was rooted in the resurrection of Jesus, resulted in the rhythm of generosity.

Now, this is probably more than you want to know, but I find it fascinating. If you look at church history and you study how the New Testament all came to be, I think with God's obviously inspiration and plan, it's surprising to some. But I think it's very important to know that the early manuscripts of what's in your Bible, those early manuscripts did not have chapters nor verses. And so chapters weren't put into our Bibles until 1227 AD, when a guy named Steve Langton, who was the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the sake of convenience and study, put chapters in our New Testament. And then it was 300 years later that verses came to be.

Now, I think that's really important to know, and it's especially important for us this morning as we consider the rhythm of generosity. And I'll explain in just a minute. Now, regarding your question about the money being collected for God's people in Jerusalem, you should follow the same procedure I gave to the churches in Galatia. On the first day of each week or every week. First day, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned.

Don't wait until I get there, and then try to collect it all at once. So Paul is wanting to establish a weekly rhythm of giving. Remember, there's no chapters and verses in the original New Testament manuscripts. So, as Paul writes first Corinthians in response to a bunch of questions that the Corinthians had sent him, he does not divide his writings into chapters. He just writes as the spirit of God moves him along.

And the reason that's significant for us this morning is that his thoughts about the mundane matter of giving money are rooted in the resurrection of Jesus. Because right before he talks about this money stuff in what we call chapter 16, in chapter what we call chapter 15, he talks about the resurrection of Jesus. And he presents this passionate plea for people to root their lives in the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus has a practical application for us. You remember what we said a couple weeks ago, that resurrection means that the worst thing is never the last thing.

Resurrection means that the worst Thing is never the last thing. And it means that we can live with peace and joy and confidence in a glorious future. Now, I want to look at just a few things that Paul says in one Corinthians 15, because I think they're really important when we think about the rhythm of generosity. So he says, I passed on to you what was most important, what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scripture said.

He was buried and was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scripture said. And so Paul goes on from that gospel message, the death, burial, resurrection. Jesus. He goes on to make this compelling case for the resurrection, and he moves from that into the present, moves the resurrection of Jesus into the present, which assures us of a glorious future. So the resurrection governs the past, the present, and the future.

And he says, let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed. It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown, for when the trumpet sounds. Those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed, for our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die.

Our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. Thank God. He gives us the victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

Paul goes straight from that resurrection talk and straight from that implications of the resurrection to talking about giving, taking up a collection every Sunday for people in need. In his spirit inspired mind, this makes perfect sense, since God has given us a glorious future rooted in the resurrection. We can celebrate in the present with generosity. And that generosity is a reflection of God's generosity. For God so loved the world that he, what he gave, God gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

So generosity is one of the key core characteristics of God. And from the beginning, the generosity that comes from God and the generosity that flows up to God have been present and a part of God's plan. If you look at it, Genesis four, Cain and Abel, Genesis 14, Melchizedek, Genesis 28 Jacob. There is an emphasis on generous giving to a generous God from the very beginning. So God wants us to reflect his heart of generosity.

It's the way to true life, he would say. And generous giving in its various forms is written into the law of Moses. It shows up all throughout the Old Testament. And when you get to the New Testament, its presence is very large. In fact, some people would say, and I could probably be one of those people, that Jesus talks more about Money than anything else.

That's something to think about. Money is a huge deal in God's plan for humanity.

God wants us to have money. He wants us to have stuff. He gives it to us, but here's what happens. He wants us to have it, but he wants us to hold it lightly, not tightly. He wants us to hold it lightly, and he wants us to use it Generously.

It's all his. We are simply stewards. And as we think further about the Rhythm of Generosity, it's interesting to me to look at what Paul says as a follow up to the Corinthians. So he tells him in one Corinthians, I want you to take up a Collection Every week for the Poor in Jerusalem. And

then he writes a second letter, Second Corinthians, and in verses or chapters eight and nine, there's this pretty intense follow up to this idea of giving.

And I hope you'll read those chapters on your own, but let me share some of the highlights that he gets at. He says, listen, I want to motivate you to give. I'm going to motivate you to give by pointing to the Macedonians, which another Church, another place. And he starts there. He says, 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. They gave themselves first to the Lord. And so Paul says, it's really actually surprising what they did. Very surprising. And their surprising Rich Generosity comes from a response to the Generous grace of God.

They gave themselves first. Paul says, and then he looks at the Corinthians and he says, what about you guys? What about you? You know, you excel in a lot of things. You excel in faith.

You excel in speech and knowledge and earnestness and love. See that? You also excel in the grace of giving. He then directly ties the Generous grace of giving to the death, Burial, and resurrection of Jesus, for, you know, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you, through his poverty, might become rich. Now, to me, it's important to note how Paul ties grace and generosity together, and they're brought together through the death barrel and resurrection of Jesus.

There's so much more that he says that we just won't mention. But a couple things he talks about. If you sow generously, you'll reap generously. And he says, if you sow generously, you just can't outgive God. He will take care of generous givers.

He'll supply what they need because they have the heart of God to give generously out of gratitude for God's grace. God honors it all. God loves a cheerful giver. He doesn't want a tight wad. He doesn't want you to give if you don't want to give.

But those who get it, he says, oh, this is such a blessing. Such a blessing to you. So Paul wraps up all of his thoughts about generosity, pointing to Jesus yet again. He says, thanks be to God for his indescribable gift. So you're talking about money again.

So seriously, what do we do with this? What do we make of it? I'm going to say for most people in the room, this is probably no problem because you give as you should, you've give as you've been prospered and probably have a regular rhythm of generosity. If that's you, then bless you and thank you. I do think for me, it's just good to be reminded of it occasionally and to think about that tie between the resurrection and generosity.

I think in responding to the generous, grace filled heart of God, it's good to think about that rhythm of generosity that's rooted in the resurrection, rooted in the first day of the week. It's

about priority. It's about giving to God first and the best of our lives. It does involve our money. Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of all your income.

But I believe the first and best of everything we have, not just our income, should be God's. We seek first the kingdom of God. Jesus says in Matthew 6:33 preaching about giving, Tim and Sean and everybody would tell you this is like our least favorite thing to talk about because we know people don't really like to hear it too much. But it's important. And when I think about it, for me, the rhythm of generosity means seeking and striving to give myself first to the Lord.

Which means, for me, I'm going to give him the first day of the week. I really do believe Sunday is the Lord's day. To me, it should be a different rhythm than the rest of the week. That's just the way I understand it. And so my Sundays are considerably different than Mondays through Saturday.

I just want to be aware of giving that first day to the Lord. I want to give him the first hour of my day before I engage anything else. I want to engage God and set that tone. I want to give him the first part of my income. And then that kind of sets a rhythm and establishes a rhythm that comes into play all the way from how I use my time to how I tip servers to how I treat people generally.

I want to be generous. I want to be generous. I want to be an imitator of God. As the spirit of God transforms me and forms me into the image of Jesus. I want to be a reflection of his generosity in all things, an absolute failure at times, as you can imagine.

But then I'm reminded of his generous grace, which just keeps me encouraged and moving as I think about the resurrection. You're here today, and to me, that's very important. Showing up on Sunday, showing up on the first day of the week, showing up on the Lord's day, showing up on the resurrection day starts off the week in a good way. It does for me, anyway. So I come here to sing.

I come here to pray. I come here to share in the Word. I come here to commune. I come here to give. Now, I will tell you, always feel a little weird when they pass the plate.

You know why? Because I give online. Anybody else give online? Don't you want to hold up a sign, say, I gave online. Everybody I gave online.

Always feel weird. It's like, keep moving. Don't look at it. Don't make eye contact. Keep moving.

Give online. Give online. You know, God owns everything, and he doesn't really need our stuff. He doesn't need our stuff. So why does he ask for it?

Because he wants us to be like him. He wants us to trust him. He wants us to honor him. He wants us to give ourselves to him first and foremost as an expression of gratitude. You can't manufacture one breath.

It's all from God. So it's a move of gratitude scattered in a couple of places in my house. I have a whole collection of things that my four children bought me when they were little made for me. I found this little socket set that says, dad, I wouldn't use this because it probably would tear up, but this is one of the most precious things that I have, and I've got little pictures. I just can't throw them away.

I've got drawers full of papers and little cheesy gifts like this that they bought at school and brought to me, they're not particularly useful. I don't need them. But they are some of the most precious things that I have. Because to me, they are solid expressions of the words, I love you. I love you.

When we give to God an offering of any kind, it I think we're saying, God, I love you.

I'm thinking of you. Thank you. Thank you for your generosity. Just thank you. As we move into communion this morning, the Lord's Supper, I want you to look at Romans twelve one.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies everything that you are as living, sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship. And the key is viewing the mercy of God. And so when I stand and think about what God has done and what he has given me and how he's redeemed me and loved me and saved me, in view of God's mercy, I want to give myself. I want to give everything I have.

And I want to express that all the way from my time to my treasure, to my talents, all those things that we do. So this morning, as we take communion, want you to think back to the cross on Friday and how brutal that was. And then think of that confusing Saturday and then that wonderful Sunday morning, the resurrection of Jesus. And it's those things, the death barrel and resurrection, that holds life together and provides us hope, and we root our lives in that. So as you take the bread and you drink the juice this morning, think about that and how that generous nature of God wells up into us to create a generous spirit.

So let me pray. Father, thank you for your generosity. It's beyond our comprehension. May we be imitators of you, Father, and may we learn to hold all the blessings that you give to us so lightly and to be generous with them to bring glory to you. And we know that you will bless us in all kinds of ways.

And so just help us as we take this bread and drink this juice this morning, to think about death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen. Thank you for listening to this message from Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. Did you know?

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