



*Week 4*

# **Generosity Accomplishes Great Things when done in Love**

**Luke 19:1-10**

## Sermon Outline

### Giving Accomplishes Great Things When Done in Love Luke 19:1-10

I. If you have been here over the past 3 weeks, you know that we have been talking about giving and generosity

A. We've stated that it is not about what God (or the church) wants *from* you. It's about what God (and the church) wants *for* you.

B. But we also want you to know that when you give – whether it's your time, your abilities, your influence or your money – generosity is more than a tool for transactions. It's a tool for transformation.

C. ILL – We've all experienced gifts that were transactions – “Christmas bonus”... going to the dance with you because my parents made me...coupons in the mail...maybe you were on the other side and you gave to something out of guilt...gave to a community relief project (Red Cross...or the church) but never heard how the money was used.

1. Here's the great thing that God shows us in Scripture – true generosity is designed not to be a transaction, but to actually transform those involved.

2. Write this down – **Giving accomplishes great things when done in love.**

a. Here's the ultimate Bible example – the Gospel

b. To show you how the grace of the Gospel and the loving generosity of God transforms lives, I want us to look at a story in Luke 19

II. Luke 19:1-10

A. v. 5 – Here's the first thing that I want you to notice – ***Jesus was the first one to extend generosity***

1. This is the way that God always works (Romans 5:8)

2. The Gospel always begins with the generosity of God. He reaches out to us and offers us a gift that we did not deserve.

a. That's grace...that's generosity...and that's the Gospel

B. v. 8 – ***The generosity of Jesus transforms us***

1. Zacchaeus went from being materially wealthy and spiritually bankrupt to being completely generous and ultimately satisfied

2. ILL – Francis Chan in India – “chauffeur” pastor forgives father who accepts Christ.

a. Every time the Gospel is demonstrated, radical generosity is present

C. v. 10 – ***The Gospel culminates with salvation.*** And not only is Zacchaeus transformed and saved by faith in Jesus during this encounter, but he is also saved from the debilitating idol of money.

1. ILL - Tim Keller has noted that everything we treasure apart from Jesus will demand that you go to the mat to purchase them. But, Jesus Christ is the one – and only - treasure who was willing to go to the mat to purchase (redeem) you.

III. **Giving accomplishes great things when done in love.**

## *Sermon Manuscript*

If you have been with us over the past three weeks, you know that we have been talking about a touchy subject...but one that has the potential to change the way we do life. If you have been with us, you know that we have been talking about money and possessions. And, hopefully, you've recognized that we are talking about this subject in a new way. Hopefully you have started to realize that the heart of this study is not about what either the church – or God – can get from you. Instead, it's about what we as church leaders and what God, as the Father, want FOR you when it comes to money and material goods.

As I was getting ready for this message this week, I ran across a passage that really challenged me. I still don't know exactly how I am going to respond to this. But, it's a prayer that is prayed in Scripture. It's one that you may have heard before, but it's so easy to skim over these verses and think, "I'm glad that wasn't MY prayer."

Listen to it. It's a prayer of a guy named Agur in the book of Proverbs. He prayed these words,

<sup>7</sup>“Two things I ask of you, Lord;  
do not refuse me before I die:  
<sup>8</sup>Keep falsehood and lies far from me;  
give me neither poverty nor riches,  
but give me only my daily bread.  
<sup>9</sup>Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you  
and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’  
Or I may become poor and steal,  
and so dishonor the name of my God.

As we go through this series on money and generosity...as we look at what God wants for us regarding our material possessions...those words hit me right between the eyes. That's a hard thing to pray! If we are being honest about these things, we have to admit that the subjects that we have been talking about over the last few weeks are difficult subjects. The things that we have been talking about are all things that fly directly in the face of typical American lifestyles.

But, as we've seen, it is critical for us to have a Biblical understanding of what God wants for us regarding money and possessions. So, let's quickly recap where we've been before we jump into today's message. If you missed out on any of the previous weeks, listen for – and write down – the key principles from each week.

1. In the first week, we learned that **we are most like God when we give**. Based on some verses in Luke 6, we acknowledged that God is radically generous. And then we said that if we are going to truly imitate His ways, we are going to have to become radically generous, too. And you may remember, we noted that God's generosity is not based on the worthiness of the recipient. It's simply a part of His nature. It's central to His character. God gives. And we are most like Him when we are generous, too.
2. The second week, we saw from the Parable of the Sower that **generosity frees us from the dangers of money**. We talked about how the “worries of life and the deceitfulness of

wealth” can cause people who believe in Jesus to miss out on His kingdom. Through that parable, Jesus taught us that the way we handle our money and material possessions directly influences the way that we experience God here on earth.

3. Then, last week, we went to 2 Corinthians and saw that **generous givers experience a life full of joy**. Contrary to the fear that we often feel before giving, we’re not trading down when we give. We’re not losing by giving. Generous givers are actually trading up. We are exchanging something of small value (material possessions) for something of extraordinary value (joy).

And as we close out this series today, we want it to be clear that true Biblical generosity is always something more than a *transaction*. It is a powerful tool for *transformation*. Whenever God prompts you to give...and whatever you choose to give – whether it is your money, your time, your abilities or your influence... generosity is intended to transform lives. And before you let your mind walk into that thought too far, let me just suggest to you that many times the one who is transformed is not the recipient of the gift, but it is the one who is giving the gift. But, either way, as we think about the best ways to imitate the generosity of God, we need to remember that what we are doing is more than a transaction. It’s a step in the process of transformation.

Let me give you a quick illustration of what I am talking about. We have all experienced gifts that were nothing more than transactions. We’ve all gotten socks on Christmas morning at some point. And I think if we are honest, that is not a life changing gift. It’s a transaction. It meets a basic need, but for most of us who live in the comforts of America, it doesn’t do much for us.

Many of you, at one time or another, have received a Christmas bonus from someone that you were working for. You may have felt like it was too little...or you may have simply been grateful that you got anything. But, either way, chances are pretty high that your Christmas bonus...as nice as it was...didn’t alter the course of your life. It was a transactional gift.

Maybe some of you, when you were in high school, went to a dance with someone because your parents made you do it. You gave that other special person the gift of your presence for one night out of the year. You didn’t want to do it. And after the fact, they probably wished that you hadn’t done it either. But, your parents made you. So, that night was a transactional gift. You didn’t start dating afterwards. You wouldn’t call it the night of your life. It was kind. But, it was simply doing what you were supposed to do.

We experience transactional gifts all of the time. We get coupons in the mail. There’s no connection to the manufacturer, but they send us these nice twenty cent gifts anyway. It’s a transaction.

And sometimes, we are even the ones doling out the transactional gifts. We throw a twenty dollar bill in the offering plate because we feel guilty. It doesn’t change the world and it doesn’t change us. It’s simply a transactional offering.

After a major natural disaster, we donate to the Red Cross or some other community group, but we never see the end result of our gift. The recipient never has a face to put with the money. It's just a quick transaction that allows money or goods or time to exchange hands...from one party to another.

But, here's the great thing that God teaches us through Scripture. The best forms of generosity are not designed to be transactions, but they are meant to transform the parties involved.

If you are a note-taker, write this down. Giving accomplishes great things when it is done in love. And today, we are going flesh that out. Today, we are going to see – in an amazing way – what God desires for us as we live generous lives. We are going to see that transformational generosity is the heartbeat of the gospel. Transformational generosity is what drives the work of Jesus on the cross. And what He did in dying for us was not just a simple transaction. It was not just an exchange of our bad for His good. It was so much more than that. And when we truly accept the indescribable gift that He has given us, it begins to transform our lives.

To look at that idea, I want us to open to the book of Luke, chapter 19. We're going to look at a story that – again – is one that is probably familiar to you. This is one of those stories that you hear about as a child and because it's associated with a children's song, it tends to stick. It's the story of a guy who's doing pretty well financially. He's basically on top of a 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel tax pyramid scheme. He collects tax money for the Roman government and while he's doing that, he gets to pocket any additional money that he can swindle out of the taxpayers.

So, he wasn't liked. But, his schemes had made him a wealthy man.

We don't always remember this guy for his tax collecting abilities, but we almost always remember him as the “wee little man who climbed the sycamore tree.” So, let's read his story together.

“Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

“When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’”

If you have your Bible with you, keep it open, because we are going to talk through this as we read. We're going to flesh it out as we look at the passage together. And here's the first thing that I want you to notice about the story of Zacchaeus. In this story, there was no reason for anyone to extend any kindness to Zacchaeus. He was not liked by the people around him. He was a thief and a swindler. There was no reason for Jesus to pay any attention to this man. I'm sure there were other people who were fighting their way through the crowds to see Jesus.

But, I want you to notice this point. Jesus was the first one to engage in an act of generosity. Even though there was no reason for Jesus to pay special attention to Zacchaeus, He stopped and made it a point to engage with this guy who was an unknown and who was unimportant outside of this small area of the world.

Jesus was the first one in the story to extend His hand in generosity.

Isn't that the way the gospel always works? Isn't it true that God always makes a way for us to come to Him? You know, in so many people's worldviews, all religions are leading up the same mountain to God. Some people say that we are traveling up one side of the mountain to reach God and the Muslims are traveling up another side of the mountain and the Buddhists are on a third side...but we're all heading in the same direction and we're all working our way toward God. But, the Bible says that there is a big problem with that theory.

According to the Bible, we didn't climb our way to God, but instead, He came down the mountain to us. Through the birth of Jesus, the Almighty, Most Holy God didn't wait on us to make up our minds and find the right path toward Him. Instead, He made the first move. He engaged in the first act of generosity. He came to us. When we had nothing to offer Him...while we were acting as enemies of His ways...while we were still sinners...He generously extended His love and grace to us.

That's the way God works. And that's exactly what Jesus did with Zacchaeus. He was the first one to extend generosity.

The gospel always begins with the generosity of God. He reaches out to us and offers us a gift that we do not deserve. That's why it's such good news. That's why it's called the gospel.

Let's keep reading. In verse 6, we see how Zacchaeus responded to the generosity of Jesus. It says;

“So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’”

Did you see what happened there? Did you see what the generosity of Jesus did to Zacchaeus? It wasn't just a transaction for him. It wasn't just an invitation to a meal so that he would feel better about himself. Here's the thing. The generosity of Jesus transformed Zacchaeus.

I wish I knew more of what happened during that meal that they shared together. I wish we knew the things they talked about and how Jesus interacted with this guy. I wish that conversation was recorded so that we could see exactly how Jesus led him to this point. But,

here's what we do know. Jesus extended generosity to a guy that did not deserve it. Jesus gave up His time to be with a man that most of the locals could not stand. And as a result of that generosity, Zacchaeus came away from their conversation saying, "Here and now..." right at this very moment..."I give half of my possessions to the poor and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Zacchaeus accepted the generosity of Jesus and as a result, he was radically transformed. His life was altered and his change of heart was immediately seen in the way he was thinking about money and possessions. In a matter of hours...or however long this conversation took...Zacchaeus went from being materially wealthy and spiritually bankrupt to being completely generous and ultimately satisfied. He was transformed by the generosity of Jesus. And that's the way that God wants generosity to work in our own lives. He wants it to be more than an exchange of money. He wants it to be more than signing over a heartless check. He wants it to imitate His own generosity...a generosity that is wrapped in love and can transform even the darkest lives.

Pastor Francis Chan tells of a time that he went to speak at a Christian conference in India. He said it was an incredibly humbling thing to speak at this event and he knew when he went in that they should be teaching him...not the other way around. Chan says that in this gathering, the people who were there had all suffered for their faith. They had been beaten for accepting Christ. They had been rejected and abused. But, they were willing to follow Jesus no matter what the personal cost was to them. He said, in essence, that this was a gathering of the persecuted church of India.

So, Pastor Chan went and spoke, but more than speaking, he really wanted to spend time listening. Therefore, after he finished his message and after the conference concluded, he spent a couple of hours walking around and talking to the people who were present. He would just go up to person after person and ask, "What is your story? Tell me how you have come to follow Jesus." And person after person would tell him remarkable stories of all that they had endured, but they would all mention how it was absolutely worth it.

After hearing a couple of hours' worth of these people's stories, Chan got back into his cab and started heading for the hotel where he was staying. Apparently on this trip, he had a guy that was kind of like his personal chauffeur. So, this 30 something year old Indian man would drive him to the events that he needed to be at and then take him back to the hotel or wherever he needed to go.

So, they got in the cab and started heading back to the hotel when Pastor Chan realized that he had spent all of this time with this man and he had never asked about the cab driver's faith story. He knew from small talk that the man was a pastor and so he asked, "What about you? What is your story? How did you come to faith in Christ and wind up serving as a pastor here?"

To his surprise, the cab driver told him that he made a profession of faith when he was eleven years old. No one else in his family was a Christian. He was the first. And he knew that his

father might be upset over his decision. But, this 11 year old boy went home and told his parents about the decision he had made.

According to Chan, this young boy's father got so mad that he began cursing at him and going into a fit of rage. He began to walk through the house and collect everything that belonged to his son...clothes, toys and personal items...and he threw them all outside in the rain. He then told his son, "You have disgrace our family and you are now dead to me. You are not allowed to call me dad anymore. Get out of my house. I never want to see you again."

So, this 11 year old boy walked outside – where it was raining – and had to figure out what possessions were really important to him. He grabbed a few things and walked away. He had to find a place to get out of the rain. He had to find his own food and shelter. He was completely alone. But, miraculously, God took care of him. Day after day, he found places to stay and things to eat and it was obvious to him that God was watching over him.

Are you ready for this? That's not even the amazing part of the story. So, eventually, this young boy got older and went into Christian ministry. And only a couple of years before Pastor Chan met him, he decided to do something amazing. He had not seen his father in about 20 years, but he decided to find his father. And he did. After finding him, he went to him and he placed his arms around his dad and said, "Dad, I forgive you."

His father broke down in tears and shortly after that...because of the generous forgiveness that was displayed by his son...he accepted Christ as his personal Savior. He became a believer. His life was transformed because he saw the generous love of the Living God through the life of his own son.

Isn't that remarkable?

Every time the gospel is truly demonstrated...I'm not just talking about someone standing on a street corner telling the story of Jesus...but, every time the gospel is truly demonstrated, radical generosity is present. The gospel...the good news...of Jesus always comes wrapped in generosity. And more than that, it comes wrapped in transformational, loving generosity.

Listen to this. Verse 9...

"Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'"

I don't know about you, but that just blows my mind! That's incredible. Jesus extends an offer of generosity to a guy who doesn't deserve it. The guy is transformed by Jesus's kindness. And now Jesus says – as a result of his faith and his transformation – "Today salvation has come to this house."



Not only was Zacchaeus transformed and saved by faith during this encounter with Jesus, but he was also saved from the debilitating idol of money. Isn't that cool? When God saves us, he's not only saving us from eternal separation from Him, but He also saves us from the things that are devastating our lives today. Zacchaeus, through this generous encounter, was set free from his enslavement to material possessions and he immediately experienced the joys of that freedom through his own generosity. The prison doors of money that had kept him shackled for so long were thrown open and he was free to start living a new life...as a new creation.

It has been noted that everything in this world that we treasure – apart from Jesus – will ultimately demand that you go to the mat to purchase them. Anything that you treasure will cost you something to obtain it. For example, if you want to purchase a new car...one that will rival any car on your block, with the heated leather seats and the 24 disc CD changer...it will cost you. You will have to work a certain number of hours to purchase the vehicle. You will have to save a certain amount of money just to get it placed in your name. Then, it will cost you each time it needs gas or oil or new tires. The car will demand something of you up front and then will continue to demand things of you down the road.

That's the way every treasure in this world works. If you treasure books, they will demand a certain amount of money and time from you. If you treasure a large retirement account, it will demand sacrifices in the way you are working and living today. If you treasure another person, they will demand that you court them properly and bring them gifts and care for their needs. That's the way it works. Every treasure that you could want in this world will demand that you go to the mat to obtain it.

But, with Jesus, the opposite is true. He is the only treasure that is willing to go to the mat to purchase you. He is the only treasure who is willing to give up all to be with you. He is the only treasure who is willing to buy and redeem you at a personal cost to Himself (even though we are ultimately the ones who are receiving the treasure).

That's what happens when love is coupled with generosity. It doesn't always lead to a rational outcome, but it does lead to transformational outcomes. Just as the story of Jesus shows us...and just as the story of Zacchaeus demonstrates...the gospel, which comes wrapped in generosity, culminates with God's transforming act of salvation.

Let me ask you something. How remarkable is this tool of generosity? For far too long, we have looked at generosity with a suspicious eye. For far too long, we have worried about what other people – or even God – wanted to get from us. For far too long, we have fretted over material possessions that were keeping us enslaved to misery and hardships. But, God wants something far better for us. God wants us to experience salvation from the idol of money and start to live the lives that He created us to live. He wants us to be transformed by his kindness. And He invites us into the business of transforming others with our generosity.

In Luke 16...just a few chapters before the one we have looked at today...Jesus tells a story of a guy who struggles with money. And at the end of the story, Jesus gives an over-arching principle to help us understand why He keeps talking about this subject. In Luke 16:9, Jesus



says, “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”

That’s God’s plan. That’s God’s way. Don’t let money dictate and destroy your life. But instead, use it to transformationally change the world around you.

Giving accomplishes great things when it’s done in love. So, how will you transform your world through the material possessions that God has entrusted to you?