

“The Blessings of Giving”
Acts 20:35
(Preached at Trinity, December 26, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we saw earlier, after leaving Philippi, Paul arrived at Troas where he spent a week teaching and encouraging these brethren. He remained over the Lord’s Day and joined them in the breaking of bread and fellowship. He also preached long to them instructing them in the Word.
2. After leaving Troas Paul’s companions left by ship and Paul’s plan was to travel by land and meet up with them at Assos.
After meeting up with them Paul was in a hurry to continue on to Jerusalem so that he would arrive in time for the Day of Pentecost. They made several brief stops in various cities then stopped at Ephesus.
3. Paul’s purpose on this journey was to visit churches on his way back to Jerusalem in order to strengthen, encourage, and teach them. While in Ephesus he called the elders together in order to instruct and encourage them.
Acts 20:17 – “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.”
4. Paul knew this would probably be the last time he would see these brothers and he wanted to strengthen them as the leaders of the Church. His method was to remind them of his own leadership, leadership to be followed, and then he instructed them as to their duty as elders of Christ’s church.
5. After he commended them to God in **Verse 32** Paul spends a few minutes reminding them that the pastor must not be guilty of covetousness. He would again stress this later to Timothy. In **1 Timothy 3:3** we read of the qualifications for pastor:
1 Timothy 3:3 – “Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;”
6. Then Paul again points to his own record.
Acts 20:33-34 – “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel. ³⁴ Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.”
7. Tonight I want to direct your attention to a single verse – **Verse 35**
 - A. Here Paul reminds them of his prior teaching that they should labor that they might be able to give to the needy.
“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak” – The word for “weak” refers to anyone who has a need.
 - It is translated in Matt. 25:39 as the “sick” -
Matthew 25:39 – “Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?”
 - In John 5:7 it is translated “impotent man”
 - In John 6:2 it is translated “diseased”Here it is best understood as those in need.
 - B. Then Paul reminds them of the words of Christ –
Acts 20:35 – “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

8. I want to focus on this phrase. It is familiar to us. We have heard it before, but we have heard it from this passage. This is the only place it is found in the Bible. It isn't found in the Gospels.
9. I want us to focus on this verse tonight because it is a beatitude of Christ that isn't found in the Beatitudes.
The word beatitude means "supreme blessedness" or "exalted happiness"
In most English translations it is translated, "Blessed" usually pronounced "bless-ed"
In **Matthew 5** we read "Blessed are" in 9 verses.
"Blessed are the poor in spirit" "Blessed are they that mourn" "Blessed are the meek"
Now we hear – "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
10. I want to focus on this verse because it is at the heart of the Christian life. It points to the blessedness of self-denial. It is better to give than to receive.
How should we apply this to our lives?
 - I. First, it is implied there that there is *some* blessedness in receiving
 - A. We all love to receive gifts
 - B. The Bible makes it clear we receive great blessings from God
 1. David announced the blessedness of receiving
Psalm 116:12 – "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?"
Psalm 103:1-2 – "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. ² Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:"
 2. Paul points us to the goodness of God in Romans 2
Romans 2:4 – "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
 - C. God has given us many things to enjoy – blessings from His hand
 1. He has blessed us with many physical blessings - God has shown great compassion and mercy to our generation
 - a. God has given families, husbands and wives and children
 - b. Our homes – electricity, size, AC, carpet, carports, yard equip
 - c. Conveniences – dishwashers, stoves & ovens, refrigerators, computers, telephone (cell phone)
 - d. Transportation, Supermarkets, Malls
 - e. God has given far above food and raiment for our generation
 2. Most blessedly, God has blessed us with spiritual blessings
Listen to Ephesians 1
Ephesians 1:3 – "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:"
 - a. All blessings are in Christ – physical and spiritual
 - b. God has given us forgiveness, reconciliation, adoption
 - c. God has given us His Spirit – the earnest of our inheritance.
 - d. God has given us the promise of eternity

- e. Most of all God has given us His Son that we might know His fulness
John 1:14 – “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
 - D. These things are meant to be received and enjoyed
 - 1. We are to receive our physical blessings with thanksgiving
1 Timothy 4:4 – “For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:”
 - 2. Most of all we are to receive our spiritual blessings with joy and thanksgiving
 - a. We are to enjoy Christ
 - b. Your relationship with Christ should bring you great pleasure – there is nothing greater.
Philippians 3:8 – “Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,
- II. While it is a blessed thing to receive it is more blessed to give
- A. This is contrary to the desires of our sinful nature
 - 1. We are naturally covetous.
 - 2. There is no end to our lusts – we want more and more. The more we make the more we want.
2 Timothy 3:4 – “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;”
 - B. When God saves us we acquire a new master, a new lover
 - 1. Grace takes away the love of money – those that continue to love money do great damage to their soul and their relationship with Christ
1 Timothy 6:10 – “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
 - 2. If you come to know the wealth of knowing Christ – that He is immeasurable in His riches all other treasures begin to pale in significance.
 The root of covetousness is severed.
 - C. With our heart severed from riches we discover the blessings of giving
 - 1. Love involves looking to the needs of others
 - 2. Paul told the church of Philippi
Philippians 2:4 – “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”
- III. In what ways is it more blessed to give than receive?
- A. Because God commands generosity – obedience is always blessed
1 Timothy 6:17-18 – “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; ¹⁸ That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;”
Matthew 5:42 – “Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”

1. Jesus taught that our greatest joy would be found in obedience
John 15:10-11 – “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.”
 2. In other words in obedience His joy might become our joy.
- B. Because generosity is pleasing to God
2 Corinthians 9:7 – “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”
Hebrews 13:16 – “And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”
1. God is pleased when we give openly and freely
 2. Our great desire is to please Christ with our life
 - a. The Christian finds great joy in the pursuit of pleasing Christ
 - b. He has a hunger and thirst after righteousness because these are the things that honor Christ. His focus is no longer upon himself and his needs but upon Christ and the needs of others.
- C. Because generosity is evidence of our new life in Christ
1. It demonstrates the love of God residing in us
1 John 3:17 – “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”
 2. It demonstrates our new nature as the sons of God
Luke 6:35 – “But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to the evil.*”
- D. Because there are blessings that accompany generosity
1. While we never give in order to receive the Bible frequently describes God's blessings upon those who are generous.
2 Corinthians 9:6 – “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”
Proverbs 3:9-10 – “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: ¹⁰ So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”
Luke 6:38 – “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”
 2. There is also evidence that God withholds from those who behave miserly
Proverbs 11:24 – “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.”
Proverbs 28:22 – “He that hasteth to be rich *hath* an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.”
Proverbs 28:27 – “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.”

- E. Because there is joy in helping others
1. God hasn't given us all of our wealth just to consume on ourselves.
 2. We will actually find greater joy in giving of our material resources than in receiving.
 3. We will find greater joy in giving of our time for others than selfishly spending all of our time on ourselves – serving rather than being served.

Conclusion:

1. Ultimately this is a matter of trust.
Giving does not make sense to many. How can giving be better than receiving? Giving means losing something. Receiving means gain.
2. Jesus says giving is more blessed than receiving. Things are not always as they appear. In 1867 Secretary of State William Seward helped America buy Alaska from the Russians for \$7,200,000. Many immediately began to criticize the transaction claiming we were exchanging seven million dollars for ice! The transaction became known as "Seward's folly."
Well in the last 130 years Alaska has yielded billions upon billions of dollars in resources to America. There are millions of barrels of oil still to be tapped.
Things are not always what they seem.
3. If Jesus says it is more blessed to give than receive we must take Him at His Word.