

WE GAIN A NEW PERSPECTIVE WHEN WE GIVE**Proverbs 23:4-5; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-24****(Read Matthew 6:1-4, 19-24)**

INTRO: Have you ever regretted something you bought? Better yet, have you ever wished you'd never bought a certain thing that you thought was the "cat's meow" until you actually owned it?

You guessed it, I have. The most notable were cars. One we were driving when we moved from Ohio to Pennsylvania in '86 and the other was the van we drove as we moved back to Ohio from Pennsylvania in nineteen years later. The former was a Renault Alliance and the latter was a Kia Sedona. Both of them were "must haves" when we bought them, and both took us to the brink of financial ruin (and while that's a little exaggerated, it's really not too far off the mark). Yet both promised so much.

The Renault was a 1983, the year the Alliance was the MotorTrend Car of the Year. MotorTrend should have been ashamed of themselves. The car was a money pit! And to think I just had to have it, because we supposedly needed a 4-door car so Sheila's car seat would fit in it.

The Kia van was Kia's first attempt to make a van. Too bad they utterly failed in the process. Too bad Kathy and I didn't realize it was such a failure until we had sunk literally thousands into it. And we just had to have it because our perfectly good Jeep had varnish on the oil dipstick which is allegedly a sign of engine failure. Well, the only failure was me and it was because I was the dipstick that believed that fairytale. You bet I've regretted these and other purchases.

But do you know what I've never regretted? I've never regretted or wished back the money I send to Compassion International for two children in Ecuador who are now young adults and two little children in Kenya we presently support. We've never regretted dropping our offering in the plate at any church we have attended. We've never regretted the money we've given to Ashland Care Center, or Joy of Living, or any of the young people we have seen go into missions or ANYTHING I've given to any ministry. I never regret what I've given because it doesn't come back to haunt me like the lemons masquerading as reliable transportation I've owned. I never say I wish I hadn't given because I don't think that way about my giving to the Kingdom. And besides, as we've seen in this study WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE GIVE, we know that what we give is always an investment in the Kingdom and the return we receive is out of this world.

The world just doesn't understand that about Christ Followers. They think we're crazy, but we're the sane ones. We just see things through the eyes of God and because of that we see things completely differently than they do. For one thing, we know, as I say over, and over, and over again, that you cannot out-give God. We just see what God is up to as we invest in his work. We are living proof that we gain a new perspective when we give. Let's take some time and look it. First taking a quick look at the passage we heard from Proverbs a bit ago. It's important that our effort is spent in the right direction. The writer says . . .

Don't wear yourself out to get rich

- Anything we strive for in the area of earthly belongings is but a puff and they're gone. It's like anything on earth, including ourselves, it doesn't last forever.
- When I was young we had neighboring dairy farmer, whose barn burned. I remember that it was fast and furious – fed by the dry summer heat and tons of hay and straw. He replaced the barn with a newfangled construction concept – the new structure was aluminum which he filled with hay and straw and began milking his cows there as he had done in the old barn. It was not too long that the new barn burned to the ground as well. The fire was just as fast and furious and the aluminum melted. All his investment was gone in a terribly short time. The writer of Proverbs had no idea of what aluminum is, but he was spot-on when he wisely said, *Cast but a glance at riches and they are gone*. Proverbs 23:5a – the farmer never rebuilt. I was young and not privy to much information, but I think he left farming completely.
- Don't wear yourself out to get rich. Instead, what the people of God find is . . .

Treasure is found in emptying yourself

- We see this in the text I just read from the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, this part of Jesus's sermon could be truly seen as the Sermon on the Amount.
- Giving shows righteousness and as we'll see in a bit, it is not to be done for the accolades but because it is simply the right and godly thing to do. Instead of puffing one's self up, our fulfillment comes from sacrifice. As we empty ourselves, God cares for us as we care for others.

- The author of my little resource booklet writes, *“Using resources for a cause greater than us give us a perspective few other things will. A perspective we need. A perspective at odds with much of our world. It shouts that there is more to life than having and attaining. It whispers of the lasting value in selflessness, in forgoing, in doing without, and doing so with purpose.”*
- Jesus affirmed giving especially to the poor, but how you do it is important. And we find as we empty ourselves, we are filled. That’s why . . .

Giving is not for showoffs

- Jesus actually begins his teaching on this in verse one, *Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.* Matthew 6:1. The Jewish law from its very inception gave direction for what one was to bring and place in the offering plate. It was the expectation for a follower of God to be a giver. But over the centuries the practice had waxed and waned. Sometimes the gifts brought into the temple were extensive and others not some much. Kind of like today where the statistic is that American Christians give right at 2% of their income to the church.
- One way the religious leaders of the day promoted the bringing of offerings and caring for the poor was to make a big show of it. As rich people brought their offerings they came with fanfare. That’s why in the Luke 21 passage from a couple weeks ago, the rich people giving out of their abundance seemed to do so with acclaim, while the poor widow slipped up and dropped in all she had.
- But why do we do anything? Is it because its right or because others are watching? Jesus says the eternal reward goes to the one who gives in mercy and humility. Plain and simply, hypocritical giving is not becoming to a Christ Follower. Jesus calls for authenticity. Jesus used the word hypocrite intentionally because it denoted playacting. Jesus didn’t want fake benevolence, he wanted genuineness and integrity. He wants his followers to see the need and quietly care for it.
- In other words, he is saying, get your heart involved because . . .

Generosity comes naturally from a renewed heart

- That’s why the world doesn’t get Christ-like generosity. That’s why they scratch their heads when Christ Followers turn their backs on lucrative careers and go into ministry. (Tell about Doc Hunsberger being appalled that Morris would throw away his future by going into missions). Morris has never looked back. And God has prospered him. And Morris and Beth have in turn shared that prosperity with huge generosity.
- The world just doesn’t understand a changed heart. They don’t understand being sold out for Jesus. And even if they’ve heard it a thousand times and they know in their heart of hearts, they don’t seem to grasp the fact that you cannot take it with you.
- So, how is your heart? Ask yourself, is my first loyalty to stuff or to God? What do you love? Jesus tells we will serve one or the other and the truth is . . .

Spiritual allegiance is greater than Material Security

- Jesus points out in verse 19 we need to invest in heaven rather than earth. Stop storing up for yourself. (Illustration from Jim on storage units). American just have too much stuff. My friends in Kenya had everything they owned, clothing and table service in a hutch that was once a china closet. And they were happy. We have thousands of square space of storage and we need more..
- That’s why Jesus tells us to be single minded. Let’s not have double vision. We simply cannot serve God and stuff. We need a change in perspective.

Conclusion: A good way to summarize this talk is this quote from G. Campbell Morgan – it truly shows us the kind of perspective Christ Followers need. He writes, *“Let us make such a fortune that when at last we come home, we shall be greeted by the friends that we have helped to reach home. Let us rather have our fortune on the other side than on this.”*

As we pour into the lives of people who need Jesus, they become the true treasure Jesus is seeking. Get a new perspective, lay up the treasure that is eternal. Amen.