

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 15 October 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Loving Giver

I will never forget the Christmas season of 1986. For about a year, my dad had been deathly sick with what appeared to be severe heart problems; and he had to take many months of sick leave. He would go into tachycardias, in which his heart would beat 300 or more times per minute; and when this happened, he was unable to do anything. I remember one evening when my dad had a particularly severe tachycardia episode, in which he simply lay on the floor, looking as though he were nearly dead. I remember being very afraid that my dad would go into eternity that night. I knew, of course, that if he died, he would be in the glories of Heaven, since he had repented of his sin, and trusted Christ as his personal Saviour; nonetheless, I had the natural fear of losing my dad.

Needless to say, finances were very tight for my parents during that time, due to the crushing medical bills. Though I don't recall going completely without a meal, our meals were very lean. The car which my mom relied on to make the 40-minute drive to school every day was leaking oil so badly, that she had to put a couple quarts of oil into the engine every day, just to keep it running. (My parents could not afford to fix the engine, or to get a newer car.) Yet, there was one thing that my parents never failed to do, no matter how hard things were: **they never failed to serve the Lord, and to serve others.** Every Sunday, we made the 45-minute drive to church, for Sunday School, Worship hour, and Sunday evening; and we were in church every Wednesday evening, as well. Every Sunday, my parents gave their tithes and missions to the Lord. We also went out to the nursing homes twice per month on Sunday afternoons, to preach the Gospel to the elderly, and to share Christ's love with them. When my parents saw someone in need, they did all they could to help him, no matter how much they themselves were struggling.

As it turned out, God, in His grace, willed for my dad to recover. It turned out that he did not have a heart problem, but rather dozens of acute food allergies, to which he had to be desensitised gradually. However, in December of 1986, we had no idea why my dad was sick, nor whether he would live another month. I remember my parents' telling us kids, as Christmas was approaching, that this year there would not be any gifts. Of course, we knew that Christmas is all about celebrating our Saviour's birth, and not about getting gifts; and thus, we weren't sad. We were just happy that our dad was alive, and that we could all gather around the piano and sing carols of praise to the Lord.

However, God had other plans! On Christmas morning, we ate breakfast, read the Bible, prayed, and sang; and our parents gave each of us a very small gift (which we weren't expecting). Then, my dad went to the coat closet, and opened the door; and the entire closet was loaded, from top to bottom, with gifts! Obviously, the money for those gifts did *not* come from my parents. To this day, my parents have never told us who provided for those gifts; and I honestly cannot guess. For all I know, it may have been a number of people who chipped in to provide those gifts. The gifts, of course, are long forgotten;

however, the *love* that was shown to us has never been forgotten. My parents lived a lifestyle of giving to God and others; and that Christmas, God put it into people's hearts to show *their* love to us.

Brethren, God doesn't want you merely to give: He wants you to give from a heart of love. It is *this* aspect of giving—the heart of love—that we will be talking about this morning. The title of this message is *The Loving Giver*.

I. Giving is not true giving without love.

Read James 1:5.

The story that I told about my parents a few minutes ago is by no means a “one-off” occurrence. I've probably known a couple dozen Christian friends in my lifetime who have been in a similar situation—except far worse. I know Christians who were serving God as best they could, and who were even using the last bit of petrol they had just to drive to church on Sunday; but God allowed them to come to a point where they had no food in the pantry. Yet, they didn't tell anyone about their plight; and they didn't complain about it. They simply talked to the Lord about it, and asked Him to provide for them; and at some point, God *did* provide for them in a marvellous way. In some cases, they literally walked out their front door, and found bags and bags of groceries, which a Christian friend had bought for them—or found a cheque in the post for the exact amount that they needed! *The Lord* put it on a friend's heart to buy those groceries, or to give a financial gift; and that friend responded to God's leading out of a heart of love.

All too often, Christians give to their local church, or to those who are in need; but they don't give out of love. They give; but they expect others to express their appreciation for their giving...*often*. If they don't feel appreciated, they get upset, and stop giving. Why? Because they're not giving out of true love for God. Folks, why would God *want* that kind of gift? Why would He want a gift that you have given to Him with a sour attitude? He wouldn't! If *your* friend were to give *you* a gift, but he had a sour attitude as he gave it, and he kept going on and on about what a sacrifice it was for him to give that gift, and kept emphasising that he didn't *have* to give you that gift, you probably wouldn't want to receive the gift from him, would you? Well, so it is with God. The mere act of giving to God means nothing, if you do not give from a heart of love.

When someone gives you a gift just because he *loves* you, it's a wonderful thing. On the other hand, a gift that is *not* given in love doesn't look pretty. Let me give you an example. Back in 1985, as I was beginning my second-class year of primary school, there was a new kid in my class named Nathan. It wasn't long before Nathan and I became good friends; and one day, I decided to do something nice for him. I dipped into my life's savings (which, at that point in my young life, probably consisted of about \$1.00), and I went to our school's bookstore, and bought him a cool pen with purple ink. (I'm guessing that the pen cost a whopping 10 cents or

so.) Now, for me, this was a big deal. After all, I had spent a considerable portion of my life's savings on that pen; and I let Nathan know it. I kept reminding him of how much I had spent on him. Well, after a while, poor Nathan didn't know what else to say. How many times did he need to say "Thank you"? Apparently, though, I didn't consider it to be enough, because I began to treat him....well, not so kindly. Now, Nathan wasn't in my class the next schoolyear, because his parents (who were missionaries to the Philippines) were on furlough in the U.S. that year. The next year, they returned to the Philippines. Sadly, though, the one good friend whom Nathan had made during that schoolyear had, by the end of the year, become not such a nice friend: and it all started with a gift which wasn't really given in *love*. Why did I give it? I guess because I wanted Nathan to praise me for what a great gift I had given him. However, it wasn't given in love. If I *had* given it in love, our friendship would not have deteriorated.

Now, you may chuckle at my story, since it involves a 7-year-old child and a 10-cent pen; but, in reality, it isn't funny. You see, I was a Christian by that point in my life; and I should have known better. I was allowing my old nature to have control of me. I was "giving"; but I was giving *selfishly*. This kind of "giving" does *not* please God.

Once you are saved, God wants to make you into a giver, just like Himself. And what kind of giver is He? A loving giver! **Romans 5:8** says, "***But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***" Christian, God gave you the gift of salvation out of love, even though you didn't deserve it; and since the time of your salvation, He has *continued* to give to you liberally, even though you don't deserve it. He gives gifts to you freely, because He really *loves* you. As we saw in **James 1:5**, God gives to all men "***liberally***" ("freely"), ***and upbraideth not.***" That word "***upbraideth***" is translated from the word *oneidizo*, which means "to reproach, or to find fault." Christian, aren't you glad that when you ask God for wisdom, or for some other spiritual or material need, He doesn't beat you over the head, and remind you about your past sins, which He has already forgiven? Aren't you glad that He gives freely and lovingly, once you've gotten right with Him (and, sometimes, even *before* you have gotten right with Him)? If you are glad that God gives to *you* freely and lovingly, then go, and do the same! Be the kind of giver that Jesus was!

Read John 4:1-27.

When the Samaritan woman went to the well that day, she went there with blinded eyes and a hard heart, knowing nothing about "***the gift of God***"; but before the day was over, she had *received* that gift, by repenting of her sin and placing her faith in Jesus the Messiah. Now, as Jesus dealt with the woman at the well, he didn't sweep her sin under the rug. (He *can't* just sweep sin under the rug, because He is God!) Her sin *had* to be dealt with in order for her to realise her *need* of the "***gift of God.***" Jesus *did* have to put the finger on her sin before He could give her the gift of salvation. However, He did so in love, and with the offer of forgiveness. Jesus didn't *have* to go out of His way to go through Samaria that day; yet, He did. Being very tired, hungry, and weary, He didn't have to speak to this sin-hardened woman at all. Yet, He did. He freely gave of Himself; and because He did, the woman received the most wonderful gift that a person could ever receive—the gift of eternal life with God!

Christian, *you*, like the woman at the well, have received “*the gift of God.*” This gift was freely given to you, out of love: therefore, go, and do thou likewise!

II. Love is the law of kings.

Read James 2:8.

Of the hundreds of laws that God has given to His people in His Word, there is one particular law that He calls the “*royal law*” (a law that pertains to *kings*). This “kingly” law is the command to “*love thy neighbour as thyself.*”

Now, lest you think that this law doesn’t apply to you, since you are not a king, think again! If you have placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you *are* a king! The Bible says that every Christian is a member of God’s royal family, and is a king *and* a priest before God!

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10.

Read Revelation 5:9-10 / 20:4.

Those who know Jesus as Saviour aren’t ruling over anything *yet*; but Christ promises that someday, when He returns to earth to set up His Kingdom on earth for 1,000 years, we who know Christ as Saviour will *literally* sit on thrones, and will be given the incredible privilege of ruling with Him in His Kingdom! We Christians who lived in this New Testament age will reign with Christ, along with all the resurrected saints from the Old Testament age, and from the Tribulation period!

Make no mistake about it, Christian: God says that you are a king. God calls you by the title “king” *right now*, even though you are not yet reigning in His Kingdom. How should you *act*, then? Should you expect people to serve you, and roll out the red carpet for you, the way they would treat a king? No! You see, in God’s Kingdom, everything is just the opposite of how it is in this world. God commands the kings in *His* kingdom to *give* to others, and not to expect others to give to them. God commands the kings in *His* Kingdom to *serve* others, and not to expect others to serve them. God expects *His* kings to *love others* the way they would want others to love them.

Read Mark 10:35-45.

James and John rightly understood that they were going to be actual kings in Christ's Kingdom someday; but they were getting the cart before the horse. They didn't yet understand that Christ was trying to teach them the character trait of *humility, love, and service* to God and others. If Christ, who is the King of Kings, humbled Himself in love, and became a Servant of all, should we not do the same? Of course we should! In God's Kingdom, *love* is the primary characteristic of kings (along with faith, which is the foundation of true love).

Now, let's see how this royal characteristic of love plays out in our daily lives. Let's say that you give a gift to your friend: and as you give that gift, you're thinking in the back of your mind, "I'll bet if I give my friend this nice gift, he'll give *me* a much nicer and bigger gift someday." Now, don't laugh! You *know* that this is how we, in our sinful hearts, think. "I'll scratch your back today, so that you'll scratch *my* back someday." In this world, we see this kind of "giving" all the time, don't we? For example, back in 2015, when Donald Trump was running for president, he was questioned, in a debate, as to why he had, in the past, given huge donations to politicians in both the Republican *and* the Democratic parties (even though these parties supposedly stand for opposing principles). His answer was very frank and honest: he said that he gave these huge gifts to these different politicians *so that they would give him what he wanted, and do what he wanted them to do*. Trump wasn't ashamed to say this in front of the world. Why? Because he knows that this is the way almost everyone thinks, anyway! He knows that nearly everyone in this world is just as self-serving as he is, and that we are now at a point in society where being selfish is actually looked on as a *virtue*.

This "I'll give to you so that you'll give back to me" mentality is the *natural* way to think, because we are sinners by nature; and as sinners, we are selfish. However, this is not the way that a Christian should think. God has given us a *new* mind, and a *new* nature. This new nature is energised by the Holy Spirit, who lives inside every believer. Now, sometimes people *will* do something nice for you in return for what you did for them. There's nothing wrong with that. However, that's not the reason you should give. Any time you give, it should be because you love God, first of all; and secondly, because you love that person.

Read Luke 14:12-14.

Jesus said that when you give to others in love, expecting nothing in return, you will be "*blessed*." Christian, make sure that when you give, you are giving for the right reason. Give because you love God, and because you love others! It's easy to give to people who have nice things, because you know that they'll probably do something nice for you eventually; but that's not real love. In fact, you could even give to *poor* people without really loving them (perhaps because you want others to see what a great thing you did). The Bible says that a person could give all his goods to feed the poor, and still not have love in his heart!

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

“Charity” is the crowning virtue of the Christian life. It is the kind of love that, in the Greek language of Paul’s day, was called *agape*. *Agape* is the highest, noblest kind of love—a self-sacrificial love, which is motivated by pure good will. I have seen this kind of love demonstrated by Christian folk throughout my life. I remember a time when I was quite small, when my mom was very sick with rheumatic fever for about two years. She had to sleep for most of the day; and sometimes, she couldn’t even make it to church. During that time, members of our church constantly made meals for our family, and sent them home with us. Occasionally, some folks paid us a visit to show that they cared, even though we lived 45 minutes to an hour away from most of the other church members. *This* is the kind of love that Paul is talking about. In **Galatians 6:10**, Paul urges Christians to **“do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”** In other words, our love should be shown, first and foremost, to our brothers and sisters in Christ. However, fellow Christians are not the only ones to whom we should **“do good.”** We should do good to **“all men.”** *This* is what adorns the Gospel of God. *This* is what attracts a lost world to the Saviour. As we take the Gospel to the lost, we should be prepared to reach into our pockets and *give* to people’s needs. If you have a lost friend who is sick, pay him a visit, and tell him the wonderful Gospel message; but as you do so, bring him a hot meal, and show him the love of Christ. Your kindness just might open his heart to the Gospel; and in time, he just might receive Christ as his Saviour. In any event, you are laying up treasure in Heaven!

Now, let’s say that you were *thinking* about making a nice meal for a sick friend, and you knew that God wanted you to do it; but that nice meal sounded so good, that you decided to make it for yourself and your family instead. What just happened? That meal that you just made went into the Worldly Treasure Bank; and you will receive no reward for it—no trophy to lay at Jesus’ feet.

As we have already seen, part of the reward that Christians will receive for their service to God will be positions of authority in Christ’s 1,000-year Kingdom. However, Christ made it clear that the amount of authority that you will be given in His Kingdom will be in direct proportion to how faithfully you served Christ in this lifetime. Christian, will you rule over five cities, or ten cities? It all depends on how well you adhere to the law of kings—**“*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*”**

Read Luke 19:11-27.

III. Love was the motivation for the Good Samaritan.

In the last several weeks, we’ve looked at three biblical examples of givers. The first and most important Giver of all times is the **Lord Jesus Christ**. He is the Giver of the Unspeakable Gift of salvation. Then, there was the cheerful giver. **Ruth** is an example of a

cheerful giver. Then there is the sacrificial giver. **Mary of Bethany** was our example of a sacrificial giver, with her expensive gift of spikenard for Jesus. Who, then, is our example of a loving giver? Well, unlike the other givers whom we have studied thus far, this person was not an actual person: he was a character in one of Jesus' parables. However, even though he is a character, we need to take his example seriously—because this character is a model of Christ Himself!

Read Luke 10:30-37.

In this parable, we see that a Jewish man was walking the 40-kilometre trek from Jerusalem to Jericho. Now, back in Jesus' day, it wasn't safe to travel this particular road—especially by yourself. It was notorious for thieves and marauders, because there were many places to hide in the bleak, mountainous terrain. The man in this parable ended up being attacked, severely beaten, robbed, and left for dead.

But then, a priest came walking by. The priests, of course, were the ones who worked in the Temple in Jerusalem. They had the important job of offering up the people's sacrifices to God. All the priests had two weeks out of the year to serve in the Temple (as well as during the seven feasts, when *all* the priests were on duty). It could very well be that this priest was going to do his two weeks' service in the Temple right then. Maybe he thought, "I can't stop to help this man, because I'll be late for my appointment in the Temple." I don't know what he was thinking; but whatever it was, he decided that this dying man wasn't important enough for him to stop and help. He just walked on by.

Then, there came the Levite. And who were the Levites? The Levites were the tribe of Israel that worked in the Temple. The Levites couldn't be priests, as the descendants of Aaron were; but they did assist the priests. The Levites had many important jobs, such as cleaning the golden vessels, baking the unleavened bread, refilling the lavers with water, helping the priests to slaughter the animals, keeping the oil in the Menorah filled, keeping the incense for the altar filled, and so on.

And so, this Levite, who *also* had a big, important job in the Temple, came down the road and saw the wounded man. However, he didn't stop to help, either. Maybe *he* was on his way to the Temple, too, just as the priest had been. Undoubtedly, he thought that doing "the Lord's work" in the Temple was more important than helping this man. Little did he realise that helping this man *was* the Lord's work! He never stopped to think that giving of himself, and showing love and compassion to this man, would please God. Now, in all fairness, maybe this man was simply afraid. Maybe he thought, "It's getting late. The sun is going down. Maybe the thieves that attacked this man are nearby; and they may attack me, too. I don't want to get involved. I'd better move on, so that I can be safe."

And so we see that these two men, who were supposed to be men of God, didn't have any love. Fortunately, though, there was another traveller who *did* have love; and as it happened, he was a *Samaritan*. Now, anyone who has read the New Testament knows that the Samaritans were *not* loved by the Jews. The Samaritans were half Jew and half Gentile; and most of the Jews would have nothing to do with the Samaritans, because they thought they were better than the Samaritans. (In fact, the Samaritans felt the same way about the Jews.)

However, this Samaritan was different. He loved and cared about this man, even though he was a total stranger (and a *Jew*). He stopped and helped him, and bound up his wounds as best he could. Then, he put him on his donkey, and took him to the nearest inn. However, he didn't stop there. He didn't just dump him off and go on his way. He took out two pence (this would be two whole days' worth of wages), and gave it to the innkeeper, and told him to use it to take care of this man until he was completely healed. Furthermore, he told him, "Whatever more you need to spend to get him back to health, I'll come back and repay you."

My friends, *this* is what loving giving looks like. You know what, though? None of us has ever loved others perfectly. We haven't even come *close* to loving others the way we should, because we are all sinners, with a selfish nature. Remember the royal law—"***Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself***"? None of us has even loved *God* perfectly; and we certainly haven't loved our *neighbours* perfectly, either. We've all fallen short of what God expects. We are all sinners, who deserve eternal punishment. That is why we all need a Saviour: and this is where *Christ* comes into the picture. **The fact is that the Good Samaritan is really a picture of Christ Himself!** Without Christ, we would all perish in hell. Yet, Jesus didn't want us to have to suffer the punishment for our sin. He loved us so much that He left heaven, came down to earth, became a Man, and took our punishment by dying on the cross for our sins. Just as the Good Samaritan paid the innkeeper so that the man could be healed, so Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, so that *we* might be healed from our sins, and have eternal life. Some of you have received that gift of salvation; but some of you haven't. If you *haven't* asked Jesus to save you from your sin, I urge you to do so today!

IV. **Loving your friends and family cannot buy your salvation!**

This morning, we have talked a lot about giving. I have given illustrations of Christians that I have known who gave to others out of a heart of love. Yet, is it possible for a *lost* person to give to others out of love? Of course it is! A lost person has a God-given conscience, and a natural sense of love for his own family. A lost man can be a good son, brother, husband, father, or grandfather; and a lost woman can be a good daughter, sister, wife, mother, or grandmother. A person who doesn't even acknowledge Christ as God can be a "good" person (at least, in men's eyes). However, loving your kids, or your grandkids, your parents, your grandparents, your brother, your sister, or your friends, *doesn't make you saved!* You see, God's laws are all summed up in two laws. The second one is "***Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.***" None of us has even kept *that* law perfectly. But what about the very first, and greatest law of all? Have we kept it? No, we have not!

Read Matthew 22:34-40.

The greatest law of all is, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*” Every other law is based on that law. So, how have we scored on this first and greatest commandment? We have all utterly failed! We have loved everything else *except* God; and our disobedience to God’s laws is the proof of it. That is why we need to be *saved*. Christ provided salvation as a free gift, by dying for our sins in our place; but we must receive His gift by simply repenting (turning, in our hearts, to Christ from sin), and trusting Him alone to save us. Giving gifts to your family and loved ones doesn’t make you right with God. You may do nice things for people; but if you have not been born again, you do not truly know or love God; and God’s wrath still abides upon you.

Conclusion: Maybe you are beginning to realise that you have never been saved. If so, I urge you to repent of your sin, and to ask Christ to save you today! You *cannot* be neutral about Jesus. By faith and repentance of heart, you *must* own Him as your Lord! You see, merely having a “**talent**” (the *knowledge* of God’s Word) doesn’t make you a member of the Kingdom. The third servant in Jesus’ parable had one talent in his possession; but he did nothing with it. He did not multiply that talent for the master’s glory. In fact, he *hid* the talent, and did nothing with it. This man represents a person who *knows about* Jesus, and who *knows about* the Gospel, and knows that Jesus *is* the Master; but he has not personally *owned* Christ as his Master, because he is afraid of what others will think. The third servant represents someone who thinks of Jesus as an “austere” man (a *hard* man), and who does not want to be governed by Him. My friend, is *this* how you think of Jesus—as a “hard” man, whom you do not want to serve? Are you *afraid* to approach to Him? If so, I am here to tell you that Jesus is a kind and loving Lord! It is a *privilege* to serve the King of Kings; and I look forward to His return! I have served Him for 40 years of my life now; and He has blessed me abundantly (even though I don’t deserve it)! If you have not been saved, why don’t you get it settled today? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you *shall* be saved!

Maybe you are saved already; but you still have a lot to learn about giving. Maybe you need to ask God to help you to be a loving giver. He’ll help you, if you will ask Him!