

Stewardship and Generosity Part 1

Thesis: We have to do some things differently as a congregation. As a family, we come together in challenging times, we learn, and we change as needed.

Text: Joshua 1:5-9

Today, I want to remind us of our conversation last week (Sunday, 8'17'25) about Our [Current Reality and Preferred Future](#) as a congregation. We have to do some things differently. As a family, we come together in challenging times, we learn, and we change as needed.

Last week, we set the stage by sharing an encouraging and challenging word the Lord is highlighting to me from Scripture.

Joshua 1:5–9 (NIV84) 5 [God said to Joshua,] “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. 6 “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

God focuses on Joshua (the “you” in verses 3–4 is plural and refers to Israel, but the “you” in verses 5–9 is singular and refers to Joshua). Typically, God interweaves promises and exhortations. The promise “I will be with you” sounds routine but is not to be skipped over. It is the promise God made to Isaac (Genesis 26:3) and repeated to Moses when announcing his implausible commission (Exodus 3:12). It is a promise God will reiterate to Israel in exile and will repeat to Mary when giving her an implausible commission, and it is the promise Jesus reiterates when sending off his disciples to disciple the world. In modern English “I will be with you” is inclined to suggest that we will have a sense that God is with us, but in the Bible it suggests something objective, not merely subjective. It means God will make sure things work out. Here God spells out the promise’s implications. Joshua will succeed in the task set before him. This is what can enable him to be strong and stand firm. (Goldingay, John. *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth for Everyone: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*.)

Old Testament for Everyone. Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press; Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2011.)

When I hear the phrase, “I will be with you,” I rejoice. Praise the Lord that God is with us. God’s presence is everything to us. And, it means that I can become aware of the God who is with me through his abiding presence.

However, I had not thought of the phrase, “I will be with you,” as “God will make sure things work out.”

It has both of those meanings.

I am grateful that God is with me and that I can have awareness of his presence (present awareness).

And, I can be strong and courageous because I will succeed in the task set before me, because God will make sure things work out.

So, we can believe that God will make sure things work out for Calvary as we follow him.

1. **We are a people who want to have a clear sense of our present reality and our preferred future.**
 - a. One responsibility of leadership is creating a sense of urgency so that we can get into action toward a preferred future.
 - i. Illustration: When you go to the doctor and you get a diagnosis, it creates a sense of urgency that you need to do something in order to be whole and healthy physically.
 - b. Currently, through the first six months of 2025, we are running 72% of our church budget.
 - c. Since 2020, we have needed three special offerings to make ends meet.
 - i. 2020 \$107,000 PPP Funds from COVID
 - ii. 2021 \$138,000 Forging Our Future
 - iii. 2024 \$121,000 Confirm the Work
 - iv. That is an average of \$73,500 per year over the previous 5 years.
 - d. By June 2025, we already used up our 2024 Confirm the Work offering of \$121,000.
 - e. At our current pace, we run out of Contingency Funds (our savings account) at the end of October.
 - f. So, that is our current reality.

2. We are a people who understand that we have to do some things differently and take some action steps so that we will be whole and healthy financially as congregation.

a. Remember:

- i. If we keep doing what we have been doing as a congregation, we will keep getting the same results.
- ii. And, our current results are financially unsustainable and unworkable.
- iii. And, we have wonderful teams-- Elders, Staff, Deacons, Missions Council, the Budget and Finance Committee, and the Personnel Committee-- who will work to help us flesh out what it means to do things differently.
 1. I want to invite you to pray for these groups for wisdom and revelation.
 2. We trust God will speak to us.
 3. And you help us by your prayers.

b. We need to do things differently in funding missions as a congregation.

- i. All the things that we do as a congregation are kingdom efforts. It is all part of one big picture.
- ii. We will continue to make sure that we give to missions through our regular tithes and offerings as a congregation.
- iii. We will continue to serve as a sending agent and as a giving hub for missions, ministries, and missionaries.
- iv. We will continue to sow into what God is doing locally and globally.
- v. And, we have to do missions differently.
- vi. Specifically, we want to cast vision for giving to missions by supporting our home base at Calvary.
 1. As a congregation, we are already giving over and above to missions. We celebrate that giving.
 2. And we need to grow in our capacity to give over and above to Calvary in order to support our home base, which is also missional.
 3. It is not an either/or proposition. Rather, it is both/and.

c. We need to do things differently regarding our stewardship of funds individually with our tithes and offerings.

- i. We have room to grow in our stewardship as a church.
 1. Nationally, only 5% of professing Christians tithe.
 2. At Calvary, we have 38% tithers compared with 5% nationally. This reality is exciting and challenging.
 3. Let me ask two questions:

- a. How many of our people do we want to be like Jesus? Answer: 100%.
 - b. How many of our people do we want to tithe, to give generously, and to be good stewards with their time, talents, and treasure? Answer: 100% in accordance with what the Scripture teaches us.
4. So, we have room to grow as a church family.
- ii. **Starting today, we will cast vision for tithing and giving for the health of the body of Christ at Calvary by engaging a sermon series on generosity and stewardship of our time, talents, treasure.**
 1. The conversation about stewardship involves different topics and principles: tithing, giving systematically, giving generously, giving extravagantly, sowing and reaping, etc.
 2. Stewardship involves how we use the time, talents, and treasure which the Lord has entrusted to us for his kingdom purposes and according to his kingdom values.
 3. Generosity involves how we show up in this world like God does.
- iii. **Talking about money, stewardship, and generosity is a challenge in the body of Christ and in our culture.**
 1. There have been abusive and/or erroneous teachings about money in the church and in culture.
 - a. Some teaching about money falls into the ditches of the prosperity gospel or of the gospel of health and wealth.
 - b. Some teaching on money is transactional: if I do this, then, God will do that because he owes me.
 - c. We need to teach what God says about money, generosity, and stewardship, and not shrink back because of abuse or error.
 2. Instead of avoiding the conversation about money, stewardship, generosity, I believe God wants us to understand his economy and the values of the kingdom of God.
 - a. God wants us to come to the place of generous and extravagant giving.
 - b. God wants us to understand that there is a link between our generous giving and God's supply.

- c. God has promised to provide. As we learn to engage in giving obediently and generously, God provides, blesses, and grows us up.
 - d. God's Word links our giving to joy. Some of the happiest people I know are generous with their time, talents, and treasure.
- d. **We need to do things differently in our church finances through the end of 2026.**
 - i. Over the next several weeks, we will look at what God's word says about stewardship and generosity in the kingdom of God.
 - ii. And, we will engage in a **pledge campaign** to invite us to grow in our giving as the Lord gives us grace.
 - 1. We have never done a pledge campaign as a church.
 - 2. We will give this action a try to help us know what God is saying to each of us so that we can budget and plan for the rest of 2025 and through 2026.
 - iii. We are engaging in a pledge campaign to raise funds to overcome our shortfall for the remainder of 2025 and for all of 2026.
 - 1. The pledge campaign will go from September 2025 – December 2026.
 - a. According to current projections, we need to raise \$360,00 for 2025 and an additional \$372,000 for 2026.
 - b. We will give some funds before year-end 2025, and we will plan to give monthly to get us through to December 2026.
- e. **We need to plan differently so that we don't live off special or designated offerings.**
 - i. For example, we want to budget in our operating budget for Youth Camp rather than doing a special offering.
 - ii. We want to budget for the cost of retreats for ladies and men, rather doing special offerings.
- f. **We need to get equipped to give differently so that everyone is doing their part.**
 - i. Not equal giving but equal stewardship.
 - ii. And, this is a growth area for us. No condemnation. Just an invitation to make a journey in giving.
 - iii. And, thanks to those of you who are already giving generously and extravagantly.

- g. **We are refinancing our bank loan** so that we can save money on our monthly payments. We will save about \$9,000/month through refinancing.
 - h. We have to do things differently.
- 3. **We are a people who want to catch of vision of supporting the home base (Calvary) generously as a way of being missional.**
 - a. We have emphasized giving missionally locally and globally, but we have failed to cast vision for what we are doing as a church family.
 - i. Most churches only seek to promote their own church.
 - ii. Most churches only seek to use people to build their own ministries.
 - iii. I wonder if we have swung the pendulum too far, if that is possible.
 - b. I want to communicate a whole and healthy balance, not either/or.
 - i. To have a healthy and whole balance, we need to increase our support of the local base.
 - ii. To be whole and healthy we need to bring the whole tithe and offerings in the storehouse, while not abandoning our other missional emphases.
 - 1. How do we do this balancing act?
 - 2. Polarity management is moving one emphasis from the back burner to the front burner for a while.

Stewardship:

We are a people who want to live with a sense of stewardship as unto the Lord regarding our time, talents, and treasure.

1. **Stewardship begins with the reality that everything belongs to the Lord because he is Creator and Sustainer.**
 - a. *Psalm 24:1-2 (NIV84) The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; 2 for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.*
 - b. My life, my possessions, my family, my capacities—they all belong to the Lord. They do not belong to me.
2. **Stewardship involves partnering with God in his plan, purposes, and mission in this world.**
 - a. *Genesis 1:26–28 (NIV84) 26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” 27 So God created man in his*

own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

- i. By the way, the phrase "rule over" does not mean to Lord over, dominate, and use for our own selfish gain. All authority comes from God, is accountable to God, and is delegated to us by God according to his will and ways (Matthew 28:18-20).
 - ii. *Matthew 20:25–28 (NIV84) 25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*
- b. **All through the Scripture, stewardship acknowledges our responsibility to work and to care for what God entrusts to us according to what he defines as right and wrong and according to his kingdom will.**
 - i. *Genesis 2:15-17 (NIV84) The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*
 - ii. In Genesis 3, humankind chooses to define right and wrong on our terms rather than according to God. And, we chose to build our own kingdoms and do our own will.
- 3. **Stewardship acknowledges that God gives us time, talents, and treasure, and that we are ultimately accountable to God for our stewardship of what God entrusts to us.**
 - a. *Matthew 25:14–21 (NIV84) 14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with*

five talents. See, I have gained five more.' 21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

- b. *2 Corinthians 5:9–10 (NIV84) 9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*
- 4. **Stewardship starts with our relationship to the Lord: that we serve Christ, that we have a trust from God, and that faithfulness to God is the measurement of our stewardship.**
 - a. *1 Corinthians 4:1–2 (NIV84) 1 So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. 2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*
 - b. We serve Jesus, not ourselves and not our money.
 - c. God has entrusted us with his fame and his name, and we represent him in this world by making God and his ways known ("secret things of God").
 - d. Faithfulness is the measurement of our stewardship before God.
Success is being faithful to God with what he has entrusted to us.
- 5. **We are a people who want to live with a sense of stewardship as unto the Lord regarding our time, talents, and treasure.**

Generosity:

We are a people who want to live generously like our Father in heaven is generous, like Jesus teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount, and like the Scriptures teach.

- 1. **In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us about our God who is generous and Jesus calls us to live a generous life.**
 - a. **Section 3 of the Middle Section.** Matthew 6:19 – 7:12. In this section, Jesus tells us how **this righteousness is expressed in right relationships with God and with neighbor.** Doing righteousness affects our relationship with God and neighbor.
 - i. **Matthew 6:19 – 34. God and money.**
 - 1. Our stuff tends to claim our allegiance and causes us to worry.
 - 2. Our relationship to our stuff can be one of the biggest obstacles to healthy relationships with God and others.

3. **Store up treasure in heaven.** We live in view of eternity, understanding that what we do now matters.
 4. **Parable 1: Two eyes.** You can have a healthy, generous eye, or an evil, stingy eye.
 5. **Parable 2: Two masters you can serve—God or money.**
 6. **Teaching on worry.** We are invited to trust the generous God of creation who cares about us.
 - b. [In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasizes several themes, including the theme of generosity.] Emphasizing humility, forgiveness, and **generous** care for our neighbors, Jesus encourages people to choose God's way of love, which will eventually renew all of creation. He calls this restored world God's Kingdom. This is a realm in which Heaven and Earth are inseparably combined, a place where life flourishes that's free from injustice, suffering, and death. ([Read - What Is the Sermon on the Mount?](#) The BibleProject.)
2. **Matthew 5:7 How good is life for those who show mercy, because they will be shown mercy.**
- a. *For those who show mercy.*
 - i. We know we are broken and in need of mercy. We need forgiveness and a fresh start.
 - ii. So, we give mercy away to others. We forgive others. We don't hold the shortcomings and sins against others.
 - iii. Relationships are a mess, and mercy helps to heal broken relationships.
 - iv. We don't want to live by vengeance, by getting even, or by making people pay; rather, we want to live by giving and receiving mercy.
 - v. We want to break the cycle of judgment and unforgiveness.
 - b. *Those who show mercy are living the good life, because they will receive mercy.*
 - i. We don't want to be treated as our sins deserve.
 - ii. We can never repay the debt of love we owe.
 - iii. Because we need mercy, we choose to give mercy and to be merciful, patient, and kind.
 - iv. We have been forgiven much. We have been shown much mercy. So, we forgive much and show much mercy to others.
 - v. Mercy is a step beyond being right and fair. **Mercy is generosity.** Mercy is extravagant kindness that goes beyond what is required.
 - vi. The degree to which we receive mercy is connected to how much mercy we give and show to others.

3. **Matthew 5:9 How good is life for the peacemakers, because they will be called children of God.**
 - a. *For the peacemakers.*
 - i. When God's kingdom comes in its fulness one day, it will bring peace to all people. So, anyone who is entering God's kingdom now is to work as a peacemaker.
 - ii. To be a peacemaker is to enter into conflicts and to work creatively **to open up a just and generous path forward for people.**
 - iii. The work of a peacemaker can be rewarding, but it can be dangerous (see Matthew 5:10, the persecuted).
 - iv. Jesus created peace (wholeness, wellbeing, human flourishing) **through generous, self-sacrificial love.**
 - v. This love isn't just for our friends; the love of God is also for our enemies. We are to be generous in our love even to our enemies. And, we will get misunderstood as we seek to serve as peacemakers.
4. **Matthew 5:38–42 (NIV84) “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.**
 - a. Jesus says that real righteousness points back to the first garden and describes the ethic of God's Kingdom. This way of life is inspired not by an appetite for personal gain but by a hunger for love that compels a person to be fair and just toward others, to seek peace with all, and to **generously** give without restraint (see Matt. 5:38-42). Jesus lives like this without fail, and he invites everyone to join him in hungering for righteousness in our own lives and in our world. ([Read - What Is the Sermon on the Mount?](#) The BibleProject.)
5. **Matthew 5:43–48 (NIV84) 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. **He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**
 - a. We are called to be generous and extravagant in our love, because that is who God is, and it is the way God relates to us.

- b. To be whole or perfect as our Father in heaven includes giving love generously even to our enemies, even to those who don't deserve it.
- 6. **Matthew 6:9–15 (NIV84)** 9 *This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 **Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.** 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ 14 **For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**”*
 - a. Jesus calls us to be generous in our forgiveness, even as he lavishly forgives us.

The Generosity Ladder:



Action:

We have to do some things differently as a congregation. As a family, we come together in challenging times, we learn, and we change as needed.

We are a people who to get in action through prayer, asking what the Lord would have us do financially to sow into what we are doing as a congregation, that our base might be whole and healthy. And, **we want to get in action through our financial gifts.**