



Part 2: Watch Out for Greed!

Luke 12:13-21

The only antidote to greed is generosity.

I. The Paradox of Generosity

We saw last week that God is supremely interested in our joy. In fact, Jesus came that we might share in his joy.

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11

We can easily be confused or misled about the sources of joy. In our secular Western culture, we generally live with an assumption that is rarely challenged:

More money = more happiness

Ironically, for all its widespread belief, it does not usually prove to be true.

“People rightly say that money cannot buy happiness. But money and happiness are still related in a curious way. Happiness can be the result, not of spending more money on oneself, but rather of giving money away to others...the data examined here show this to be not simply a nice idea, but a social-scientific fact.” Christian Smith & Hilary Davidson, *The Paradox of Generosity*

Secular Western view: more money = more happiness

Jesus' view: more generosity = more happiness

“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘There is more joy in giving than in receiving.’” Acts 20:35

It’s true that generosity is more than money ... but’s it’s not less than money according to Jesus. It’s estimated that 15-25% of Jesus’ teachings are on money and possessions.

Disclaimer: Warning! The topic of money and generosity can evoke strong reactions including fear, anger, resentment, and shame. None of these emotions are the goal of this series because none of these emotions are from the Holy Spirit. Instead, the emotions we desire are joy, peace, thanksgiving, and confidence in God to lead us into His Way of “abundant life” (John 10:10), “the life that is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:19).

Disclaimer: “To be clear, we want something for our people (more faith, joy, freedom, and purpose) rather than something from our people (more money).” This short series is not a sneaky fundraiser for Greenwood. It is aimed to teach one of God’s most surprising truths – the path into deeper joy is generosity.

Generosity is the path to a joyful life. To live as a disciple of Jesus is to be transformed into a person who is joyfully generous with our resources.

II. Jesus Warns Us About Greed

A. The Unrivaled Danger of Wealth.

An honest look at Jesus’ teachings on money reveals that he mostly warns us about the danger of wealth:

“No one can serve two masters...you cannot server both God and Money (*Mammon*).” Matthew 6:24

“Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth; and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.” Mark 4:18-19

“Worldly possessions tend to turn the hearts of disciples away from Jesus.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer And Christian community as well...

“I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God...With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:23-26

B. A Parable About Greed.

“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Luke 12:15

“Be on your guard” (Greek = present imperative = be vigilant against greed!).

Greed or covetousness is about excess referring to the attitude of always wanting more beyond what we need. It's the opposite of contentment.

“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.”
Ecclesiastes 5:10

Q – What's the farmer's mistake?

He does not acquire his harvest unethically or immorally. His mistake is that he is only focused on himself. All his thinking and planning is centered on himself, and his goal is “Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry” (v.19).

The farmer has been very successful, but he has made a crucial mistake: he did not consider that his life was loaned to him by God (v. 20). He never considered that God was blessing him materially so he could bless others.

“The fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. Their tombs will remain their houses forever.” Psalm 49:10-11

“Financial success can equal spiritual failure.” – *John Mark Comer*

Q – What kind of legacy do we want to leave?

C. Rich Towards God.

“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.”
Luke 12:21

We see ourselves as Jesus' friends and allies in his Kingdom mission, and we are generous with our money, possessions and time to see his beautiful Kingdom on earth as in heaven.

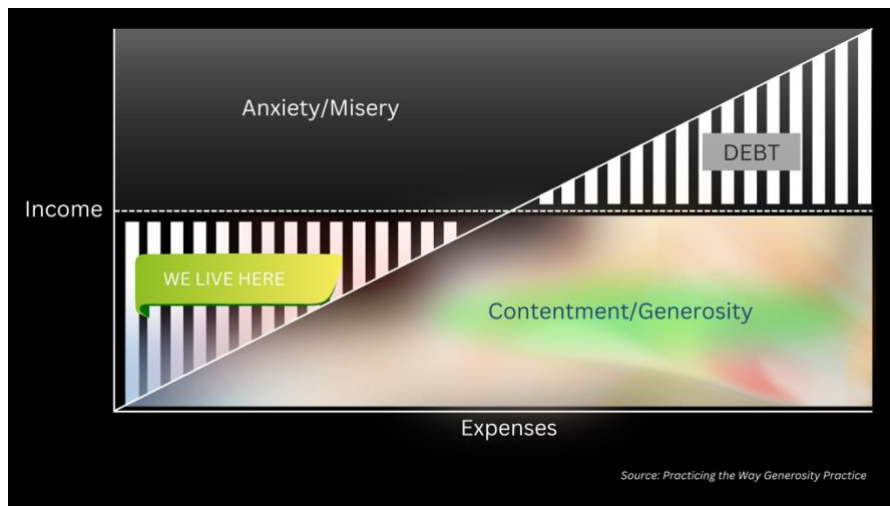
III. Contentment and Generosity

A. The Opposite of Greed is Contentment (1 Timothy 6:6-10; Hebrews 13:5).

“Contentment is being satisfied in whose you are, who you are, and what you have. Those who love and serve Jesus can be truly content. Those who love and serve money can never be.” – Randy Alcorn, *Giving is the Good Life*

“Contentment cannot be bought, but it can be given.” – *John Mark Comer*

B. Living with Financial Margin



“There are two ways to get enough. One is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less.” – G.K. Chesterton

C. Asking the Right Questions.

Q – How much is enough? Spiritual growth starts with asking the right questions.

We are not given a math equation or formula. This is a relational conversation with the Lord, His Word, and our community (spouse, etc).

John Mark Comer offers this general principle: Assuming our basic needs are met, people should look at our lives – our clothing, housing, transportation, dining out, etc. – and guess that we make less than we actually do. We should make more than most people would guess, because we have intentionally decided to live below our level of income to create margin to live simply and be generous.

IV. The Practice of Generosity

A. Generosity Begins with God (see last week).

A Biblical theology of generosity does not begin with a conversation about tithing. It begins with the recognition that the most joyfully generous Person in the universe is the God revealed in Jesus Christ.

- We see the generosity of the Creator, who gives...
- We see the generosity of the Father, who gives us His Son Jesus.
- We see the generosity of Jesus, who gives His life for us.

B. The Practice of Generosity.

“Generosity is the practice by which we index our heart from a scarcity mentality to the abundance mentality of Jesus.” – John Mark Comer, *The Generosity Practice*

We are training our hearts to want less and to be content with what we have. Joy can be our fuel! Recommended practice: Identify something you own that you don't need, and either give it away, or sell it and give the money to someone in need.

Father, Provider, you hold all things in endless, fearless supply; help us to live in that trust, in the rest and extravagance, of knowing we can freely give in the manner we've received – selflessly, daringly, lovingly. Giver of the present, help us to be present too, that in our joyful receiving of your goodness we may rightly welcome the gift of our lives and your unceasing Presence with us. Prayer, The Generosity Practice (Practicingtheway.org)

Recommended Resources:

1. A Theology of Kingdom Generosity – Pastoral Counsel from the Elders of Greenwood community Church (greenwoodcc.com/resources/articles).
2. The Practice of Generosity (4- Part Video Series) (practicingtheway.org).

Discussion Questions:

1. In your family of origin, what was the messaging around money?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how aware have you been of Jesus' warnings about the deceptive power of wealth?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is feeling the anxiety of greed and a desire for more, and 10 is feeling content with what you have, where would you plot yourself right now?
4. What is your response to Jesus' parable in Luke 12:13-21?
5. Which way are you most likely to view your life – as totally yours to be used however you please, or as a loan from God to be enjoyed and used to bless others? If you have moved from the former to the later, how did this happen?
6. What has been your experience fighting greed for greater contentment? What have you found helpful?
7. Is there an area of your life (schedule, possessions, finances etc) that you sense the Lord inviting you to grow in generosity?