

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 22 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 Giver Whose Gift Keeps on Giving

This past week we celebrated Timothy's 15th birthday; and one of the gifts that Timothy received from Katie and me was a high-quality Scofield Bible, with a genuine leather cover. As I watched Timothy poring over the beautiful pages of his Bible, and as I smelled the lovely scent of the newly-printed pages and leather binding, it brought back good memories for me. I couldn't help but remember another birthday party, about 36 years earlier.

You see, on my 11th birthday, I received from *my* parents the same kind of reference Bible that Timothy just received. Before my eleventh birthday, I had gone through several cheaply-made Bibles, which always came apart at the binding, and eventually broke into smaller and smaller pieces. Reading my Bible every day, and hauling it to and from school and church six days out of the week, and vigorously thumbing through its pages in countless "sword drill" competitions during Sunday School, had caused all my Bibles to fall apart. But not so with my new Bible. It was well-made, and durable; and I did my best to keep it in the best condition possible. Not only did I love the beautifully-printed text of Scripture, but I also enjoyed the helps that were included. I loved the concordance, subject-index, and list of proper names in the back of the Bible. I loved the cross-references; the footnotes; the timetables and chronologies of the 17th-century Irish pastor James Ussher; and the detailed maps of the Bible-times lands. However, I didn't use this Bible merely for myself: I used it to share the Gospel with others. I still have a pencil mark—the only mark I ever made in my Bible—under the word "*sinned*" in **Romans 5:11**. I made this mark when I was 12 years old, to remind myself to emphasise that particular word while I was preaching at my school. As a teen, I used this Bible in the children's Sunday School classes, to teach the children God's Word, and to lead some of them to the Lord. I used it occasionally to preach at my Christian school, and at my home church, when opportunities arose. In my college years, I used it to teach in street evangelistic outreaches for children, and to preach in nursing homes, and to read while I was on break at work, and to witness to my co-workers. I knew the layout of the pages so well, that even if I couldn't remember an exact reference, I knew where, on the page, I could find a particular verse.

Well, after about 15 years of using that Bible, I realised that it was looking worn. One page was slightly torn, near the bottom of the page; the edges of the pages were quite yellowed from constantly turning them; and there was now a little pinkish mark on the top of every page from **Daniel chapter 11** all the way to **Revelation**. That stain came about one evening when I fell asleep while reading my Bible. Let's just say that the sugary content of the red cough drop in my mouth, mixed with saliva, made its way from my mouth down onto the pages. (I always remembered that night, because just after I woke up and realised that my pages were stained, I happened to look down at **Revelation 16:18**; and right as I was reading the words, "*And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake,*" a huge streak of lightning, along with a gigantic clap of thunder, shook the house, and lit up the sky!) At that point, I knew that if I wanted to keep my Bible as nice as possible, I needed to get another Bible for public use. And so, that's what I did. However, I still use my old Bible for my personal daily Bible reading; and I still use it to disciple my own children. I am often encouraged by what my dad

wrote in the front of my Bible on 2 November 1987: “Read God’s Word every day. His Word will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from His Word.”

My parents spent a good sum of money on that Bible; but with that Bible, I have been strengthened and prepared for God’s work. With that Bible, people have been shown the way of salvation. Because of that gift, souls will be in Heaven for eternity. You know what that Bible is? It is a “gift that keeps on giving.” Gifts that are given out of genuine love for God, with an aim to His glory, will *always* “keep on giving”! That is what we will be talking about this morning, as I preach the last message in preparation for our missions conference, “Give of Your Best to the Master.” The title of this message is ***The Gift That Keeps on Giving.***

I. How to give the “gift that keeps on giving”

We’ve all heard the expression “the gift that keeps on giving”; and we could probably all think of examples of those kinds of gifts in our own lives. Teaching someone a skill, for example, is a “gift that keeps on giving.” I often think of the “gift” that my brother Shawn gave me when I was growing up. My brother is a professional graphic design artist; and his artwork is absolutely beautiful. However, he didn’t become a professional overnight: he spent countless hours in drawing. When I was growing up, it was a familiar sight to see my big brother in his room, drawing away; and I did my best to imitate him. My brother often took time to show me how to draw; and this gave me a good foundation on which to improve, and to go farther. If it hadn’t been for my brother’s encouragement, I probably wouldn’t have taken art as a minor study in college. Now, I have never measured up to the level of talent that my brother Shawn has; but I do have enough ability to draw much of the artwork and décor that you see around this church (especially for Holiday Bible Club). In this sense, my brother’s gift is still giving. Katie’s ministry to us in music is another example of a “gift that keeps on giving.” Her ability didn’t just happen by accident. She didn’t just wake up one morning with the ability to play the piano. Throughout her childhood, her dad and mum sacrificed in order for her to have piano lessons; and they gave of their hard-earned money in order to purchase a piano on which she could practice every day. The gift that her parents gave her is still giving. Because they gave, she is able to be a blessing to us, by playing our congregational hymns.

God has given each of us gifts and talents; and in most cases, someone sacrificed something in order for us to develop those talents. However, merely having a talent means *nothing* if you do not use it for the Lord. You may have art ability; but if you don’t use it for the Lord, it is wasted. You may be able to play the piano, or do woodwork, or painting, or work with technology; but if you use these abilities merely for yourself, it will gain you nothing beyond this life. However, when you give your money, time, or talents to *God*, in order that others may hear the Gospel and be saved, you are giving a “gift that will keep on giving” not just in *this* lifetime, but for eternity! As I was preparing this message this past week, I couldn’t help but think of Mrs. Zemeski, over in Maynooth. She and her husband spent 43 years of their lives serving the Lord as church planters here in Ireland; and they established two churches—both of which Pastor Zemeski was able to hand over to another pastor before he went to be with the Lord. Many people’s lives have been transformed for time and eternity because of their faithfulness. However, Mrs. Zemeski’s giving didn’t end when she and her husband

officially retired from the office of “missionary.” Despite her increasing health problems, she is still faithfully serving God within River Valley Baptist Church, which she and Pastor Zemeski planted 25 years ago. She still teaches children; and she still gives to the Lord through her local church. Whenever a member of River Valley B.C. leads someone to Christ, Mrs. Z has a part in that salvation, because she and her husband were the ones who led many of those folks to the Lord, and taught them how to share their faith with others. To this day, every time Mrs. Z gives to her church’s missionaries, she is taking part in the evangelisation of lost souls in Honduras, Hungary, the Middle East, and other places; and every time the souls whom those missionaries led to the Lord go out and lead *others* to the Lord, Mrs. Z has a part in their salvation, as well. Whether directly or indirectly, her gifts just keep on giving.

Someday, all the people who got saved because of our giving (whether directly, or indirectly) will meet us in Heaven; and I believe that there will be a lot of “thank you’s” going on for all eternity! Countless souls will be received into “*everlasting habitations*” because of the labours of countless other souls who went before them; and when that glorious day comes, *no one* who sacrificed things of this life to serve Christ will regret having made those sacrifices. You won’t be able to take any of the money or wealth that you have accumulated on this earth with you to Heaven; but you *will* be able to take with you the *souls* who came to Christ because you gave what you had to the Lord. That is why Jesus gave this investment plan.

Matthew 6:19-21

Brethren, we are living in dangerous times. All over the world right now there are people who are grabbing gold and silver as fast as they can, because they know that very dark days are ahead. Financial experts are calling gold and silver the “only safe haven.” However, the Bible says that the only safe haven is Jesus Christ. In fact, God specifically warns us *not* to stockpile silver and gold. The Bible warns people who will be living in the last days that “*Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’s wrath.*” Look in the New Testament. Did Christ or the Apostles ever advise Christians to stockpile gold and silver in order to survive through the hard times that might come before the Rapture happens? No! There is not a single command to that effect. By the way, it is obvious, as you read the New Testament, that the Apostles expected the Rapture to happen within their lifetimes; yet, they did not stockpile gold. Quite the contrary, they *gave* what little they had to the Lord, and to others; and they admonished God’s people to do the same.

That is God’s investment plan, Christian. God’s investment plan is not to *get*, but to *give*! Will hard times come? Yes. However, the wisest way you can prepare for the future is not to hoard what you have, but to *give*. Not only will God take care of you through the hard times on earth, but He will give you treasure in Heaven, which will never pass away. Gold and money will all pass away. You can’t take it to Heaven with you. However, you *can* use your money to win people to Jesus Christ, so that they can be your friends in Heaven for all eternity! Let’s see what the Lord had to say about this.

Luke 16:1-12

In this parable, Jesus told of a steward who stole his master's money, and used it on himself. Now, the day came when the master discovered that his steward had been embezzling his money; and the steward knew that the "gig was up." He knew he was about to be fired; so, he came up with a plan to ensure that he would have somewhere to live after he lost his job. He slashed the debts of his master's debtors with the hope that they would look at him as a friend, and would feel obligated to give him a place to stay after he was fired from his job.

Now, what is the point of this parable? Jesus certainly was not praising this unjust steward for stealing his master's money. He was simply making the point that even sinners know how to use money to make friends, so that those new friends will help them when they need it. (In this case, the unjust steward was hoping that his new friends would give him a place to lodge.) What is the spiritual illustration, then? The illustration is this: if you be a Christian, then you are a steward of *God's* money. All the money you have is actually *God's* money, which He is allowing you to manage. How, then, should you be *using* God's money? As a steward of God's money, you should be using God's money to "make friends"—in other words, to take the Gospel to lost people, so that those lost people will be saved, and become your friends in the Lord. Then, when you "fail" (in other words, when you die), you will have friends in Heaven waiting to receive you into their mansions. All those people who came to know Jesus Christ because you used God's money to bring the Gospel to them will be your friends for all eternity, and will enjoy the bliss of Heaven with you. *That* is the gift that keeps on giving!

II. The rewards that Christ will give to Christians who give

As we saw in **Matthew 6:19-21**, there are treasures (or rewards) that Christians will receive in Heaven. Now, the Bible doesn't give us tremendous detail about the kinds of rewards that we will receive; but the Bible *does* tell us that God will give us five special kinds of **crowns** for our service to Him here on earth.

The first kind of crown that Christians will receive is the **crown of life**. God will give this crown to Christians who were faithful to Him through times of temptation. When others were harassing them, or outright persecuting them, for being a Christian (perhaps to the point of *killing* them), they stood firm, and did not waver. These believers will receive a crown of life.

Revelation 2:10

The second kind of crown that Christians will receive is the **crown of glory**. The crown of glory will be given to pastors who served God faithfully, and who did their best to feed people God's Word. They weren't in it for the money; and they didn't tell people what they *wanted* to hear so that they could have large crowds, and big offerings. They cared only about being

faithful to the truth of God's Word; about leading people to Christ; and about helping Christians to grow in the Lord.

1 Peter 5:1-4

The third kind of crown that Christians will receive is the **crown of righteousness**. The crown of righteousness will be given to Christians who loved to look for the appearing of Jesus Christ (the Rapture). Not only did they love to talk about Christ's coming, and to read back over the promises of Christ's coming in the Scriptures, but they lived every day of their lives with the anticipation that "Christ could come back *today*, and I therefore must serve Him with all my might, so that I won't be ashamed if He were to appear today!"

2 Timothy 4:7-8

The fourth kind of crown that Christians will receive in glory is the **incorruptible crown**. The incorruptible crown will be given to Christians who had self-control in their Christian life. That means that they just kept serving God faithfully every day, no matter what they *felt* like. They were not driven by their emotions and lusts, but by the Spirit of God. They were like a runner in a race, who keeps on pressing toward the finish line, even though it hurts. These Christians don't wake up some mornings and say, "Ho-hum. I don't really feel like serving the Lord today. It's too hard, and takes too much of my time; and I have to deny myself a lot of things. Besides, it's raining outside. I think I'll just do what I feel like doing today." No, they keep serving God, no matter what the cost!

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Now, there is a fifth kind of crown that Christians will receive; and it is called the **crown of rejoicing**. The **crown of rejoicing** will be given to Christians who were soul-winners. This means that they did their best to tell others about Jesus Christ, and his wonderful salvation.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

Christian, if you will do your best to tell others about how they can be saved, God promises that He will give you this very special crown! This crown will not be given on the basis of *the number* of people that you led to the Lord, because God often sends believers to very sin-hardened audiences, who refuse to listen. When God commissioned the prophet **Ezekiel** to preach to his fellow Jews who had been carried away to Babylon, He warned Ezekiel, right from the start, that *the people would not listen to him*; yet, He commanded him to preach to them anyway! He told Ezekiel, "**Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and**

of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”

Christian, put yourself in Ezekiel’s shoes. Would *you* have obeyed God’s commission, even though you knew that virtually *no one* would listen to you? Ezekiel did: and because he did, God will reward him abundantly in the Kingdom that He will establish on earth one day! Rewards will be given not according to *numbers*, but according to faithfulness.

When I think about faithful witnesses, I often think about my own dad. Over the years, my dad spent thousands of dollars *beyond* his tithes and missions giving to purchase tracts and Bibles for his own personal witness to people. He would buy quality Bibles, and would have the name of the people to whom he was giving the Bible printed on the front cover of the Bible. He would then hand-write a personal letter to that person, in which he would explain the Gospel thoroughly. He posted these Bibles not only to friends, family, and co-workers, but to many people whom he didn’t know, such as presidents, governors, and other civil leaders. As for tracts, my dad didn’t get his supply from the tract rack at church, because the supply at church wasn’t nearly enough for what he needed. He was *constantly* ordering boxes and boxes of tracts for his own use, and handing them to people everywhere he went. Did people get saved through his witness? Yes! Not in huge numbers; but every now and then, individuals, and sometimes whole families, did receive Christ as Saviour: and their lives were changed forever! Today, my dad’s dementia has progressed to the point that he can scarcely remember who his own children are; but one day, in glory, my dad will see and know every soul whom he led to the Lord; and they will be a literal “crown of rejoicing” to his head!

Now, *why* will God give Christians these crowns? What is their purpose? Will God give Christians these crowns so that they can go bragging around Heaven for all eternity, and say, “Look what *I* did for Jesus”? No! There will be absolutely no bragging in Heaven, because we won’t have anything to brag about! We don’t *deserve* to miss hell, and go to Heaven. We’re nothing but dirty, rotten, hell-deserving sinners. The only reason we will miss hell is that God loved us so much, that He made a way for us to escape His wrath by sending His Son to earth to die in our place, and take our punishment. As for our service to God, whatever we did for Christ *after* we were saved, we were able to do it only because the Lord *enabled* us do it through His Holy Spirit. Without Christ, we cannot do *anything* that pleases God. Why, then, why *will* Christians be given these crowns? Well, here’s the reason.

Revelation 4:9-11

God will give Christians crowns for their service to Him on earth so that they may take those crowns, cast them back at Jesus’ feet, and say, “You are worthy”! By casting our crowns at Jesus’ feet, we will be telling Him, “We know that we don’t deserve these crowns, Lord! We

love you, and we thank you for saving us!” With this in mind, what will it be like for Christians who *didn't* do their best for the Master when they were on earth? What will it be like when they stand before God at the Judgment Seat, and find that they don't have crowns to cast at His feet? They will be extremely sad and ashamed. Christian, don't let that be you!

III. An example of a believer whose gift kept on giving

This morning we are going to look at the example of an Old Testament believer who gave a gift that kept on giving. The Bible calls this believer the **Great Woman of Shunem**. The great woman of Shunem lived in the northern Kingdom of Israel, about 900 years before Jesus was born; and she and her husband lived in a town called Shunem. She and her husband had a great love for the LORD; and one of the ways they showed their love for God was by being a blessing to God's prophets. Whenever the prophet **Elisha** was travelling through the area, she and her husband always opened their home to him. Elisha lived in the city of Samaria, which was the capital city of Northern Israel; but he travelled to towns all over Israel, and preached and taught the Word of God to the people.

Now, the people of Israel were in desperate need of the preaching of God's Word. Most of the nation was in a state of apostasy and rebellion against God. Most of the people worshipped the two golden calves that were in the cities of Bethel and Dan, as well as the false god Baal, and many other false gods. And guess what? Because they didn't love God, they didn't love God's prophets, either. Elisha was mocked and ridiculed wherever he went. In fact, at the town of Beth-el, a huge mob of young men came out in the streets just to mock him, and to call him a “bald head.” (God put a quick end to that, by sending two mama bears from out of the woods to maul about 42 of them!) However, in Shunem, there were two people who loved and respected Elisha. Whenever Elisha was travelling through the town of Shunem, he knew that he would have a place to stay at the woman of Shunem's house. Now, one day, the woman of Shunem had an idea of how they could be even more of a blessing to Elisha.

2 Kings 4:8-11

We don't know how many souls were saved through Elisha's preaching and teaching ministry. However, we do know one thing: this woman and her husband had a part in every soul whose heart was turned to God through the preaching of Elisha. Now, ironically, the one person we know of who *was* saved through Elisha's ministry was not even a Jew. The man's name was Naaman; and he was from the country of Syria.

2 Kings 5:1-17

The best part of this story is not that Naaman was healed of his leprosy; it was the fact that Naaman got saved! Naaman was so impressed by Elisha's God, and by Elisha's godly character, that he *knew* he needed to make a life-changing decision. He repented of his sin,

stopped worshipping his false Syrian gods, and placed his faith in the God of Israel. And guess what? The woman of Shunem and her husband had a part in Naaman's salvation, because they gave to Elisha. Their gift kept on giving! Jesus said, "***He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.***" Think about that, brethren! Jesus said that when you bless your pastor, or a visiting missionary, preacher, evangelist, or *any* fellow labourer in Christ, God will reward you. Whether you offer for a pastor or missionary to stay in your home, or simply give him a cup of cold water, you are having a part in what that preacher is doing! Anyone who gets saved because of his preaching, you had a part of it; and someday, God will reward you!

IV. Eternal treasure....and infernal "treasure"

Someday you will come to the end of your life; and if, in this lifetime, you received God's gift of salvation, you will go to that wonderful place called Heaven. And what will there be in Heaven? There will be unspeakably wonderful things! However, we will also encounter judgment in Heaven. At the judgment, God will not hold any of your sins *against* you, because your sins are all forgiven for time and eternity. However, you *will* have to give an answer as to why you disobeyed God. Also, Christ will examine what you did *to serve Him* after you were saved; and He will reward you for the things that you truly did for His glory. Whatever you gave to Christ because you loved Him, you'll be rewarded for it. You'll receive crowns; and you'll be given a position of authority in Christ's 1,000-year Kingdom. On the other hand, anything that you did to please yourself, and not God, will *not* be rewarded. Instead, you will *forfeit* reward.

Christian, all "earthly treasure"—money and treasure that you spent on yourself—will be "burned up" at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We know, of course, that Christians will never stop being saved. After you are saved, you can't ever be lost again, and end up in hell, because Christ is the One who saves you and *keeps* you. **But**, you *can* lose rewards. Whatever you did for yourself on earth will be lost. You'll get no reward for it; and you will be very sad that you didn't have crowns to give back to Jesus.

1 Corinthians 3:9-16

We've looked at the reward for believers; but what about the reward for *unbelievers*? What about those who never surrendered their lives to Christ? What about those who spent the years of their lives pursuing worthless trinkets of this world, and who never repented of their sin, trusted in Jesus Christ, and received God's gift of salvation? What will come of those who thought that they weren't really bad people, and who believed that they could get to Heaven by their own goodness? What about those who lived their whole life for self, and not for God? What will happen when they come to their deathbeds, and finally pass through that

door between this physical realm and eternity? Tragically, they will pass into the flames of hell; and one day, at the end of the world, they will stand before the righteous Judge, and receive the final (and irrevocable) sentence of eternity in the Lake of Fire, along with the devil and his angels, and with all the other members of Adam's race who rejected God.

Which will it be *for you*? Will you receive “Heavenly Treasure”—or “Infernal Treasure”? There *will be* a “treasure” for those who die without Christ: but it isn't the kind of “treasure” that you want to receive! It is an *infernal* treasure—a *fiery* treasure. **Romans 6:23** says, “***For the wages of sin is death.***” **Romans 2:5** warns that the lost are treasuring up “***wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.***” The “treasure” for those who die in their sins will be an eternity of fiery torment and separation from God. **Second Thessalonians 1:9** warns that those who die without Christ “***shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.***”

Conclusion: If you have not come to Christ for salvation, I urge you not to cash in on that “infernal treasure.” Christ already took the penalty of your sin upon Himself, so that you would not have to receive the reward for your sin. There is nothing keeping you from having eternal life with Christ, except your own stubbornness, self-will, and pride. Don't end up in hell! Repent of your sin and believe on Christ today! **If you have already received God's unspeakable gift**, and you know you are saved, perhaps the Lord is speaking to you about this matter of giving. Maybe you've never had much of a burden for souls, or for missions. If so, don't merely make a resolution to give a certain amount to missions this year. Yes, you should give to missions; but if you decide to give out of a sense of guilt or obligation, your resolution won't last. What you need is to allow Christ to conform you more into His image. Ask Christ to make you into a cheerful giver; a sacrificial giver; a loving giver; and a giver whose gift keeps on giving.