

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

MAY 8 - 12, 2023



# Money Wi\$e

Sermon Series

April 16 - May 14

# MONDAY

Read **Proverbs 11:24-25**

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## Love gives

*“For God so loved the world, He gave ...”* (John 3:16). How does giving fit into God’s scheme of things? (1) God’s love is *agápē* love—a non-transactional love—expecting nothing in return. (2) At the same time, God’s love is powerful and transformational. It changes us and others from sinners to saints. And (3) God’s love is like an investment God makes—like a good seed, He expects good fruit and a good harvest. God’s love is all of that.

God loves because that’s who He is—He is love. While we were yet sinners, He died for us (Romans 5:8). Hosea loved his unfaithful wife Gomer like that. God said Hosea’s love was a picture of His love for unfaithful Israel. And no doubt, it is a picture of His love for sinful us.

Gregory Boyle, founder of Homeboys Industries, illustrates how such love begets love. In story after story, his love for hurting young men and women transforms them from haters into lovers. Surely that is God’s dream—His plan, His sure hope, His prayer and His faith.

We read in passages like Luke 8:15 and John 4:34-42 that God expects to have a return on His investment in us. Jesus is like the good and faithful servants who invested their money and doubled it

(Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-17). We know love is God's gift to us. Let us receive His gift, open it, and exercise it by giving love to others, partnering with God in this endeavor.

Kevin Burgess, in his new book *Dangerous Jesus*, summarizes what we're talking about: "Love is demonstrated not by what we hold on to—our possessions, our way of life—but by what we are willing to give up. ... The currency of the Christianity of Christ is sacrifice. Loving God and others ... is demonstrated by a willingness to be inconvenienced, to be made uncomfortable, and to adjust our lives for the benefit of other people." (Burgess 33).

## QUESTIONS

How has God shown His love to you? How are you passing it on to others?

## PRAYERS

**For Pars Theological Centre—Training Leaders, Transforming Iran**

Give praise to God for His amazing faithfulness to Pars throughout the years, enabling it to continue with the ministry He has set out for it. Thank Him for each of the 482 students, the faculty and staff, and for the important role they all have within Pars' learning community.

# TUESDAY

Read **Luke 20:1-10**

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## **Relationship with Jesus changes people**

*“God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7). God is a cheerful giver. So was the lady with the alabaster jar. Also, the widow with the two mites and Barnabas—they all were (Acts 4:36-37). Am I? Are you? What makes a cheerful giver?

My Great-Aunt Myrtle was settling her sister Rose’s estate. Aunt Rose had been a Sunday School teacher interested in missions. For Aunt Myrtle’s services, she received \$3,000 and she prayed, asking God where to send a tithe of it (\$300). That same morning, my wife and I, who were heading to the mission field, had laid out our needs to God for \$300, including the final payment on the adoption of our oldest son. Myrtle called that afternoon, asking if we could use \$300. I replied, “Yes!” “Good,” she said, “because I put a check in the mail this morning.” What a faith-building moment that was for both of us!

Zacchaeus happily gave in the wake of Jesus’ noticing him (Luke 20:1-10). Relationship with Jesus changes people. It changed Nathanael. It changed Paul. And Jesus is changing us (increasingly into His image).

How can we be a joyful giving person?

- Remember, everything belongs to God anyway. We, and all that we have, belong to Him. We are chosen to steward our possessions and distribute it as He directs us. What fun!
- We trust Him to provide as He promised.
- For the *joy* that was set before Him, Jesus “*endured the Cross, despising its shame.*” What was the joy before Him? The salvation and wholeness of people, because He loves them. What is the joy before us? As His followers, it’s the same.
- Whatever we do, the Bible says we are to do it with our whole heart.
- Jesus told us to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. Through a nation’s God-fearing citizens, God invests in government through their taxes, preferably good government with good leaders.

## QUESTIONS

Are you finding joy in following Jesus? Is His burden light and His yoke easy (Matthew 11:30)? Are you casting your burdens on Him (1 Peter 5:7)?

## PRAYERS

For Pars Theological Centre—Training Leaders, Transforming Iran

Pray for those affected by the earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria on February 6, leaving over 50,000 dead. Thankfully, none of the Pars students were harmed.



# WEDNESDAY

Read **Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:10; Philippians 4:12-19**

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## **Giving as an act of faith in God**

God has promised to take care of us, to feed and clothe us. If we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, the rest will take care of itself (Matthew 6:33). He provides for people who provide for others. *“Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed”* (Proverbs 3:18).

Some churches and organizations request “faith pledges.” Such a pledge is an appeal to believe God for the ability to give what you may not have at the time, but may be given by God in the future in the form of a job, a raise or an inheritance, for example. Having a positive experience brings blessings to the giver and receiver alike. Often many times over.

Once I felt God nudging me to give away a number of my favorite books to the library of a proposed church training center, believing God would take care of my future book needs. Not long after, I was hired as the librarian of a Bible college with oversight and access to many thousands of books.

Paul said he knew how to be abased and how to abound. For some, discretionary spending is little to non-existent. Some people live in debt much of their lives. What about them? Can these people be generous? Yes—look at the widow who gave two small coins.

Appropriate for all (rich, poor, in-between) is the *tithe* (giving one-tenth of one's income) which can help us both in our giving and our budgeting. In the book of Malachi, God makes an amazing promise to tithers: *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse [church], that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this,”* says the LORD Almighty, *“and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it”* (3:10). It is as if God is “priming our pumps” by this, His promise.

## QUESTIONS

Are you abounding or abased, or something in between? Do you have a plan for giving? Do you hear God's voice nudging you to give in a new direction? How can you be a blessing to others?

## PRAYERS

**For Pars Theological Centre—Training Leaders, Transforming Iran**

Pray for the Pars staff as they plan for the third Iranian Leaders Forum that Pars will host in October 2023. Prayerfully, more than 120 Iranian leaders from many different ministries and organizations will be represented to reflect on the following theme: *“One Body in Christ: How to Prepare in Unity for God's Kingdom Dreams in Iran.”*

# THURSDAY

Read **Luke 18:18-25; Acts 4:26-27**

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## **Giving as the first step in ministry**

The rich young ruler and Barnabas had different reactions to Jesus' suggestion that if they sell and give away their wealth, they would follow Him more fully. Barnabas went on to bring Paul to the church of Antioch. He accompanied Paul on their first missionary journey to Asia Minor. After that, Barnabas partnered with his cousin Mark, who probably wrote the Gospel of Mark. The name *Barnabas* means "son of encouragement."

Mark's gospel says, "*Jesus looked at the rich young ruler and loved him*" (Mark 10:21). But after receiving Jesus' answer to him, the rich young ruler went away sad. He did not see that the exchange of his riches for the privilege of following Jesus to be the bargain that it was. No one can serve two masters at the same time (money and God, for example). Is anything holding us back from following Jesus fully?

Some scholars have posited the idea that Barnabas and the rich young ruler were one and the same person. If so, it would underscore the idea that God is the God of second chances.



Either way, the application is that giving can be the first step into ministry. Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus, experienced the joy of giving by selling “a field he owned and bringing the money and putting it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:27). And the freedom he felt and enjoyed catapulted him into a lifetime of discipleship and service that is rivaled by few people. His second recorded step in ministry came from recognizing Paul’s exposure to the light of Jesus, vouching for him to Jerusalem’s church leaders (Acts 9:27).

## QUESTIONS

Do you believe that fully following Jesus is or would be more fulfilling than anything else? Is there anything keeping you from fully following Jesus?

## PRAYERS

**For Pars Theological Centre—Training Leaders, Transforming Iran**

Pray for the Pars staff as it prepares for its second Certificate Award Ceremony—for students who have completed the first and second year of the Bachelor of Theology program—in the second half of 2023.

# FRIDAY

Read **Proverbs 3:5, 11:24-25; Matthew 6:1-3, 33; John 15:1-8**

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## Two key points about giving, each with a corollary

**First, abide in the Vine.** A branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the Vine. And the Vine is Jesus. Botany tells us that plants have *xylem* flowing from the roots through the trunk to the branches and leaves. And plants have *phloem* flowing back. With that connection, flowers and fruit grow.

Just as a branch receives life from the vine, so we receive life from Jesus through our connection to Him—an interactive, conversational relationship with Him. Holy Spirit power to do His will comes through prayer, Bible reading, and obedient application of His directions. Our Heavenly Father is glorified by our bearing much fruit (John 15:8). Love is a fruit of the Spirit, and by extension, generosity.

And the corollary is that if we don't give, we won't grow. Giving grows us. The Vine's branches (that's us) have to focus on two things: abiding in the Vine and bearing fruit. Giving branches grow; hoarding branches shrivel and die.

Giving is more of a blessing than receiving (Acts 20:35). Still, receiving is a blessing, and we can't give without receiving—receiving not grasping. Better to be a Sea of Galilee or a Jordan River (with inflow and outflow) than a Dead Sea (with no output).

**Second, trust in God** and His goodness and His power. If we seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first, He will take care of the rest. If we give, He will restore.

The corollary to this is “Don't toot your own horn,” as my mother used to say. God can be trusted to do that, too. If we give in secret, He will openly honor us. But that's His job, not ours. He wants us to live to please Him, not others.

Jesus lived this way. He wrote nothing, that we know of, except something in the sand at the feet of a woman's accusers. But look at all the New Testament that the Holy Spirit inspired Jesus' disciples to write down for us. And look at the result—a growing Church all around the world.

## **QUESTIONS**

How do you abide in Christ? How do you trust in God to provide?

## **PRAYERS**

**For Pars Theological Centre—Training Leaders, Transforming Iran**

Pray for all 15 Formation Conferences planned for 2023. Pray that all participants will experience days of deep refreshment and encouragement together in God's presence.

## Sources

Information about Gregory Boyle can be found at <https://homeboyindustries.org/our-story/father-greg/>.

Kevin Burgess, *Dangerous Jesus: Why the Only Thing More Risky than Getting Jesus Is Getting Jesus Wrong* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2023).



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