

Godly Guidelines for Joyful Generosity

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Stewardship: Taking Care of Things God Gives You

- This entire week here at church (last Sun, also on ThG), we've focusing on Xian stew. I think too often when people hear stew, imm think: "\$, church needs \$." But not what stew all about. Stew re managing (or might simply say, taking care of) blessings God gives you. As Xian I want take care of: home, spouse/children/parents, job, church/school, my faith and faith of others around me, rels with people, possessions, yes \$. All these things are blessings from God; and stew re taking care of those blessings. So not all about \$; but certainly includes \$, bec I need take care of \$ God's given me. So today, we're going talk re \$.
- I know, sometimes that's taboo subject at church, bec some people think all church talks re is \$. Well, you know that's not all we talk about. This church proclaims gospel of JC, cruc/risen for our salvation; that's what we talk about! But know who does talk lot re money? Jesus does! Not taboo subject for him. Bible has lot to say re how we use our \$. And today we're going look at short Bible passage that gives us some dirs/instrs for how to give \$ to Lord through our church offerings. We'll call them GG4JG.

When

- So we turn to **1 Cor 16:1-2**. Number of GG in there. First, the when of JG. **Vs. 2a**. When hear that, normally think coming to church, on Sun/Mon, 1st day week. But really, should think of it more like this: if you're employed, how often get paid? Think was time when common people paid once/month. Today more common, twice/month (how often I). Seems like in Jesus' day, people got paid every day, at end of workday. Workers in field, at end day, got paid daily denarius for their work (cf. Mt 20:1-16). Would probably be impractical for our employers cut us paycheck every day. But that's how they did it back then. So that's why Paul can say **vs. 2a**, after week's worth of work/income, set aside your church offering.
- For us today, same principle applies, even if it's not necessarily on weekly basis. God still wants us set aside our church offering, and that doesn't necessarily have to be a weekly offering. But this passage does emphasize regularity, consistency in giving. Something that you've preplanned. What don't want do: get through sermon at church, stand for creed/create, then as sit, see ushers, go: "Oh yeah, offering; what got here – some change/ bills." Not preplanned, consistent. Haphazard. God says **vs. 2a**; so regularly – that's the when. Can be weekly; nothing wrong with that. Or can be twice month when get paid. Or can be monthly. Tell you something personal: Sarah & I pay bills, give church offerings once month. Monthly pattern for family finances. It's just what we do. And it's regular, consistent; I have no intention of missing a month. God wants us to be reg/consist in our church offerings. That's the when of JG.

Who

- How about the who. **Vs. 2abc-income**. So who is "each one of you" who earns income. When first came to SJ ~10 yrs ago, church giving offering envelopes to grade school kids. We changed that bec they don't earn income. Now we give envelopes to kids when confirmed, for 2 reasons: 1) bec giving offerings is mature act of worship, and 2) bec by time confirmed, might be earning some income. I always tell my 8th gr Cat students this story: when I their age, often worked on weekends for uncle. RL, tree nursery, all kinds jobs (trim branches, cut grass, rake leaves, haul brush); he'd pay by hour. Even though I was only 13 yrs old, I still took that income and set aside 10% (talk re % little later) for church.
- I'm sure many of our middle/high sch students have jobs (working Culver's, grocery store, babysitting, for uncle), and they earn little money for first time. And that's when Xian financial stew starts. **Vs. 2abc-income**. If that's true for mid-schoolers, certainly true for income earning adults. The who of stew is anyone who earns income. Like from ThG Day sermon, PDW's picture of playing catch with God – he throws ball, you throw back, repeat. God gives you income, you give some back, repeat. That's who gives church offerings.

How

- Now you might say, "Pastor, how?! You don't understand my situation. Things really tight right now! How am I supposed give decent offering to church?" Well, Bible talks re that, too – re the how. **Vs. 2abc-income** – which means % of income, a portion of what you earn. God's not trying to ruin you financially; he simply asks you give proportionately, a %, "**in keeping with your income.**"

- Now this requires little math; have to calculate this %. But as you're doing the math, might be eye-opening for you to see what % of your income you spend on other things. How much really do you spend on mortgage/rent, car payments, groceries, entertainment, vacations, sports clubs, personal hobbies, church offerings? How big is each sliver of the pie? Are things proportionate? Remember: stewardship is re managing or taking care of what God gives you. If a store manager (Walmart) spends all store's money on product but doesn't pay workers, that's disproportionate, bad management. If restaurant manager pays workers very generously but runs out of money to purchase actual food for restaurant, that's dispro/bad manag. And in our lives, if we overspend in one area (like if paying on house/car that's too much for us, or if blowing ton of money on sports or vacations, or if maxed out credit card on Black Friday on bunch junk we don't really need) – if we spend \$ on what we say is imp instead of what God says is imp, that's dispro, bad manag, bad stew.
- And finally, it's also idolatry. Giving offerings to church – that's a command from God, not a recom. And if we don't obey that com – either because we've managed our money poorly, or because just don't want to – that's idolatry, worshipping another god (1st Com), and that stealing from God (7th Com). Wise management of what God gives us includes proportionate, % based offerings.
- In OT, always 10%; that was rule. And that's fine baseline for us today; nothing wrong with 10%. But not a NT regulation. So we're not bound to 10%. Maybe you, right now, can only give 4%. If you give 4% regularly, faithfully, joyfully: that is God-pleasing worship. And if you've been blessed in way that you can give more than 10%, and if you do that reg/faith/joyfully, that is God-pleasing worship, as well. JG in church offerings is proportionate, % based. That's the how.

Why

- Finally, the why. Everything I've said so far in this sermon been law based: here's what God wants you to do. And these are good rules; come from God himself. But whenever faced with God's law, his rules, always 2 dangers. Either we despair, say, "No way I can do this; always been bad at offerings. What's point in trying now?" Or we become Pharisee, say, "Man, everything Lahmann's saying up there, that's me, that's how I give; and makes me mad more people don't give like this. How I was raised, how everyone should give to the church. I do my part – certainly better than all those people that don't give anything at all, or if they do, only give at Xmas or Easter when actually come to church. Blah/blah."
- No. Why do we give offerings to church? Not because we're driven by law, but bec driven by gospel. Verse/day, that heard today right after this (2nd) lesson, says **2 Cor 8:9**. That's the reason; that's why. **8:9ab** – Jesus, in heaven, surrounded by angels, being worshiped in heavenly splendor... **8:9c** – he left heaven, gave it up, came to earth, to sit on throne (?), no to be nailed to cross, to be tortured to death, by the people he came to save. Why do this? **8:9d** – through his suff/death on cross... **8:9e** – eternally rich, with God's forgiveness/grace, with his love for you as his own child, and with home prepared for you in heaven, where you will live with Jesus forever when die, because Jesus saved you – made himself poor, to make you rich.
- And that's why we give offerings: to say thank you to Jesus for giving us eternal riches. And we know that those offerings help spread the gospel, so that others can have eternal riches, too. Christ has given us everything, and our Xian hearts can't help but respond.

Conclusion

- GG4JG. When? Regularly, consistently. Who? Everyone who earns an income. How? Proportionately, a % of what you earn. And why? Because of the love of Jesus. These are God's GG4JG. May this sermon and this stew series not only clarify for us what means to be Xian steward, but may it also motivate us to manage and take care of all the blessings God has so richly given to us.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

2 Corinthians 8:9

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.