

Hilarious Giving

Pippa Page | 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Harvest Sunday | 12th October 2025

In our reading from 2 Cor. 9, we heard in v.7 that God loves a cheerful giver. But if you've been in church over the last few weeks you might have heard Tom telling us that what the Greek manuscripts actually say *is that* God loves a hilarious giver! So that's why, this morning, we're thinking about hilarious and joyful giving, coming from a place of thankfulness to God.

I would like us to have a think about

1. Why do we give?
2. How do we give?

So, first of all, **Why do we give?**

Well, mainly because God has done an amazing thing in sending Jesus to make a way for us to be put right with God. Jesus himself came from heaven to give his life, in a very horrible, undignified and painful way for us, because He loved us so much. Also, and particularly for us in Weston, He has given us a very beautiful corner of the world to live in and provided us with homes and all that we need. We have so much to be joyful and grateful for!

But also we give because God has told us to give, which is *because* He knows that giving makes you happy, and He has said that we will be blessed if we do. God has also pointed out that it's His money, not ours.

In the Bible there are more than 500 verses about prayer and nearly 500 verses about faith but over 2,000 verses about money and possessions. Jesus talked about money and possessions in 16 of His 38 parables. So it is obviously a significant issue!

Let me show you why I said that it's God's money:

Psalm 24:1

**The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;**

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendour,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.**

Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;

you are exalted as head over all.

¹² **Wealth and honour**

come from you;

you are the ruler of all things.

Job 41:11

Who has a claim against me that I must pay?

Everything under heaven belongs to me.

Psalms 50: 10-12

**for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the cattle on a thousand hills.**

¹¹ **I know every bird in the mountains,
and the insects in the fields are mine.**

¹² **If I were hungry I would not tell you,
for the world is mine, and all that is in it.**

Haggai 2:8 **“The silver is mine and the gold is mine,” declares the Lord Almighty.**

1 Cor. 6:19,20 **You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price.**

That’s a pretty thorough declaration of God’s ownership of everything including ourselves, and I left an awful lot of verses out! and nowhere in the Bible does it say that He has handed over the ownership of any of it to us.

When we come to Christ, He puts His resources at our disposal. He also expects us to put *our* resources at *His* disposal! We are God’s stewards.

A steward is defined as : Someone an owner trusts with the management of his assets.

Stewardship includes all the responsibilities that God has delegated to us, including looking after the world, our families and communities and exercising the gifts we have been given. Stewardship isn’t a narrow subcategory of the Christian life, it is the Christian life! God’s ownership of “our” time, “our money” and possessions “our” abilities and everything else, should be central to our thinking. But this morning we need to focus on joyful financial stewardship.

But before we feel “put out” about God wanting us to share our money and possessions, lets just remember who He is

Psalm 103 begins by saying

- ¹ Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.**
- ² Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits –**
- ³ who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,**
- ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,**
- ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.**

It goes on to say that the **Lord is gracious and compassionate** and that **as far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.** It’s a good psalm and it talks about a good God who loves us: **as high as the heavens are from the earth so great is His love for those who fear Him.**

God is really keen for us to have a right attitude to money and possessions. Materialism drives us away from God: striving for more money and more things can become an idol in itself, and after all, we may feel that there is less need to trust God if we think we have everything provided for and under control already. You might feel that you don’t need to ask God for your daily bread if you own the bakery! But *wealth* can get in the way of our dependence on God. But God doesn’t want us to be independent of Him, He wants us to trust Him and to have faith in Him.

1 Tim 6: 17-20 says this

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Heb 13.5 says

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’

Jesus said in Matt 6: 19-21

¹⁹ ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The Bible does not ever say that money is evil. Money is neutral. It can be used for good things and it can be used for very bad things. It is our attitude to money and how we use it that can be called into question.

A Steward’s primary goal is to be “found faithful” by his master. He proves himself faithful by wisely using his master’s resources to accomplish the tasks that have been delegated. So what do we know about God’s money management principles and priorities?

Or 2. How Should we give

In the Old Testament, God instructed the people of Israel to offer tithes and firstfruits. Tithing literally means a tenth, or 10%. The firstfruits means the first or best part. There were other offerings they were required to give too, and plenty of voluntary ones they could give as well, but tithing was the basic starting point.

The tithes would go to the priests and Levites, to supply their needs and also to be distributed to the poor and any foreigners or refugees who needed food.

The sheep farmers of Israel never knew when they offered their first-born lamb how many more lambs their ewe would have, but God didn’t say wait until your ewe has had 9 lambs and give me the next one, He said “the firstborn is mine”.

In Ex.23:19 He said “**bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God**” The principle that we need to get hold of is that we are to give to God first – so when we get our wages or our pension we should give to God first and then allocate the rest to pay the bills, buy the things we need and to give to other people who are more in need than ourselves.

Incidentally, it says “bring it to the house of the Lord”, so the principle suggests that we should be bringing our tithe to the church.

Jesus notices and cares what people do with their money. In our gospel reading from Mark 12, we heard that Jesus sat down opposite the place where offerings were put and He watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. He didn’t *just happen to notice*, He was deliberately watching.

He observed that the widow put in 2 tiny coins that were worth less than a penny, but He said that she had put in more than the rich people, because she had put in all that she had to live on.

Why do you think that she did that? I think it was because she was grateful to God, and she trusted Him to look after her.

Now, I would say that, as a general principle we are not required by God to give all that we have to live on, BUT if you feel God calling you to do that at some point, don't let me stand in your way, because He might have a particular way to bless you in mind!

I have been reading a book called "The Blessed Life" by a man called Robert Morris, who is, or was, a travelling evangelist in the United States. He and his wife were dependent on the "love gifts" that he received from the churches where he preached, so he never knew what his monthly income was going to be, but he says that they were diligent tithers, and they always gave the first tenth of any money that came in to God. One month he only had one speaking engagement, so he was a bit worried about how to pay all the bills. But after his talk, the church took a collection and gave him the money, which was a much bigger gift than usual, and a much bigger amount than that church usually collected, and was roughly the amount of their entire monthly budget. He was ecstatic until he heard God telling him to give it all away to a missionary who had been in the church that evening to give an update on his work.

Robert Morris was shocked and tried not to listen, but God was persistent. So, when nobody was looking, he gave the money to this missionary.

Later that evening some of the members of the church went to a pizza restaurant together and he and Debbie went too, and, in a slightly bizarre incident, after a bit of a grilling, a man he didn't know told him that God wanted to teach him about giving and gave him a cheque for exactly 10 times the amount that he had given to the missionary!

God is able to bless us!

Now, I know that some Christians think that tithing is too legalistic and that, now we are no longer under the law, we don't need to do it. But in Luke 11:42, when Jesus told the Pharisees off for being picky about tithing their herbs, whilst neglecting justice and the love of God, he said "**You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone**". In other words you should do both: tithing and distributing justice and love.

I think that tithing is a good way to start to learn the discipline of regularly giving to God and recognising that it's His money anyway. It's only meant to be a start – we can give to Genesis and Eagles and Wateraid and Comic Relief and all the other charities we want to on top of that.

Prov. 3:9-10 says

Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Some people say that they can't afford to tithe. That is between the individual and God – I don't know about anybody's personal circumstances. However, maybe we need to look at how much we spend on coffee, entertainment, alcohol and clothes before we make that decision. If 10% is not affordable, then we need to prayerfully consider before the Lord what we should be giving as our regular offering. I really do believe that if we honour God with our finances, he will honour us and provide for us.

Malachi 3:10 says

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, 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.

Just a word of caution here; there is a philosophy called the "Prosperity Gospel" or "the Health and Wealth Gospel" which teaches that the more you give away, the wealthier you become. I don't think that it stands up to Biblical scrutiny.

Jesus was brought up in a poor family and as an adult was homeless and owned next to nothing. The apostle Paul was often short of money and had a longstanding health problem, which we can read about in 2 Co. 12.

If we give because we expect to get more, that is completely the wrong motivation. We give because it is a joy and a privilege to be able to give in order to bless other people.

Luke 16:10 reminds us that we are continually tested in our money management. It says:

'Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

This principle tends to invalidate some of our "if onlys" such as "if only I had lots of money I would help the poor" or "if only I had a million pounds I would give it to my church or to missions." Jesus is suggesting here that we wouldn't, and that if we are stingy with a few pounds, we will be stingy with a million pounds too!

The issue is not "what would I do with a million pounds", it is "what am I doing with the £10 or £100 or £1,000 or £100,000 that I do have. If we are not faithful to God with the few pounds that He has entrusted to us, why would He give us any more?"

Proverbs 30: 8-9 says

**give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.
Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you
and say, "Who is the Lord?"
Or I may become poor and steal,
and so dishonour the name of my God**

Maybe that is easier for us! Having a lot of money is a big responsibility!

But earning lots of money is not, in itself, wrong. A Christian can make millions of pounds a year, give generously, live modestly, and avoid immoral behaviour. Its not how much money we make, its how much we keep for ourselves that is the issue.

And Jesus says that when we give, either directly to the needy or via the church or a charity, we need to keep it quiet.

He says in Matt.6: 3-4

³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Jesus said in Luke 6:38

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'

God has promised to bless us and to provide for our needs if we trust Him and are obedient to Him.

So, we've looked at why we give, and how we can give. But I'd like to take us right back to where we started, because this is really important:

2 Cor 9: 7

⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

I'd like to finish by reading some words from Psalm 96 and then having a short prayer.

Psalm 96:1-9

- ¹ Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- ² Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.
- ³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous deeds among all peoples.
- ⁴ For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.
- ⁵ For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.
- ⁶ Splendour and majesty are before him;
strength and glory are in his sanctuary.
- ⁷ Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- ⁸ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts.
- ⁹ Worship the Lord in the splendour of his^[a] holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth.

Let's pray

Father God

Thank you for all you have done for us and all you have given us. Please will you give us wisdom and guidance about how to manage the money that you have made available to us. Help us to be joyful and generous givers, and help us to be a blessing to the people around us, so that your Kingdom may grow in this place.

We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus

Amen