

Idolising Money

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[0 : 00] You got a Bible, you can turn to the Gospel of Luke chapter 19 and we're going to read the first 10 verses of Luke 19. Luke 19 and verse 1.

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Luke 19 and verse 1. Luke 19 and verse 1. Luke 19 and verse 1. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray.

Amen. great redeeming message of Jesus.

[2 : 15] And so I pray you would show us these things this morning, Lord. For Christ's sake and for his glory. Meet with us by your spirit, we pray. Amen. So we're not going to be in Acts this morning.

Actually, in the series in Acts, we come to a big section now with the day of Pentecost. And so I thought it would be better. I'm going to be away in the U.S. for a couple of weeks doing some fundraising work for our church plants and for our denomination.

And so I thought it would be better to go into Acts 2 when I get back from that. And then today's situation kind of made an occasion for me to then deviate.

But we're still with the same author, with the author Luke, not in Acts, but in his gospel and the story of Zacchaeus. I don't know if any of you, as I was reading through those passages again now, any of you had a Sunday school experience?

Maybe you've got like a little song, like a little ditty about Zacchaeus in the back of your head as you listen to that. Anybody? Or was it just me? I can see somebody nodding your head. You've got a song in the back of your mind there about something coming home to your house for tea or something like that.

[3 : 15] We're going to talk about Zacchaeus. Like I said earlier in the beginning, I want our church, and this is not empire building or seeking our own glory.

This is for the sake of the multiplication of the gospel. But I want our church to be a hub church, a base church, a church for church planting, for student ministry, for theological education, for mercy ministry.

In 20 years' time, I hope to still be here, not necessarily as a pastor, but around maybe. Who knows? Maybe you also want me as a pastor in 20 years' time. Maybe we'd be bored at that point. But in 20 years' time, I want us to not only be able to point to a thriving congregation here on the corner of Kloof and Eton, but to multiple other congregations, planted across Cape Town and even further afield.

Many ministers of the gospel being trained up and sent out. The poor and the needy served through mercy and justice ministries. The early, well, late 18th, early 19th century missionary, William Carey, was famous for saying, expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.

Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God. That's what I want for us. Now that requires many things from us. It requires prayer. We need God's spirit to move, to work.

[4 : 40] It requires sacrificial service from us. We need to roll up our sleeves and get busy, all of us, not just the pastor, not just the staff, not just the campus outreach team, all of us.

It requires bold evangelism from us. We need to share this faith that we have. And it also requires generous giving from us.

God uses our resources for the building of his kingdom. And so this morning, what I want to do is I want to try and encourage and motivate you from scripture to be a generous sacrificial giver in the service of God's purposes.

I want to call you to mission. Maybe you think of missionaries as people you send far overseas and you don't associate giving with mission. I want to call you to mission this morning, mission through

giving.

I want to call you to expect great things from God by attempting great things and part of which includes sacrificial giving. To do that, I want to speak about one of the big obstacles that stops us from being sacrificial and generous givers and that is idolatry.

[5 : 41] The fact that we are prone to idolize money. Now if you've been around Union Chapel for a while or you've heard many of my sermons, you know we talk about idolatry a lot.

You'll know that the kind of definition I use for idolatry, and it's not mine, I got it from other people, but it's basically idolatry is having any God, small g God, in the place of God, capital G God.

Having any small g God in the place of the real, true, biblical God. That's idolatry at its simplest definition. Now the idol of money is probably one of our culture's greatest idols.

It's one way that our sophisticated, very secular culture has looked to, I think, replace the gaping hole that dismissing God from our public lives has actually left in us.

So if you don't get transcendence from relationship with the creator God anymore, well then you have to get transcendence from somewhere else. If you're not worshipping God in church anymore and you've given up on that and you say, well that doesn't really work as a society, now we have to get the sense of transcendence from somewhere else and so we go looking for it.

[6 : 46] Now you see this actually reflected in architecture. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period, if you were in Europe, you could see that the highest point of a town marked out where it was getting its sense of transcendence from, where it was worshipping.

It was the church steeple. It was the highest point in any local town. You can actually still see this a little bit in rural towns in South Africa if you drive through the country with the Dutch reformed churches in every little town. The highest point is always the church steeple.

Today, however, the tallest buildings in many cities around the world are what? Banking buildings. Go down to the foreshore, the port side, is the tallest building in Cape Town and the very top is FNB, Rand Merchant Bank.

If you look at our architecture, you can discern the gods, the small g gods. You can discern how we're trying to replace transcendence, the transcendence of the infinite God with finite things.

You can see what's highest in our culture. Friedrich Nietzsche, he wasn't really a friend of Christianity, but he saw this just as Western world was kind of beginning its journey into secularism.

[7 : 55] He wrote this many, many years ago. He said, what induces one man to use false weights, another to set his house on fire after having insured it for more than its value, while three-fourths of the upper class indulge in legalized fraud?

What gives rise to all of this? Is it not, so he says, it's not real want, for their existence is by no means precarious, but they are urged on day and night by a terrible impatience at seeing their wealth pile up so slowly, and by an equally terrible longing and love for these heaps of gold.

What once was done for the love of God is now done for the love of money, i.e. for the highest love of that which at present affords us, the highest feeling of power and a good conscience.

Why do we behave the ways that we do in regards to money? Well, Nietzsche says it's because money has become our highest love. It's the pinnacle, it's the pinnacle of our new temple, the highest point of the city.

And then that behavior then that he mentions there, so using faulty scales and the fraud, well that's the byproduct of having money as your God, and what we might call greed.

[9 : 04] So I want us to look at this character, Zacchaeus, in the Bible, wrapped up, he's a character that's wrapped up in greed and the idolizing of money. And I want you to see three movements in the story.

There's a movement from God to greed, and there I'm saying small g, God, from God to greed, there's a movement from God to greed, then there's a movement from greed to grace, and then there's a movement from grace to giving.

So here's the first movement in the story, from God to greed. Look at the first three verses. 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 couldn't see over the crowd. And we're told a few things here about Zacchaeus.

We're told that he's a tax collector.

A tax collector in this society is someone who, at least by the general populace, is seen as being in league with the Romans. You are exacting a tax on behalf of your Roman overlords.

[10:05] You're probably taking a cut off of it, and so you do not have a good reputation in the community. You're seen as being on the side of the oppressor, on the side of the enemy, and benefiting financially at other people's expense through this.

But he's not just a tax collector. He's a chief tax collector, and as a result, he's extremely wealthy. He's extremely wealthy. And so you get this picture of an incredibly wealthy man, but probably a very despised man.

Now there's another interesting detail in the picture, and that is, he's short. Now Luke very deliberately tells us this. So he's short enough for this to be a very noticeable thing about it. Like he's not like short like me short. He's like short as in like, well, that guy's really short. Enough to kind of be the object of ridicule and derision in that particular culture.

So that, if you think about it, makes it somewhat peculiar then that he wants to be a tax collector in the first place. He's a guy who knows what it's like to be on the receiving end of societal ridicule because of his height, and yet he actively then pursues a career that puts him in an even worse light within that same community.

[11:21] Now you've got to ask, well, why would he do that? Why would he risk further emotional damage and relational isolation? He's got to have something driving him to do that.

And it's pretty clear from the rest of the story that it was money up until this point that was driving him. The accumulation of wealth was his God. His God moves him to greed even at the risk of his social status.

And remember, social status is a huge thing in this particular culture. So even for the sake of risking that social status, he's still going to have this small g God move him to greed. It's interesting to me that Jesus warns us about greed way more than he does about sexual immorality in the Gospels. And yet, very, very few of us actually think we struggle with greed. We can point to people like Zacchaeus and go, oh yeah, that person really struggles with materialism and with greed, but we don't see it in ourselves.

If I got 10 pastors, 10 friends of mine who are pastors in different churches around the city and I had them kind of stand up here this morning in the service and I asked them a couple of questions, it would be pretty revealing.

[12:31] So if I said, how many of you pastors have had a congregation member come to you saying they're really struggling with lust? I bet you all of them will put their hand up. If I say, pastors, how many of you have had a congregation member come to you and say that they're struggling with anger?

I suspect most of them will put their hand up. If I say, pastors, how many of you have had a congregation member come to you and say they're struggling with pride? I think a few of them will put their hand up.

If I say, pastors, how many of you have had a congregation member come to you and say they're struggling with greed? I don't think any of them would put their hand up.

I wouldn't be able to put my hand up. Which is bizarre. Because we all know deep down that money is one of, if not the biggest idol in the materialistic culture that we inhabit.

We also know that we're deeply, deeply, deeply embedded in that particular culture and yet none of us struggle with greed. Why do we think that? It's because greed is very hard to see in yourself.

[13:40] Mainly because we live in economic strata, layers. And we take our cue from the people around us in the same layer as us.

Now I'm speculating here but I suspect that Zacchaeus when he did hang out socially he hung out with other tax collectors because it kind of reinforces the narrative then. Because we all live in particular socio-economic brackets we tend to determine the boundaries of excess and insufficiency by that particular group that we inhabit.

So you can sit and you can live in a three bedroom house in the southern suburbs with a double garage and have your kids go to a nice private school and you go, I'm not that wealthy. And because in your mind you're thinking, well I don't live at the top of Camps Bay or the top of Bishop's Court.

And what you've done there is you've basically just rationalized how you're living your life. I'm not making a comment on how you're living your life but you've rationalized it based on the strata that you inhabit. And so it's entirely possible to be very greedy and yet completely blind to that reality in your own life.

It's hard to see greed in the God of money. You know those cathedral spires that I mentioned earlier those church steeples that towered over medieval towns and cities in previous centuries.

[15 : 01] when organized religion back in those days got into bed with the state and with power the finances flowed through those buildings. And so they were often not that different from the banking institutions that tower over contemporary cities because the God of money is an expert at hiding.

He'll hide in the church even. Which makes the God of money who drives greed exceptionally dangerous. Dangerous to you and me. Very, very dangerous to you and me.

And so we will do all sorts of destructive things like jeopardize our social status in the pursuit of greed without even realizing it. And we'll have ways of justifying it. And listen, if you look at this particular scenario so Zacchaeus jeopardizes his social status but we will jeopardize all sorts of other things.

We'll jeopardize our values to feed greed. We'll jeopardize family responsibilities to feed greed. We will jeopardize our faith to feed greed.

And all along we'll have very, very sophisticated ways of justifying it to others and even to our own hearts. Because the God of money is exceptionally dangerous to you and me. Zacchaeus is wrapped up in a very destructive way of life through greed driven by his God.

[16 : 20] So that's the first movement in the story. Here's the second movement from greed to grace. Look down at verse 3. He wanted to see who Jesus was but because he was short he could not see over the crowd so he ran ahead and he 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 and so he came down at once and welcomed him gladly and all the people saw this and began to mutter oh he's gone to be the guest of a sinner.

Now it seems that somehow Zacchaeus has become aware of his problem because he does something quite extraordinary he climbs a tree he's short he couldn't see Jesus probably because the people wouldn't let him through to the front some of the commentators actually mention that they're probably actually just blocking him out it's not just the fact that he's short and he can't see over them they're actually blocking him out because they don't like him there's no sympathy for him he's a chief tax collector hated by many of them and so he does an incredibly undignified thing in the culture and that is that he climbs up a tree honour and dignity are massive values in this culture and so to do things that would jeopardise your honour and your dignity is a big thing that's why for example the story the parable of the prodigal son is such a powerful image when the father as the text says girds his loins and runs to his son because dignified men don't do that and so it gives us this extravagant vision of the father's love for us same thing yeah dignified people don't climb up trees throwing your dignity out the window and so why would he do it well he's desperate to see Jesus he's desperate to get a look in at Jesus he wants he knows he's enslaved he knows he's in trouble he knows it's going to have terrible consequences for him and others and he wants to be free from this idol from this god that enslaves him he wants to see the man who brings redemption and so he completely humbles himself he strips himself of any claimed worth that he might have before Jesus and Jesus looks up at him in the tree and says come down

I'm coming to you for lunch being a guest at someone's house definitely involves eating this isn't like a polite pastoral visit it means coming for a meal and you can see the response he gets from the crowds there at that point oh this Jesus he's gone to be the guest of sinners Jesus has gone to eat with the sinner he's gone to share table fellowship with a greedy idolater sharing that sort of table fellowship is a sign of acceptance it's a sign of affirmation to sit down at the same table with him see what's happening here is what what happens throughout the gospels when people have a life changing encounter with Jesus and that is that there's grace there's grace grace is grace is undeserved favor and merit Zacchaeus takes any merit that he might possibly still possess at this point and he tosses it he humbles himself and at that point of humility

Jesus meets him and Jesus accepts him that's grace that is the gospel that's the center of our faith we do not bring our performance to Jesus we do not bring our morality our good deeds and say okay now Jesus you must accept me look what a good person I am look at the good things I've done now I accept me on the basis of the things that I've done of the merit that I bring we don't do that the way you get into relationship with Jesus in the Bible and this is all over the Bible is by humbling yourself and saying like the hymn says nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling Jesus is the redeemer he saves us he brings us in by his grace he chooses to come and sit at

the table with us and bring us into the family friends you never you never get rid of your idols through the sheer exercise of your will say you get to a point like Zacchaeus and you go oh I actually got this problem I am actually enslaved by something you never get rid of that idol by the sheer exercise of your will why well because worship the worship of God is built on grace on a grace relationship through Jesus Christ you can't you can't will yourself into that relationship you can't earn your way into his good books all you can do is repent and humble yourself before him and ask him to come in and be your guest

[20 : 59] Zacchaeus does a whole lot of really good stuff in the postscript of this story and we'll get to that in a moment but everything that he does all the good deeds flow from his first being accepted by Christ he moves from greed to grace before he then moves to giving and that's how we all get to God in the end it's God who does the giving he gives his grace and he welcomes us in and so you need grace to be free from your idols and grace starts with humility taking your perceived sense of I've earned this or merit and saying actually I haven't I have nothing before the creator God of the universe come before God and say I have nothing I have nothing to bring to this relationship and so that's the movement the second movement in the story that we see now here's the third movement from grace to giving so look down at verse 8

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 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 save the lost so Zacchaeus now moved by grace gives he gives in response to the grace he's received he says I want to take this wealth and I want to give 50% of it to the poor and then I want to pay back the people I've defrauded so I actually want to do some restitution here see here's how you know if you want some you want to do some tests in your own life of where you are at spiritually here's how you know that grace is taking root in your life and loosening the grip of the idol of money you want to know what it is you give you give generously and freely it's one really good indicator there are two types of giving here in this passage there's kind of what we might call generous giving and then there's what we might call just giving so generous giving first he says

I'm going to give 50% of my wealth to the poor now the Bible commands in many places that we do use our material resources for the care of the poor we give but it nowhere ever commands that you've got to give 50% of your wealth to the poor Zacchaeus wouldn't have been in sin or disobeying God if he'd only given if he'd stood up and said look I'm going to give 15% of my wealth to the poor there's no kind of legalistic instruction he's following by giving 50% but what he is doing is he's being exceedingly generous his heart his heart has been disentangled from his wealth and it's and it's been disentangled in a very specific way so let me explain it this way Jesus is clearly at this point in Luke's narrative it's not always going to be this way but if you're reading through the gospel of Luke at this point in Luke's narrative Jesus is someone of stature the crowds are flocking to him hence Zacchaeus has to climb a tree to see him he's got followers he's got a temporary level of status he's got people coming around hanging on his every word he's got all of the stuff that Zacchaeus doesn't have

Zacchaeus is hated by the people where the people adore Jesus people run from Zacchaeus when they see him people run to Jesus when they see him Zacchaeus has nothing and Jesus has everything that Zacchaeus wants and at Zacchaeus' lowest point ironically when he's in this undignified place in a tree Jesus who has everything that Zacchaeus longs for gives it to him by sitting at a table with him see that he generously includes him he generously reaches out to him and he accepts him he shares his status with him his acclaim with him and he does it at cost at cost to himself at cost to his reputation the crowd sneer the crowd mutter he's gone to be the guest of a sinner so out of great great great generosity

Jesus loses his reputation to include and affirm Zacchaeus you see and so the way that his heart is disentangled from his money is through the costly generosity of Jesus and it changes him when he sees it when he understands what Jesus has done for him it changes him and it makes him generous he gets to see the gospel in microcosm form the infinitely rich son of God generously impoverishing himself to make us eternally rich that's exactly what the apostle Paul will say about Jesus in 2 Corinthians 8 Paul will say 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 that's the gospel Zacchaeus sees it Zacchaeus is generous in his giving because he has been a

recipient of that generous costly love of Jesus he's like my bank card is overflowing in the love of [26 : 41] Christ I could never withdraw enough money to deplete it it's overflowing with the costly love of Jesus how can I not now give think about us friends how much have we been recipients of Christ's generous wealth through his sacrificial death on our behalf through his love so the question I have to ask because the Bible asks us this question is what has that done to your wallet what has that done to your bank balance that knowledge that knowledge of being included by that costly love of Jesus what has it done to your budget do you even give do you give generously if you don't it might be because you fail to grasp the generous love of God that has been poured out into your life through the death resurrection of Jesus might be that you can sit here and you can tell me

I believe the gospel in my head but without generous giving it's kind of hard to tell if that sacrificial generous love has actually taken root in your heart or not now this is really really practical let me make it super practical for you in the New Testament Christians are predominantly called to give in two places to the poor and we'll talk about that in a second and to the advance of gospel ministry through churches so giving to your local church the Bible calls on Christians to give to ministry of the church deliberately and consistently and what I mean by that is this I'm guessing most of you use some sort of a budgeting system to work out how you're going to spend your money each week you get some sort of income and then you've got a budget and you figure out I'm going to portion different things I'm going to portion this much for rent this much for food this much for insurance this much for entertainment a bunch of other things that are on that list I would put it to you that because of the way the Bible speaks about giving consistently and deliberately and you can see this in the way

Paul talks about giving in the Corinthian letters I would put it to you that because of that way that the Bible speaks about consistency and the deliberate nature of giving predetermining how much you're going to give and then putting it into your budget at the beginning is probably a very wise and biblical way of going about making your giving habitual in other words what you don't do is you don't give with your leftovers each month you plan to give beforehand you plan to be generous beforehand you discipline yourself into generous monthly giving giving is just like any other spiritual discipline like reading your Bible or praying there's a discipline required it doesn't just happen you just kind of fall into it it needs discipline without that planned consistent giving you're a little bit like the person who used to click because it's not there anymore but used to click the old the maybe button in Facebook for events I went and checked this up again but that maybe button is gone now it's just are you interested in this event but back in the day when you were trying to organize an event and you were trying to invite your friends on

Facebook you would create an event and it would have three options on the event it would be yes I'm coming maybe no I'm not coming and you always had those irritating friends who would click the maybe button by which they were communicating to you yes maybe I want to come to your party but if something better comes up I might actually want to go to that so I don't want to say yes because I want to hedge my bets here and be careful and so I'll click the maybe button when you're kind of giving with your leftovers all the time you're essentially doing that you're clicking the maybe button yes I want to be generous and I want to give to mission and I want to use my money for the service of the Lord but just now something else comes up just now I get into a little bit of a tricky spot financially or just now I have to buy a new car or I need to do something else and so I'll just click the maybe button and instead of deliberately and consistently planning out my giving and my budget I will I'll just see if I've got some stuff left over at the end of each month and then I'll maybe throw that into the church into the church coffers you discipline yourself into generous monthly giving it's a spiritual discipline it's an act of worship if you are that kind of maybe button person it's probably a clear sign that your money has too much of a hold on you that it's got control of you in an unhealthy way then people always want to know since we're being practical how much should I give in the church is the kind of Old

Testament law of a tithe of tithing 10% is that law still for New Testament believers today the the the straightforward answer if you're looking just at the New Testament the straightforward answer is the New Testament doesn't precisely tell you how much to give it doesn't peg it at a percentage as directly as the Old Testament does it does say you should give in keeping with your income Paul explicitly says that but it doesn't say well here's 10% I do think you can make a pretty good case that the tithe the 10% principle from the Old Testament is still somewhat binding on New Testament believers at least in principal form Jesus doesn't seem to want to overturn that at any point in the

Gospels when he talks about the tithe he tends to talk positively about it at points so I think it's a really good rule of thumb as you're initially trying to figure out how to give 10% of your income but interestingly what the New Testament then does instead is it points you to the cross so when you ask the question well how much should I give the New Testament says well no no that's the wrong question look at the cross it says the pattern for giving is the cross

[32 : 25] Christ graciously generously and sacrificially giving up his glorious wealth to make you his treasure so how much should you give and I would say well how much did Jesus give for you if anything tithing is kind of like a minimum standard for believers today now that's a big that's a kind of big truth bomb from the Bible but here's what I want to tell you here's what I want to push you on what I want to provoke you on this morning I want to say this go out and be reckless go out and apply this teaching be sacrificial be generous in your giving and do it consistently and do it deliberately do that and I am pretty sure in fact I'm 99.9% sure that you will have less problems with money as an idol in your life so are you giving generously has the gospel loosened your purse strings now there's also just giving here not only does Zacchaeus generously give to the poor he also promises to make restitution so he realizes that his participation in the kind of economic empire of Rome has actually hurt a lot of people and so he uses his wealth to redress that the gospel of grace has so changed him that he actually then becomes a champion of justice in the face of injustice so previously he oppressed the poor and now he commits to undoing poverty previously he extorted wealth now he serves others with his wealth and you see what's happened is this is now that money is no longer his God his small g God it's no longer his savior and if it's not his savior it goes back to simply being money a tool a tool a tool that when used rightly can be an amazing force for good so his attitude for money has completely changed he's still got it but he it doesn't rule him anymore and so the next logical question that he asks if he's still got this money is how can I use it for good what do I do with this how do I use it for good friends you know that that is why God gives you material blessing right the reason you have what you have right now is because you need tools you need tools to serve God's good and just purposes in this world he puts those tools in your hands and he says go out and use them go out and use them he puts money in your bank account and he says go out and use it go out and use it use the tools he gives you they make terrible terrible terrible masters but wonderfully life giving tools when they use rightly we live in a society that is wracked by economic injustice more than ever in this country we need Christians who view their wealth and privilege as tools of redress and restitution we're fearful of that aren't we in our economic climate we're fearful we might be left short fearful that our wealth won't return to us if we dish it out fearful that if we give it out it might be squandered rather than used well but I think our level of fear is directly proportional to how much we value wealth as a personal saviour in our own lives the less we view it as a personal saviour the more we will view it as a tool that can be used to serve God's purposes friends we have a saviour already that's the whole point of the gospel we have a saviour already his name is Jesus Christ and to the extent that your heart is moved by his costly salvation you will stop seeing your own wealth as a personal saviour and you'll start seeing it in much much more healthy ways you need the salvation of Christ to come to your house

Jesus he looks at this change in Zacchaeus the generous giving the just giving and he says this remarkable thing he says today salvation has come to this house today this lost person has been found today this impoverished person has truly become rich are you rich in Christ this morning or is money slavishly ruling over you are you rich are you taking your money and sacrificially and generously giving it to God's cause in this world are you giving to the poor are you giving to the church in the advancement of the gospel there is a spiritual relationship with between your giving and your grasping of the costly love of our Lord Jesus Christ that's something we need to investigate something we need to let our hearts meditate on as we look at our own personal finances as we come to a situation like this maybe you sit there and you are moved as you listen to us talk about the church finances you go

I've really got to help this because I like this church and I want things to go well yes I've got to help this I don't think that's a good enough justification the only good enough justification is that I've seen the love of Jesus Christ I've been a recipient of that I've seen his costly love my bank account is so full now Lord take my finances and use them for your good purposes that is the gospel centered approach to giving anything else is probably going to enslave you in other different ways with regards to your money and so I encourage you I motivate you this morning with that that gospel centered approach to giving when you consider it and embrace it as we engage with the current

situation that we as a church find ourselves in let's pray together Father and our King you have given us so much this morning we talk about giving but we cannot talk about giving without the giving of your son

Jesus Christ looming largest in our lives it is there that we find forgiveness it is there that we find hope it is there that we are drawn into your family it is there where we find eternal life with you forever so we thank you for the grace of the gospel we thank you for that giving that took place there that generous sacrificial giving I want to pray for anyone Lord who sits here this morning who is maybe an outsider to that grace because they have never repented they have never humbled themselves and said Lord I can't save myself please save me I pray that you would bring them to a place of faith this morning in your mercy that you would be able to say of them today salvation has come to this house for those of us who walk following Jesus loving Jesus grateful for the grace poured out for us Lord I pray that you would help this grace that has been poured out to us would help to make that grace inform our interaction with our resources and our finances more and more Lord so often we want to come to you and we want to say yes we want this forgiveness Lord we want we want to be free of our sin we want to embrace the salvation that

Jesus gives oh but no our money's off limits we don't we don't let you touch that Lord Father I pray we would take every single part of our lives and say this is all yours lay it at your feet at your disposal to be used for your good purposes Lord Father meet our church in this difficult moment not with some sort of legalistic plugging holes but with gospel driven generosity and grace we ask for your help for Christ's sake Amen Go ahead And please I search this and give