CALLED TO GIVE – LOVING JESUS IN THE USE OF OUR MONEY

1. Introduction

a. For the values of the Kingdom to grow and blossom in our lives we need to resist certain temptations and also engage in certain Kingdom activities. These activities which describe as the fasted lifestyle are a call to embrace voluntary weakness to experience more of God's power.

b. There are five types of "fasting" in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:1-18). We fast **food, time**, **energy, money, and words** by **giving, serving, praying, blessing enemies, and fasting food.** Each is a form of fasting, in which we voluntarily embrace weakness to experience more of God's power. In giving, we fast our money and financial strength. In serving and prayer, we fast our time and energy, investing it in others and in intercession. In giving up food, we fast our physical and emotional strength. Blessing our enemies requires that we fast our words and reputation.

c. Jesus spoke on money four times in Matthew 6. He promised that the Father rewards generosity in this age (6:4). He called us to pray for our daily provision (6:11). He addressed fear related to lacking money (6:25-33). He warned us of covetousness and urged us to use money in a way that gains heavenly treasure, expresses our love to God, and strengthens our spiritual life (6:19-24).

d. Jesus urged us to use our money in a way that gains heavenly treasure, expresses our love to God, and strengthens our spiritual life, and He warned us of covetousness. There are several principles here.

[19] "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, [20] but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. [21] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [22] "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, [23] but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! [24] "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

2. Principle 1: Jesus urged us to use our money to express loyal love to God (v. 24).

a. Here, He defined love of God in terms of how we spend money. Money is a relational subject to Jesus. The size of sacrifice in loving God in our giving is more important than the size of the gift. The widow loved more than those who gave more with less sacrifice (Lk. 21:1-4).

Luke. 21:3–4 *[3] "This poor widow has <u>put in more</u> than all; [4] for all these <u>out of their abundance</u> have put in offerings for God, but she <u>out of her poverty</u> put in all."*

3. Principle 2: Do not treasure earthly possessions (v. 19).

Matt. 6:19 *[19] "Do not lay up <u>for yourselves treasures on earth</u>, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal"*

a. The word *treasure* is an all-inclusive term that includes anything a man thinks of as his wealth, such as his position and reputation; it includes all that money can buy. Our treasure is what we most want to invest our time, money, and thinking into. Is it possessions, comfort, reputation, and influence, or developing our relationship with Jesus and helping others do the same?

b. Some are tempted much more by status and position than money. They dream much more about influence than money. Their main interest is in establishing their prominence in the workplace or their ministry. Thus, they lay up treasures on earth without recognising it.

c. Jesus did not call us to refuse to have possessions, property, a savings account, or life insurance, etc. Scripture endorses planning, saving, investing, etc. Jesus warned us of covetousness, which is to inordinately treasure or strongly desire money and possessions in a way that hinders our devotion to God.

d. Jesus warned us not to "treasure" our possessions so that we think that our life consists in the amount of money that we have. He called us to be rich toward God.

Luke 12:15-21[15] *….. be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions."* [16] *And he told them a parable, ……., 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you……*[21] *So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God."*

e. Jesus taught that we must guard against the deceitfulness of riches—covetousness—so that our love for God (our heart) will not be choked and defiled.

Mark 4:18-19 [18] *And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word,* [19] *but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.*

f. Being preoccupied with money and entitlement, with what should be "mine," is defiling.

Mark 7:21-23[2] *"From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,* [22] *thefts, covetousness…*[23] *These evil things…defile a man."*

g. The love of money is "a root of many evils" (1 Tim. 6:10). Paul listed covetousness as an attitude that we must put to death, because it leads to more evil (Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:3).

1 Tim. 6:9-10 [9] *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.* [10] *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

h. Money that we keep is not "our money"—only the money we give away is ours forever.

4. Principle 3: We can exchange our money for heavenly treasure (v. 20).

Matt. 6:20 [20] *"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys."*

a. Eternal rewards show us how God feels about the way we loved Him while we were on earth. Jesus "pays us so well" for doing so little. He rewards us for even giving a cup of water (Mt. 10:42).

b. We will soon enter a realm of endless glory, so we should invest as much time and money as possible into the kingdom and not our houses, pleasure, comfort, or reputation. Jesus called His disciples to gain treasure in heaven by using their money to obey God.

Luke 12:33 [33] *Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with money bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail.*

Luke 18:22 *Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.*

c. Heaven is the realm of glory and nothing can steal or destroy there. Thieves cannot steal our heavenly treasures because God is the guardian of it. Even our reward for giving a cup of water will

never fade away. This makes our obedience very significant. Why do we lay up treasures on earth when we know what is going to happen to them?

5. Principle 4: Our emotions follow the way in which we use and spend our money (v. 21)

Matt. 6:21[21] *"For where your treasure [money] is, there your heart will be also."*

a. The way we use our money affects our emotions either to worldliness or to the realities of heaven.

b. There is a connection between our money and our emotions—love, desire, greater interest, possessiveness, jealousy, fear, etc. Those who give their money to the kingdom will love the kingdom more.

6. Principle 5: If the eye of our heart is good, we'll be full of light—having a vibrant heart (v. 22).

Matt. 6:22-23. [22] *"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,* [23] *but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.*

a. The way we use our money affects our spiritual life and our capacity to enjoy God and His Word. In Scripture, our body often refers to our *whole personhood* (not just our outer man).

b. Having a good eye speaks of our "primary life vision" being to love Jesus by obeying His teaching and living for treasures in heaven. The lamp that allows spiritual light to touch our inner man is the "eye of our heart," or the eyes of our understanding (Eph. 1:17-18). Having a bad eye refers to a life vision that neglects the values of the Sermon on the Mount and makes decisions primarily to enhance our treasures on earth.

c. Jesus longs for us to know the *pleasure of wholehearted love* for God (instead of seeing it as a sacrifice). The eye gate is where our imagination is fed. If the eyes of our heart are set on that which brings us light, then our whole body (or person) will be full of light. Being full of light means having the capacity to feel loved by God and to feel love for Him and others in return. It means feeling delight in doing God's will, meditating on His Word, embracing holiness, and receiving living understanding of His Word.

d. What is the primary dream of your life? Is it to have more money, influence, or honor in business and ministry, and comfort in circumstances, or is it to walk in grace that empowers us to live out the Beatitudes?

7. Principle 6: Light can be lost and replaced by darkness.

Matt 6:23[23] *"But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"*

a. This principle can be experienced at various levels, from a believer who loses ground in their spiritual life to one who completely rejects the Lord and ends up in outer darkness (Mt. 8:12).

b. Our past decisions to obey Jesus must be maintained, because it is possible to lose some of our capacity to experience light. Restoring our commitment to obey and seek Jesus with all of our heart is the only way to restore our capacity to enjoy His light. Some speak of the cost of discipleship, but ***the cost of non-discipleship is much higher***.

8. Principle 7*:* It is impossible to serve both God and money.

Mt 6:24 *[24]"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

a. The picture here is of a slave and a slave-owner. To serve does not signify an occasional act of obedience, but a bondservant who constantly obeys. Men can work for two employers, but no slave can be the property of two masters. Single ownership and full-time service is the essence of slavery.

9. The simple lifestyle

a. Paul exhorted Timothy to embrace a simple lifestyle by being content with food and covering.

1 Tim. 6:8 *[8]…and having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*

b. We set our heart to be content with food and clothing and to live a simple lifestyle. Kingdom simplicity is not about lacking financially, but about giving extravagantly. We do not live on less because we have less, but because we give more. There is a great difference between a spirit of poverty and a spirit of generosity. Poverty is a curse and generosity is a godly virtue.

10. Receiving the Father's reward financially

Matt. 6:3-4 *[3]When you do a charitable deed… [4]your Father who sees in secret will…reward you openly.*

a. The Father openly rewards those who are charitable with their time and money. Charitable deeds refer to acts of servanthood and financial giving to serve people in God's will. The Father's rewards openly show us how He feels about the way we love Him.

b. The measure in which we act against fear and covetousness by operating in the opposite spirit (faith and generosity) determines some of the measure in which God intervenes in our finances. Love is not minimized by believing that God promises to give us more money. We are called to believe that He will provide us with a greater ability to give and thus love others more.

Luke 6:38 *[38]"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over…For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*

c. The Bible makes clear that prosperity is a blessing, and poverty is a curse. The definition of prosperity is *having enough money to meet our needs and enough to bless others and to invest in extending the work of the kingdom.* God gives "power to get wealth" to "establish His covenant," which includes the ability to bring more people into the benefits of covenant relationship with Him. He gives us wealth to promote the kingdom. The biblical paradigm of money includes seeing money as that which helps us to win souls, support mission and help the oppressed.

Deut. 8:18 *[18]It is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant…*

d. We need a biblical view of prosperity based on Jesus teaching in Matthew 6 within the context of the fasted lifestyle. There is much teaching in the church today that has misrepresented scripture in a way that can lead to an earthly view towards money rather than the kingdom perspective.

e. God desires that we prosper financially as we grow spiritually. He is looking for partners to be "vessels of supply" in His purposes. We refuse both the spirit of poverty and over indulgence.

3 John 2 *[2]I pray that you prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.*

f. Having financial abundance is God's blessing; it is also like swimming in shark-infested waters, and requires the Spirit's help to navigate it safely. Money can be compared to a sharp knife. In the hand of a skilled chef, it brings blessing, but in the hand of a child, it is dangerous.

g. God created us to love Him in four spheres of life—with our heart (affections), soul (personality), mind (thoughts), and strength (resources), because He loves us this way.

Mark 12:30 *30 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."*

h. God promises to supernaturally open the windows of heaven financially and to rebuke the devourer as His people obey Him with their money. This is the only time He calls us to test Him.

Mal. 3:10-11 *10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food [provision] in My house, and try Me now in this…if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. 11 I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground…*

i. Why does the Lord command His people to tithe?

   i Tithing declares that Jesus is ***Lord*** over all our money and our primary ***source*** of money. It forces us to trust His leadership over our finances and positions us to receive *financial power encounters* as He answers us in our giving.

   ii The storehouse was the central place to receive tithes under the leadership of those in the Lord's house (Neh. 13:5-12). Today, the storehouse speaks of the place you are "fed" spiritually—typically this speaks of one's local church, one's spiritual family.

   iii Tithing is the beginning not the ceiling of our giving and receiving from God.

j. God delights in opening the windows of heaven to release finances in response to our giving. The testimony of three poor young people (Joseph, David, and Esther) who prospered is meant to inspire our faith. You never know what God may do with a heart that desires to serve and give.

Matt.6:3-4 *3 But when you give to the needy, ……. your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*