

“Sacrifice” // Exodus 35–36 // All-In #4

We summarize our mission as a church as going all-in to make disciples of Jesus from our families, our neighbors, and our world. We’ve introduced a new way of giving at our church that combines everything into one fund that represents the totality this mission. We’re calling it the “All-In initiative,” and we’re saying, ‘As a church, let’s go all-in for our families, our neighbors and our world.’

- **For our families** refers to what we’ll spend on ministries right here in our church that reach people, disciple them, and send them out.
- **For our neighbors** refers to what we’ll spend to expand our facilities to reach people in our church we’re not reaching yet.
- **For our world** means money we will give away to see the poor helped and the gospel taken to people who have never heard it.

For Our World

That last video explains a little about what we are doing “for our world.” Let me tell you a little more on 3 different fronts.

International Church Planting

- Three years ago, the Summit had never sent someone to India as a church planter—a country with the second largest population and greatest number of unreached people groups in the world. Today, we have 5 families and 2 singles from our congregation living there on mission. A 6th family will join them in a few months—making a total of 14 adults, 10 children, and two more children on the way.
- In another place in Asia, one of most violently antagonistic toward the gospel places in the world, we have a Summit church planting team working alongside several local believers—discipling and equipping them as they expand a house church network that has grown to over 50 churches or proto-churches across that region.
- In yet another place in Asia, one of our Summit church planting teams is mentoring and discipling a large group of former Muslim Imams that are passionate about planting reproducing churches throughout their country.
- All total, we’ve got more than 150 of our people who live overseas on one of these church planting teams.
- A lot of these people we fund directly; some we support the organization they go with. For example, last year we gave over \$¼ million to the IMB.

Domestic Church Planting

- I’ve told you before that each weekend in addition to the 6–7000 that attend here, we have 2000 people worshipping at a Summit church plant. 1000 of those are at 1 of the 6 churches we’ve planted (or re-planted) in the last 2 years.
- Our most recent plant, **Mercy Hill Church** in Greensboro, launched in September with over 200 people. Andrew Hopper wrote this to us this week: *“Two weeks ago we baptized 5 people. The best part is that we didn’t know a single one of those 5 when we moved to Greensboro a few months ago. One of them was a college student who got connected to us because some of our guys were intentional about getting onto the college campus here at UNCG. They met this guy, invited him to a small group and then to our weekend gathering. He has since accepted Christ, been baptized, and has yet to show up at church without bringing at least one of his non-Christian friends.”*
- At another one, **Summit Denver**, Bryan Barley told me that they did a spontaneous baptism at one of their events. One girl there asked a lot of questions about Jesus, Bryan said, and then left. Ten minutes later *“she reemerged and came back to tell me through tears that she felt like her need for Jesus was so great that she didn’t want to leave our building without fully committing to him and asked if she could*

make that decision and be baptized immediately.” Well, what can you do?” We filled up our horse trough (which is their low budget baptismal) and baptized her.”

- Our next plant leaves in February for **Baltimore**. Over 30 people are joining Pastor Brad and his family (who have been on staff here for 10 years) to plant Redeemer City Church there. Note: these 30 aren't church staff. They are ordinary people moving and getting jobs to leverage their lives to see the gospel advance in Baltimore.

Community Ministry

- This is how we bless our community. This past summer, we put over 2500 volunteers on the streets for ServeRDU involved in numerous projects to bless our city. This is just a beginning point for how we serve our community—it's not supposed to just be a feel good or photo opp.
- Let me give you an example: One of our ServeRDU projects was the construction of 2 Habitat houses in a neighborhood where 11 of our members have now moved in our “Go-Urban” initiative. Many residents of that community have started attending our weekend services.
- And we already have Team Leaders identified for our next GoUrban team in South East Raleigh and this week we had an interest meeting with 37 people considering moving into strategic parts of the Triangle on one of these teams.

And let me tell you one other story on this front that really pulls it all together. Obviously, you know what happened with Hurricane Sandy this week and the devastation it caused... well, one of our church plants a few years ago was in NYC, and one of the families that church has reached lost everything in the storm. So we were able to minister to that family, not just by giving them relief money, which we did, but there is a church there now that is blessing them and caring for them, body and soul! This is because you have been generous in the past!

We want to do even more in the future. We want to give away 5 million dollars over the next two years toward things like this. Now, note that we're not doing a Christmas Missions Offering the way we used to. Giving to this one fund is how we'll support these things, and you know that of the \$26 million we want to take in as a church, we will give away 5 million.

- You say, “What happens if we don't take in \$5 million?” We have a charts worked out based on different scenarios as to what gets trimmed down where—it is, of course, proportionate—but folks, I don't even want to consider that. I am confident, with God's help, we can do this.
- ADVANCE COMMITMENT NIGHT?

All-In

So, unapologetically, we are asking you to go “all-in” for these things. And, of course, not just with your money, but with your lives. Are you all-in with the mission of God? You say, “Well, what does that look like?”

- Are you a covenant member here—been baptized and joined the church? If not, go to starting point.
- Are you involved in a small group?
- Are you involved in ministry?
- Are you invested financially?

Summit: *There should be no spectators in the church.* Church is not an event you attend on the weekend. Or, let me say it like this: *You should be followers of Jesus, not just fans.*

- I was at Cameron Indoor Stadium this past week for one of Duke's 1st basketball games, and so I know that fans can get pretty excited about the team; they can dress up; paint their faces, even their bellies; yell their heads off at the game; a lot of those fools can even camp out in the winter for tickets; but at 6 am when the team is running wind-sprints in the gym they are not there; when

the team is digging deep for a 4th quarter surge the fan is stuffing his face with his 20th chicken wing or running to the frig to refill his drink. And, a lot of times, if the team starts to let him down, his enthusiasm wanes—he quits going to the games and flying the little flag on his car and might even switch teams.¹

- I think we have a lot of fans of Jesus in the church, but not nearly as many followers. People who live and die with the team.

So, today, we want to consider what it looks like to sacrifice for the mission.

Last week I explained to you that gospel-centered generosity starts with the understanding that God doesn't need your money... Which is different than how many of you have heard people talk about money. You have to give because poor little God is out of money and you need to spot him some for his work on earth. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Jesus pulled money out of fishes' mouths and sneezes out fully furnished universes, at will.

When Jesus talks about generosity, he's not after our money, he's after our hearts.

- That's why when someone says to me, "I don't get why I have to be part of this. I can barely make ends meet as it is, and there are rich people in this church that have it all, they should be the ones who give."
- When someone says that, I am positive they don't get "gospel-centered generosity." We're not giving because God needs it. Jesus once watched a woman give 2 mites into an offering and said that her gift had more weight than all the rich people putting in substantial checks, because God didn't need the money. He can take the 2 mites of the woman, like the 5 loaves and 2 fish, and multiply it beyond our wildest imaginations!

Both rich and poor alike should give in a way that reflects a sacrifice of their heart: something that represents a transfer of treasure and trust from their heart.

- That's why David said in our story last week, "I will not give unto the Lord that which costs me nothing," because the question is not, "How much does God need and am I able to supply it?" the question is "what statement does my giving make to God?"

Here were the questions to consider:

- What does what you do with your money show that you most love?
- What does your giving show that you most trust in?
- What does what you do with your money reveal about what kingdom you are serving?
- What statement does your giving to God make about his value to you?

God's primary purpose in giving is not to get the money out of our pockets but the idols out of our hearts. Generosity is not something he wants from us but for us.

Our example this week: Israel...

Exodus 35–36

Context: Israel had been delivered from political captivity in Egypt. God has led them through the Red Sea, guiding them with a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. He has fed them manna in the wilderness, given them water from the rock, and safety from all their enemies. He is taking them to a Promised Land.

¹ Adapted from Kyle Idleman, *Not a Fan*.

[35:4] Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "This is the thing that the LORD has commanded. [5] Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze; [6] blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen; goats' hair, [7] tanned rams' skins, and goatskins; acacia wood, [8] oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, [9] and onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece.

[20] Then all the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. [21] And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD's contribution... [22] So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an offering of gold to the LORD.

Several observations:

1. They gave in response to the command of God

- God was clearly leading them. They weren't building something for God, they were cooperating with God as God built something through them.
- I have explained to you that in the clearest ways we see the evidence of God moving in our church. And we want to cooperate with him as he blesses us to be a blessing. We believe we have just scratched the surface in terms of what God wants to use us to do.
- One thing we say around here. Past grace is a promise of future grace. Philippians 1:6. When God strikes the match he intends to light the fire.

2. God used their stuff to build his tabernacle

- God didn't need their stuff, of course, but God chooses to use our stuff in the building of his kingdom. Saying that he chooses to use it, and gives us an opportunity to participate in it, is different than saying that God needs it.
- When Jesus fed the 5000, he used a lunch of 5 loaves and 2 fish. Clearly a God that could do that did not need the 5 loaves and 2 fish, but he chose to use it.
- The work God does on earth is always facilitated by the gifts of his people.

3. They gave in response to grace

- First, you have the fact that he delivered them from slavery in Egypt at the Exodus
- If you go back one chapter to Exodus 34... God had spared them after they made an idol. Had mercy... They knew God should have destroyed them. "Hey, we shouldn't be here."
- In fact, here's an interesting observation. It says they gave "brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects..." Well, where did they get those? When God was leading them out of Egypt, he caused a spirit of fear to take over the Egyptians and then God told the Israelites, now ask them for an contribution—and these Egyptian taskmasters just unloaded all this jewelry on the Israelites. This is a reminder that they are only giving back to God out of what he's given to them. They are simply giving back out of the blessing they have received.

4. They gave in anticipation of the future

- God had promised to make them a blessing to all peoples by bringing the light of his presence to the nations, and they determined that the gold in their ears was not as important as the kingdom God was building on earth.
- Here's a cool thought: the blessing that God had promised them is why you and I are sitting here today—why we have come to know Jesus!
- Do you think any of them had any anticipation of this fathering? That one day, more than 3K years later, a group of people from a completely different culture would be worshipping and rejoicing in the salvation of the God of Abraham that came through them?

5. Giving was both free and Spirit-prompted

- Listen to these verses:

- [35:5] Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution...
- [35:21] And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments. [22] So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought... (an offering) to the LORD.
- [35:29] All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD.
- What do you see? Freedom! No compulsion. Whoever's heart moved them. But it also said this:
- [35:30] Then Moses said to the people of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel... [31] and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship... [34] And he has inspired him to teach... [36:2] And Moses called Bezalel... and every craftsman in whose mind the LORD had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work.
- What do you see? The Holy Spirit had put things into their hearts. The Spirit of God is deeply involved in the giving process, showing you specifically what you should give.
 - 1 Cor 14 says that generosity is a spiritual gift, which means the Spirit of God moves on your heart about what you, individually, are supposed to give.
- Now, I am NOT saying that only give when you have a tingly moment and then you throw 5 dollars in the plate. That's lunch money giving. No—Paul says in 1 Cor 16 that our giving should be disciplined and systematic: at the first of every week set aside. What I'm saying is that you should do is seek the Spirit's counsel on how much that should be. That's what Veronica and I have done in this season is said, "Spirit of God, what do you want from us in this?"
- And then, beyond that, be open, "be ready to share," when the Holy Spirit puts a particular need on your heart.

6. They gave publicly

- The word translated in the ESV as "contribution" in Exodus 35:5 is *terumah*, which means literally "to raise up." In the old King James they called this the "heave-offering." You'd heave it up for all to see, showing you were "all-in."²
- There was a kind of sense that we're all-in with the people of God.

7. Everyone had something to contribute

- Vs. 20, says "all the congregation of Israel" was involved in this. Then it starts listing all these different kinds of people. The craftsmen did this; some of the women did this; and the people who were good with cloth did this... just this laundry list of different kinds of people.
- There was something for everyone; everybody was invited to be involved.
- You don't control the gifts or resources God gives you with. What you are responsible with is what you do with what God gives to you.
- Which leads me to...

8. You can't give what you don't have

- [35:24] Everyone who could make a contribution of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD's contribution. And every one who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work brought it. [25] And every skillful woman spun with her hands.
- You shouldn't feel guilty about not being able to give what you don't have. I know some of you who were at one point in your life where you could give a lot of money, but things have changed now and you can't. You don't need to feel bad about that.

² Strong, J. *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: 2001; Osborn, N. D., & Hatton, H. *A Handbook on Exodus*. UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies, 1999, pp. 698-9.

- God determines the seasons of your life. You are responsible to give out of the situation he has currently put you in!
- This answers the question for me, by the way, of whether you should give when you are going into debt.
 - Student who is living on loans. My answer to that is “usually, no.” You shouldn’t be giving away someone else’s money.
- But that’s different than the question of should you give off of your income while your in debt. Maybe you have modest income but you’ve also got credit card bills, school loans, car payments, a mortgage, and the answer to that is yes. Generosity should always be a part of your life and a portion of every bit of income God brings in to you.
- And #9, my favorite point:

9. They had to hold a congregational meeting to tell them to stop giving

- *[36:5] (They) said to Moses, “The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do.” [6] So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, “Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.” So the people were restrained from bringing, [7] for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.*
- Just one time, Summit, in my period as your pastor, could you let me experience this? I promise I’ll do a really good job with calling the congregational meeting.

All this giving motivated not by the perception of a need, but by a grateful heart. Let me tell you a very important lesson I have learned: ***The most generous offerings are not motivated by guilt but by grace.***

- Presenting God as a poor little God who needs our help and he’s depending on us to save the world might create a little flurry of guilt giving, but that will either paralyze us or will wear off after a while.
- But when we see how gracious God is and that he is inviting us to be a part of his plan, that creates joyful, lifelong generosity.

God doesn’t need your money. God wants your heart. Luke 21: The disciples were standing at the temple watching an offering one day and evidently they were pretty impressed with some rich people dropping in some pretty big coin, and Jesus said to them, “You don’t get it. I don’t need that money. Their gifts, even though they are big, don’t represent their hearts. But that woman over there who gave 2 mites, about a half penny, what she gave represents her heart. I can do more with that than all those religious people can do with their huge sums of money. Don’t you remember what I did with the 5 loaves and 2 fish?”

A woman comes in to anoint Jesus’ feet with a very expensive alabaster flask of perfume. She begins to weep and pours it out on Jesus’ feet, so grateful for the grace Jesus has shown to her. Some of the religious leaders object and say, “Oh, what a waste. Think about how much good could that have done for the poor.” And again Jesus says, “You don’t get it. I don’t need that money. What I want are gifts that represent your heart.”

God doesn’t invite us to generosity because he needs our money. He invites us to generosity so that we can give him the sacrifice of our hearts. What God wants us to do is to be overwhelmed by grace and offer our hearts back to him in response, and one of the ways that we do that is through our money.

So the question from Exodus 35–36 is this. If this is how they gave in response to what they’d seen, how much more should we?

- We see more clearly than they the grace of God than they: they had been delivered from political slavery. We have been delivered from judgment and death.

- They were building a tabernacle where the presence of God would dwell and sacrifices would be offered to cover their sins. We see that Jesus made us his tabernacle and dwells in us and put our sin away forever by offering the sacrifice of himself.
- If that's how they gave in response to what they saw, how much more should we give in response to what we've seen?

2 Cor 9:6–15

Now, let me do what I did last week and take you to a place in the New Testament where Paul articulates the principles we just learned. A lot of times the Old Testament will speak in pictures, and then Paul's epistles will spell things out. But what you find is that remarkably they are always saying the same thing.

In these verses Paul deal with the two things that, I believe, keep Christians from giving.

2 Cor 9:6 "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. [7] Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

[8] And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. [10] He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. [11] You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way..."

Fear

This is the #1 reason people don't give, I believe. A lot of people want to be generous but they fear, "Well, what if we can't make ends meet one day? What if I lose my job? What if the President and Congress destroy our economy?" And so part of you wants to be generous but you can't because money is like the only lifeline you have for security in the future.

Do you see what Paul is saying? Don't fear. Supposedly, this appeared in a **Peace Corps** manual many years ago for volunteers serving in the Amazon... I don't know if that's true,³ but it's instructions on how to react if attacked by an anaconda (the anaconda, of course, is the largest snake in the world; it can grow to be up to 35 feet long and can swallow a 350lb animal whole.) Here's supposedly what it said:

1. *Don't run.* (They say the anaconda is fast enough to catch you. I say, let the anaconda prove it. And if I am with somebody else, I don't have to be faster than the anaconda, I just have to be faster than that other guy. No greater love.)
2. *Lie flat on the ground and keep arms close to your side and your legs together.*
3. *Tuck your chin in*
4. *The snake will come and begin to nudge you and climb over your body.*
5. *Do not panic.* (Do not panic!!!!)
6. *After the snake has begun to examine you, it will begin to swallow you from the feet end first. It always swallows from the feet end first. Permit the snake to swallow your feet and ankles. Do not panic.*
7. *The snake will then begin to suck your legs into its body. You must lie perfectly still. This will take a long time.*

³ http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/snakes/a/snake_attack.htm

8. *When the snake has reached your knees. Slowly, and with as little movement as possible, reach down, take your knife, and very gently insert it into the snake's mouth between its mouth and your leg. Then suddenly rip upward and sever its head.*
9. *Be sure you have your knife.*

(I'm not sure I could escape an anaconda, but I'm pretty sure that if I was attacked by an anaconda, I'm not going to be able to obey the "do not panic" instruction. There is a time to panic, and I feel like that would be a really good time.) But panic paralyzes you and it keeps you from doing what you should.

Paul says, "When it comes to giving, don't panic." Why? Listen to that verse again:

[8] And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. [10] He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. [11] You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way..." (Don't over-spiritualize that: in every way means "in every way." Yes, God will use your generosity to enrich your heart; tear down your love for and dependence on money; give you new and more exhilarating forms of joy. He also uses your generosity as a means to multiply your financial capacity to give, which means enriching you financially even more.)

He's not talking about a name it, claim strategy or about you doing stupid things and giving money you don't have. He's talking about God taking care of you when you honor him with your giving and giving generously even when it scares you.

Paul's analogy of a seed here is fantastic. Most seeds you can either eat or plant—but if you plant it you, of course, lose your ability to eat it now.

- I was reading about a really bad **drought in Oklahoma in the 1920's**. People had gone there to plant crops, because for a while rains made it very fertile. But then for 10 years there was drought. And in that 10th year one particular farmer had to make a difficult choice: he had just hang onto his seed and eat for another year, or he could plant seed and only have enough to eat for about 9 months, and bank everything on the fact that the seed he planted would produce a crop. In those days planting seed was the equivalent of losing a month's salary.⁴

That's the analogy Paul uses for giving. You are giving it away in faith that God will multiply it and give it back to you. The great thing is that with God, of course, there is never a drought, but biblical giving is always a little fear inducing. In fact, **C. S. Lewis** says that unless your level of giving creates fear in you, you are not giving biblically.

I heard a great real-life example of this in our church this week. One of our leaders who made an All-In commitment told me that the day she mailed in their commitment she lost her job. She said, I'm not sure what that means, but what my husband and I are not going to do is quit tithing, and we are going to trust God with our future and ask God to help us not only meet our faith commitment but also to exceed it. (Now, she's not saying, "We know that God promises me a new and better job and I'll probably win the lottery and we'll buy a yacht." She is saying, "We are going to be faithful. If God doesn't provide me a new job our giving will look different, of course, because we can't give what we don't have. But we're not going to let this setback keep us from being generous and we're going to pray that God gives us an even greater capacity to be generous in the years to come.)

And, btw, do you see why God enriches you? To add all that bling to your life you've always wanted? No, vs. 10, "to multiply your seed for sowing." He multiplies your resources not *to increase your standard of*

⁴ Andy Stanley, *Fields of Gold*.

living, but to increase your capacity for giving. Nothing wrong with enjoying the fruit of your labor, but you realize the reason God multiplies your resources is to increase your capacity to be involved in the kingdom. For some of you that God has really blessed, what would it look like for you to think of your success and blessing *that way*?

Let me say something to the wealthy:

- *Jesus told a story in Luke 12 that really scares me sometimes. A rich man whose problem was... what do you do if you have too much stuff to put in barns? Give it away. He built bigger barns. There is something about human nature that wants to hoard it and build bigger barns.*
- *God looked down from heaven and said, "You fool! You thought it was about you!" I gave you that money to pour out in my kingdom and you kept building bigger and bigger houses.*

Then Paul ends this passage with this. [15] Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! We give because we are overwhelmed by grace. One chapter back, he said this: **2 Cor 8:9 [9] 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 by his poverty might become rich.** In the previous verse he said, "I'm not giving you a command to give, but if you have any perception of how much grace God has shown you, giving will rise up out of your heart as naturally as breathing."

- Balloon analogy

Understanding God's promises and understanding his grace create "cheerful givers." This is such a key verse: [7] Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

So I want to be just like Paul here. I want you to feel no compulsion or reluctance in giving. Each of you must decide in your own heart what to give. I want you to listen to the Spirit.

If you are not wealthy, and you think your gift won't matter, I want to remind you that God's not in need of your money, he's after a statement of your heart. When God wanted to feed 20,000 people he didn't ask rich people to finance it, he asked a regular little boy to give what he had.

If you are wealthy, I want to remind you that God doesn't need your money, either, so giving him a gift that is impressive on a balance sheet but doesn't represent your heart is meaningless to him also. Remember David's statement, "I will not give unto the Lord that which costs me nothing!"

So the question for you is: What represents a gift *from your heart*, a gift of your soul?

"I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare...If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us,... they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditures excludes them." C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

- Or, the way I've explained it: **two steps below your peers.**

The card

- Stories
 - Retirement
 - Savings for a beach house
 - A honeymoon
 - Cable

- Our staff: Summit staff members have committed to give an 55% more than they gave the last 2 years. If you take what Summit staff members gave 2 years ago, and compare it to what they have committed to give, it is increased by 55%. We have staff team members that give over 30% and 20% of their gross income.
- A group of leaders: 4 million.
- My story. Twice cable.

Bullpen:

- **Opt:** *“People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward of healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter?”*

Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering or danger now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father’s throne on high to give Himself for us.”⁵

Died May 1, 1873: buried his heart in Africa

And so the question is this. If this is how they gave in response to what they’d seen, how much more should we?

- We see what God is doing. What God meant when he said he would bless the world. We see how the kingdoms of this world don’t last and only the kingdom God is building lasts forever.
- We see more clearly than they the grace of God. They had been delivered from political slavery. We have been delivered from judgment and death.
- They built a tabernacle where sacrifices would be offered to cover their sin. We’ve seen God come to earth to be our tabernacle and spill his blood as the sacrifice that put away sin forever.

The thing that changes a heart of selfishness to one of generosity is your perception of God’s grace in your life. What God needs is not your money; what God wants is your heart. Last week we studied, briefly, the story of the woman who came in and anointed Jesus’ feet, and then you looked at it again in your small groups...

- She’d been a prostitute that Jesus had saved and forgiven... she was so overwhelmed with his grace she took this alabaster flask.
- Well, do you remember who objected in that story? The religious people. Their spokesperson was Judas, who said, “This money should be wasted and should be given to the poor.”
- Religious people think about money all wrongly. Religious people give for two reasons: so God will consider them good Christians and because they think God needs their money.
- The gospel is that Jesus’ love is given as a gift and that God doesn’t need our money. But when you understand the grace of God in your life there is no way you can’t fail to rise up with your money and offer it to God to use for his purposes.
- Here’s what Jesus said: “Those who are forgiven much love much.” What does your giving say about the worth of God to you?
- Here’s the secret. God takes gifts of the heart: 5 loaves and 2 fishes; the poor woman’s two mites, and multiplies and uses them beyond our wildest dreams.

⁵ *Livingstone’s Private Journal*: 1851-53, ed. I. Schapera.

- **Purposed** (9:7), not impulsively either way
- **Priority**
 - Don't wait until your bills are paid. People that live above their means. "Americans give proportionately less today than they did in the days of the Great Depression."
- **Percentage:** into the "storehouse." On the gross or the net? It belongs to God before it belongs to George Bush.
- **Progressive:**

Nehemiah (9:1–10:29). A renewal of the covenant.

- Confessed their sins to God (9:1–4)
- They owned their sins (5–37)
- They promised to faithfully follow God (38–10:29)
- The renewal of the covenant is the Lord's table

Discarded

Two ways to keep a balloon afloat

David and Mephibosheth

The "good old days" in which they were slaves in Egypt

And note that Paul says, [vs. 11] "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way..." and God multiplies your seed for sowing." In this verse, why does God multiply your resources? *Not to increase your standard of living, but to increase your capacity for giving.* Nothing wrong with enjoying the fruit of your labor, but what would it look like if you started to think of your increased salary that way?

God can do more in 5 minutes with 5 loaves and 2 fish than the richest billionaire can do in 10 lifetimes. God can take a gift from the heart and multiply it, by his power, to an extent that dwarfs what the richest billionaires can do with all of their wealth.