

The Joy of Giving

Romans 14:17

Thesis: I want to invite you to experience the joy of the Lord in the spiritual practice of tithing and giving. The Lord is here with a new grace and new mercy to tithe and give. And, you are a part of a congregation that excels in giving faithfully, sacrificially, and extravagantly to the Lord.

Text: Romans 14:17; 2 Corinthian 8:1-9; 9:6-15

Thanks for praying for Tammy and me on our recent vacation. We had a great time. Our time together was refreshing.

Thanks for your prayers for my back, knee, and feet. I was able to do everything that I wanted to do. And, I got to hit golf balls for the first time in a really long time. I even played a couple of rounds of golf. It was wonderful and refreshing to enjoy God's creation.

On our trip we saw first-hand the devastation of [wildfires in Ruidoso](#), NM. These were the worst fires I had ever seen in that area, and I have been going there since I was a child. People first suffered from the fires and the impact on the water supply and on other services like electricity, cell, and internet. Obviously, when the area was shut down, the shelves of the grocery stores were empty. Even if people wanted to come back, there was nothing there after having to evacuate for a week or more. When we arrived, some people were still not able to get into the exclusion zones. Then, the monsoons started; the rainy season starts the first week in July. Without trees and vegetation, and with all of the scaring of the land, the water just runs off. Places that escaped the fire couldn't escape the flash floods. Because of the flash flooding, the roads into and out of Ruidoso get shut down when the roads become rivers.

Prayer: Lord, we stop and pray for those who have suffered from devastating events like the fires in New Mexico and [Hurricane Beryl](#) that devastated Islands in Grenada and St. Vincent, Jamaica, and other Caribbean Islands. Lord God, we bless Somebody Cares and the other first responders to these disaster areas. We pray for the grace for relief, recovery, rebuilding, and restoration. Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy.

- If you are looking for a way to give to those who have been impacted by Hurricane Beryl or other disasters, may I recommend giving through [Somebody Cares](#) and Doug Stringer, one of the most impactful compassion evangelism and disaster relief ministries around.

- If you want to help us minister to those who are in need in our sphere of influence, consider a [donation to Calvary's benevolence ministry](#).

Today, I want to talk about ***The Joy of Giving***, using Romans 14:17 as our central text.

Romans 14:17 The kingdom of God is righteousness [right standing with God, right thinking, right believing, right doing, with the help of the Holy Spirit; alignment with and in action around the way of God], peace [shalom: flourishing, overflowing, having enough, generous, etc.], and joy [celebration, supra-emotion of joy even in the face of difficulties, tests trials, etc., because we are connected to God] in the Holy Spirit.

Why does God want us to talk about money? Because Jesus talked about money a lot.

Why does God talk about the tithe, offerings, stewardship, generosity, and giving?

Because those are values of God's heart that flow from him and through his kingdom people. It is the way in which the Creator designed the world to work well.

Why does God let us partner with him using his money the way that he directs and in the way that glorifies him? Because we are blessed to be a blessing. God wants us to experience the joy of giving.

Calvary, you are a part of a generous church. Members of our church give joyfully, generously, and sacrificially of their time, talents, and treasure for the kingdom of God. People at Calvary and friends associated with us **pray, give, and go** in order to join Jesus on his mission locally, nationally, and internationally.

- Right now, we have a team in Israel. Joshua Rushing organized the crew from Calvary to serve with Generation2Generation and Dafne and Andrew Kirck.
- On Saturday, July 13, Debi Buckles leads a team of 20 adults and youth on the [Thrive Students Guatemala Mission Trip](#) to the New Life Children's Home in Guatemala.

Thank you, Calvary and friends, for investing into what God is doing together with all of us in the nations.

There are many encouraging stories about how you are serving and giving sacrificially of your time, treasure, and talents to help people still reeling from the [May 16 derecho storm](#) that hit Greater Houston.

The Kingdom of God is Righteousness.

1. Righteousness: right standing with God.

- a. The Lord wants to bless you, and keep you, and make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you, and turn his face toward you, and give you shalom (Numbers 6:24-26).
- b. The Lord knows that when we are generous, obedient, and faithful in tithes and offerings, we open the door to his blessing in our lives (Malachi 3:8f).
- c. And, the Lord wants you to have **right standing with him by his grace and by the work of the Holy Spirit.**
 - i. **Before some of us need to hear a message about *The Joy of Giving*, we need to respond to what the Spirit of God is saying to us.**
 1. The Lord doesn't just want our money. He wants all of us.
 2. Because God knows us inside and out, yet he loves us, the psalmist says in Psalm 139:23-24-- search me, try me, know my anxious thoughts, and see if there is any wicked way (out of alignment, disobedient, sin) in me. And, lead me in the way everlasting.
 3. The psalmist invites the Lord to remove anything and everything that hinders love in his life.
 - ii. Some of us have **secret sin that is destroying us like cancer**. Or, at the least, our place of being out of alignment deceives us, confuses us, and leads us to a life of compromise with our God.
 1. Let's repent and confess our sin(s) (1 John 1:7, 9).
 2. Let's agree with God about what he says.
 3. Let's respond to the grace, forgiveness, and mercy of the Lord.
 - iii. **Having right standing with God might mean giving our lives to God, not just our money.**
 1. The Lord wants you to have real life, abundant life, purpose-filled life through Jesus Christ.
 2. Is Jesus the Lord of your life? Are you following the way of Jesus, meaning that you are following a person, not a religion and not trying to earn your way to God?
 3. This morning, God is speaking to some of us about coming into a right relationship by saying "yes" to Jesus as the Lord of our life.
 - a. **Lead people to receive Jesus as Lord and to follow him relationally all the days of our lives.**

4. **This morning, God is speaking to some of us who know God to repent, confess, and turn from our way to the way of God's righteousness. God sets the standard.**
 - a. **What is the Lord saying to you?**
 - d. **Let's pause and listen to the loving Voice of conviction and invitation.**
2. **Righteousness: aligning with and getting in action around the way of God.**
 - a. **Acknowledge that life is about stewardship.**
 - i. *The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it... (Psalm 24:1).*
 - ii. *The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty (Haggai 2:8).*
 - iii. *But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth... (Deuteronomy 8:18).*
 - iv. *You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price... (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).*
 - v. *Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2).*
 - vi. You and I belong to God by creation and by blood.
 - vii. God owns everything. I am given a responsibility to steward God's stuff as God intends.
 - viii. One day each of us will give an account to God of what we did with our time, treasure, and talents.
 - ix. Righteousness means that I align with God's call on my life regarding stewardship.
 - b. **Live generously with your time, talents, and treasure.**
 - i. We give because we want to be like the Lord. Our God is generous and gives freely. So, we want to excel in this grace of giving and generosity (2 Corinthians 8:1-9).
 - ii. **Spend time in examen.** How is your heart? What is your heart motivation? Where is your source of identity and approval? Family? Children? Clothes? Houses? Cars? Knowledge? Work? Position? Other?
 - iii. Covetousness or greed can sneak up on us and steal the affection and attention of our hearts away from the Lord.
 - c. **Give your tithes and offerings as an expression of faith in God and obedience to God.**
 - i. Giving helps build up your faith in God, because you are saying that you commend your life to his work and his word of grace in your life (Matthew 6:33).
 - d. **Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.**
 - i. **The tithe belongs to the Lord** (Leviticus 27:30).

1. *"A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD" (Leviticus 27:30).*
 2. **The tithe belongs to the Lord.** It does not belong to us. It is devoted or holy unto the Lord.
 3. **We don't give the tithe.** We **bring** to God what belongs to God. We **return** it to its rightful owner, which is God.
- ii. **I believe that the scripture teaches us to give the first 10% as an act of obedience and as sign and testimony that everything we have belongs to God** (Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:10-12).
1. Malachi 3:8-9 says that God's people rob God when they fail to bring tithes and offerings to the Lord.
 2. **The tithe belongs to the Lord and is at least 10% of our gross income.**
 3. Offerings are given to the Lord in response to what he is saying to us or as we have determined in our hearts to give in response to God (2 Corinthians 9:7).
 4. We don't divide the "tithe" up into tithes and offerings. The tithe and an offering are two different things.
- iii. **We acknowledge with the first-fruits that everything good we have comes from God** (Proverbs 3:9-10).
- iv. **I believe that the Bible teaches that the whole tithe should go to the local storehouse, the house that ministers and cares for you.**
1. *I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting (Numbers 18:21).*
 2. *I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD... (Numbers 18:24).*
 - a. The Israelites gave their money to God, not to the Levites.
 - b. It was God who in turn designated his funds for the Levites.
 3. Yes, Christians are called to love their pastors and ministers, and to support them.
 - a. *Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor (Galatians 6:6).*
 - b. *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially*

those whose work is preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17).

- c. A workman is worthy of his keep, and faithful pastors should not be taken for granted but rather recognized as a special gift from the Lord, one worthy of unstinted and generous support. (Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 421.)
4. Please note: the call to give tithes and to honor those who give instruction and labor well among you is first and foremost giving of yourself to God as an act of worship.
- v. People ask: **Do I tithe on the gross or the net income?**
 1. My practice has always been to tithe on the gross. Otherwise, you are giving the government their full portion and tithing on the leftovers to the Lord.
 2. Giving to God after the government seems like honoring the government over the Lord.
 3. And, I tithe off all of the funds that come through my hands.
 - a. That is my current practice.
 - b. One day, when I begin taking withdrawals from my retirement savings and Social Security, I will tithe off the amount I take as withdrawals, because I don't know how much I put in and how much money was earned (or lost) through my retirement accounts.
- e. **Look for other ways to help others locally and globally.**
 - i. I give my tithe and first-fruits to this local congregation, this storehouse. Then, I give offerings over and above the tithe here at Calvary and beyond.
 - ii. I support ministries that are making a difference in the world.
 - iii. I support missionaries that are touching people with the love of Christ whom I cannot touch.
 - iv. Look for ways to strengthen the weak and to help those in need.
 1. Note: While we don't want to be need driven, we do want to meet needs out of love and compassion.
 2. I am so encouraged by the stories I hear of people stepping up to meet needs in their small groups. Others show up to help friends with rides to doctor's appointments and other places. Others show up to

serve in other ways. There are so many encouraging reports. Way to go. Keep up the good work of loving well.

The Kingdom of God is Shalom.

The word translated “peace” in the OT (shalom) and in the NT testament (irene’) means way more than the absence of conflict.

1. **Restored wholeness/shalom will look like this:**
 - a. Reconciliation.
 - b. Generosity.
 - c. Non-Violence.
 - d. Freedom.
 - e. Justice.
 - f. Integrity.
 - g. Security.
 - h. Inclusion.
 - i. Love.
 - j. Flourishing.
 - k. Having enough.
2. **We are blessed to be a blessing to others** (Genesis 12:1-3).
 - a. We are a channel of God’s resources into this world.
 - b. Our role counts.
 - c. No gift is too small (of money, love, compassion, sacrifice, time, treasure, etc.).
3. **What we do with money is a test of our hearts.**
 - a. Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also (Matthew 6:21).
 - b. That is why we seek first the kingdom of God (rule of God) and his righteousness (character of God) (Matthew 6:33). Right focus results in right results—*and all these other things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33).*
 - c. It takes faith to give God the first fruits and to believe that he will provide for you (Matthew 6:33).
 - d. **Wholeness comes as we use God’s money in God’s way.** Giving tithes and offerings to the Lord is a way to say “no” to the values and priorities of this world in order to say “yes” to God, his kingdom, and his right standards. It is a way to remain focused upon God and awake to God, being alert to his kingdom priorities and purposes. It is a simple activity which detaches our hearts from this world and allows us to attach to Christ.

4. **We want to labor with God to bring his multi-dimensional wholeness to this world.**
 - a. **Reflect on the six dimensions of wholeness. Which dimension stirs your heart the most? Focus on that one dimension.**
 - b. **Evidence of spiritual wholeness:** Experiencing forgiveness, inclusion rather than exclusion, unconditional love, liberation from bondage, abundant life, and a life of purpose on mission with God. When there is spiritual wholeness, we experience love, joy, and peace, and we walk humbly with God—we love mercy and we act justly (Micah 6:8).
 - c. **Evidence of physical wholeness:** Everyone will have affordable and accessible healthcare. Everyone will have proper nutrition, clean water, proper exercise, whole and healthy living conditions, rest and relaxation. There will be no disease.
 - d. **Evidence of economic wholeness:** Where there is economic wholeness, everyone will have jobs that pay a livable wage. Everyone will manage his/her money wisely. Every person will be a good steward who is generous. No one will be enslaved to debt. There will be housing that is affordable for everyone. Everyone will have the opportunity to get a quality education. No one will be poor. There will be no stealing, cheating, or embezzling. There will be no consumerism or materialism. There will be enough for everyone.
 - e. **Evidence of social wholeness:** There will be reconciliation, forgiveness, graciousness, hospitality, peacemaking, equality, empowerment, emotional maturity, and the differentiation of self.
 - f. **Evidence of emotional and mental wholeness:** There will be no feelings of inferiority or shame. No one will feel like they are “less than” or not enough. No one will have a god-complex or a sense of superiority. All will be mentally whole and healthy. There will be no worry, anxiety, or depression. There will be no stress overload. Everyone will be at peace, and everyone will be full of joy. No one will be afraid.
 - g. **Evidence of political wholeness:** We declare that Jesus is Lord. We give up needing power and control. We believe that there is no political party or government that fully represents the Jesus agenda. We speak out against governments that oppress, abuse, kill, or act unjustly. We work to repair systems that perpetuate injustice. In the Jesus kingdom the last will be first and service is more important than power. There will be unity in spite of our diversity. Everyone will have a voice, and everyone will be heard. There will truly be liberty and justice for all.

The Kingdom of God is Joy.

1. **The kingdom of God is joy which means celebration.**
 - a. We get to rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 4:4).
2. **Joy is more than celebration.**
 - a. Joy is also a supra-emotion even in the face of difficulties, tests trials, grief, etc., because we are connected to God and to others.
 - b. Our brains are hardwired for deep connection with God and to run on joy, not anger or fear. (See [The Other Half of Church.](#))
3. **Our God is full of joy.**
 - a. *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).*
 - b. His joy is in knowing God and in having us as brothers and sisters (Hebrews 2:10-12).
 - c. His joy is in defeating the principalities, powers, and world forces of darkness (Divine Council) who have rebelled against God and sought to destroy the plans of God for this world and our lives (Colossian 2:6-15).
 - d. *You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy (Psalm 45:7).*
4. **The joy of the Lord is our strength** (Nehemiah 8:10)... and our courage, and hope, and inspiration for saying “no” to the things of this world for a better “yes” to God.
 - a. This God of joy and author of joy lives in us and with us, forever.
 - b. *“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them” (John 17:13).*
5. **There is joy in giving.**
 - a. *And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity (2 Corinthians 8:1-2).*
 - b. The Macedonian believers refused to let challenging circumstances or hard times keep them from the joy of giving (2 Corinthians 8:4).
 - c. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).
6. **We have much to celebrate in God.**
 - a. **Q: What are you celebrating?**

Why do I tithe and give offerings over and above the tithe?

1. It is an act of worship.

- a. The first recorded use of the word “worship” in the Bible is when Abraham went up to the mountain to surrender his son to the Lord (Genesis 22:5). Abraham acknowledged his obedience to the Lord and that everything he had belonged to the Lord.
- b. Tithing for me is an act of worship.
 - i. I worship by acknowledging that the Lord is worth everything by obeying him and giving back to him what already belongs to him.
 - ii. I worship the Lord by agreeing with God: the first fruits belong to him.
 - iii. I worship the Lord by surrendering to his ways and his wisdom. The Lord tells me to tithe and give offerings to him.
 - iv. I worship the Lord by admitting that I am dependent upon him for everything.

2. It is an act of honoring the Lord.

- a. I honor the Lord by putting him first in our finances. I try to do that in every part of my life.
- b. I honor the Lord by trying to live according to his word, in the midst of a world and culture that lives by a different code and set of values.
- c. I honor the Lord by giving him thanks through an act of surrendering everything we have to the Lord, starting with our resources.
- d. I honor the Lord by giving offerings over and above my tithe. I don't just do the minimum. However, I go above and beyond because Jesus went above and beyond for me.

3. It is an act of love.

- a. Jesus said, *“If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15)*. Tithing and giving are commanded throughout the Bible. Tithing and giving are spiritual practices in the Old and New Testaments. I believe that we express our love to God in action and deed, not just in words.
- b. Because I love the Lord, I want to be like him. He is generous; I want to be generous, too.

4. It is an act of trust.

- a. I trust the Lord with my life, my finances, my family, and my eternity.
- b. I trust the Lord so that when I give to him, I am laying up treasures for eternity. It is an eternal investment which will produce a crop 30, 60, and 100-fold.
- c. I trust that the Lord can do more with the 90% than I can with the 100%.

- d. I trust that the Lord will fulfill his promise to take care of me, to cause me to have an abundance for every good deed, according to his word.
 - e. I trust that the Lord will rebuke the devourer on my behalf, according to his word.
 - f. I trust that the Lord will take care of us, that he is a good, good father. He can take all my messes, my best efforts, my failures, and my successes and do more with them for good than I can ask, think, or imagine.
 - g. I trust that the ways of the kingdom economy supersede human economies. (Give and it shall be given to you, for example. Sow and you will reap is another example.)
5. **It is an act of gratitude.**
- a. I am thankful that the Lord meets our needs.
 - b. I am thankful for every blessing and provision of the Lord.
 - c. I am thankful that the Lord is faithful and true.
 - d. I am thankful that the Lord can take my little and make eternal impact in lives.

Summary:

For the kingdom of God is... of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

May we be a people who align with the ways of God, getting in action regarding what the Lord is saying to us.

May we be a people who work with God for wholeness and well-being in our spheres of influence.

May we be a people who experience deeply the joy of the Lord and who live with celebration, gratitude, and rejoicing even in the midst of trial, trouble, testing, and brokenness.

And, may we be a people who experience the joy of giving and living generously in the midst of a broken, selfish, and materialistic world.