

CcUMC –*God’s Giving Guidelines* -- R.G. Loy

January 15, 2012 • I Cor. 16:1-4; Acts 5:1-11

THESIS: God really wants you to live!

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

Joyce and I have watched a movie several times, one of our favorites that has been out for several years, called *Second Hand Lions*. Haley Joel Osment is a kid with a troubled mom that cannot raise him. He goes to live with a couple of eccentric great uncles, Robert Duvall, and Michael Caine. These brothers had been around the world, amassed a fortune fighting a sheik of Arabia, and fought in several wars. Their exploits seemed far-fetched, but captured the imagination and heart of this young, impressionable boy. One of the lines in the movie is a write-me-down. The son of the sheik had been told of these grandiose battles and duals with these brothers. Later as a grown son he asks, “Did these two brothers really live?” And their nephew replies, “Oh yeah, they really lived.”

I’m here to tell you, God wants you to really live, not just exist.

I. GOD CARES ABOUT YOUR LIVING

- A. I have lots of books of sermons, sermon outlines, and illustrations. One talks about a preacher that had a 3-point sermon he called his annual stewardship sermonⁱ on the Ananias and Sapphira event in the early life of the Church that we read earlier. His points are:
1. It is more blessed to give than to buy.
 2. It is more blessed to give than to lie.
 3. It is more blessed to give than to die.
- B. This event caused many people to re-think church. Yes, the Christians were having great growth, personally and spiritually, everyone was excited and the Church was the newest, going thing! But, it suddenly became dangerous if a person could die for lying, for example.
- C. Your living is important to God, just as we discussed on Dec. 18th, when Beth Moore, an internationally know Bible teacher is told by God to brush a man's ratty hair in the Knoxville airport because of his need.

- D. God cared for the missionary couple who's infant had died, and he sends a native couple who give them their baby – “Here, this baby is for you!”
- E. With examples like these, how would we ever think that God is not concerned with how we live, how we talk, whether we ask Him for our needs to be met and if it is OK to lie to the Holy Spirit?
- F. God cares about the Church, and when you can be a means of blessing for others whom God cares about, their living, their needs. So here is Paul waxing eloquent about the end of time, the resurrection from the dead in I Cor. 15:51-58, for example (read it now). And then he does a Peter Faulk thingy, “Oh, by the way..” Paul says, I Cor 16:1 About the offering...

II. GOD CARES ABOUT OUR GIVING

- A. The Holy Spirit tells Paul how we are to give and with specific guidelines:
1. We are to give weekly (“on the first day of the week”).

2. Each of us is to give (put aside & save the extra resources for the collection)
 3. We give into the church treasury.
 4. That needs may be met (Jerusalem).
- B. Giving regularly for God's work is something we all need, not so we will get something out of it, but so that something will get out of us.
- If you cannot part with your money, your money is too much a part of you!
 - When you put your money to God's work, you are aligning your heart with God. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Some of you think little of God, of heaven or of your life after death. When you invest in God's kingdom, your heart will be more inclined there.

ILLUST. When I was a student pastor in Indiana, one of my regular visits was to the nursing home room of **Mrs. Alpha Baker**. She was crippled with arthritis, bent but beaming as she put her offering of \$5 dollars in my hand to put in the Sunday offering at the Church. She was my prayer warrior and an inspiration about giving.

- C. Now each of us can give something.
The tithe is just the beginning, but it is an equitable amount for every person. A tithe is just as hard for a poor man or a rich man to part with.
- D. We give the tithe to the church because that is the treasury that Paul was speaking of, NT equivalent to the OT Temple, God's place. The treasury is to be full so the needs of God's people will be met. After the tithe, you are free to give as you feel led. And there are many good, Christian organizations out there that help many people and do fine work. Joyce and I give regular support for the Martin Reeves missions in Peru, Shannon and Kelly serving overseas, and in a host of other ways. But God calls for our tithe to his Storehouse. And if Jesus felt the Church was worth dying for, it is certainly worth your tithe, your 10%.
- E. The needs that we meet through the Church tithes and offerings give glory

to God and no one else. When people come to the church it is a shame to God when we have to say, “there is no money for that,” or “we cannot help you.” His storehouse is to be full!

- F. The church leadership takes your giving very seriously. We ensure the money is counted by a team, accounted to each donor’s credit, and paid out for legitimate purposes and ministry. A committee holds our receipts and dispersing up to great scrutiny and an audit is made each year to ensure all that was received is handled carefully and used as it was intended.
- G. This past week a personal, itemized list of your gifts was sent to you if you identified your gift at all. Please review it for accuracy. Also enclosed was a letter thanking you for being a part of God’s ministry through the CcUMC. We are sincerely grateful for your trust and obedience to God’s Holy Spirit.

- H. About 20% of our membership made a pledge last year. To many who did not make a giving commitment last year, you were sent this week for your prayerful consideration, an invitation to make an estimate of giving for what God is asking you to give toward His ministry in 2012.
- I. We invite you, without embarrassment because we sincerely believe God wants to bless you. Yes, we truly believe we are blessed who bring the tithe into God's storehouse, spiritually, financially, physically and in every way. No, it is not magic or some superstition; but the promise of God. He says, "test me and see if I will not open the floodgates of heaven & pour down blessings on you."
- J. God cares about your giving because He wants to bless you. Until you are able to give, your spirit and life will remain blighted, unhealthy and poor. I talk about giving because I want God's richest blessings for you.

III. GOD'S GOAL IS OUR ETERNAL LIVING

A. One of you is saying, "Oh great! The one time I come this year and the preacher talks about money." I have two responses:

- You should have come more often
- You may be the one the Holy Spirit wanted to hear this.

B. Jesus was concerned about your possessions and your giving, so much so that 50% of his teachings addressed this real need in the life of a believer.

ILLUST. A missionary persuaded a London merchant of the great needs of his field. The merchant gave the missionary a check. In the morning the merchant learned that his business had suffered a heavy financial loss. Regretfully the missionary returned the check when the merchant requested it. Soon thereafter the missionary received a larger check. The merchant, who had torn up the first check, wrote: "God is teaching me that I must give while I can."¹

¹As found in A Treasury of Sermon Illustrations, Charles L. Wallis, ed., p. 132, #1036, Egbert W. Smith, *The Desire of All Nations*.

C. One of Jesus' most significant teachings on giving was the idea that you can take it with you. It is very much like another Haley Joel Osment movies, *Pay it Forward*. You have not seen a hearse pulling a u-haul trailer, but Jesus said, you can lay up treasures in heaven. These treasures will not be corroded by rust, mold or stock market crashes; but they can only be paid forward by believers. Every act of kindness in Jesus' name, each testimony or suffering in Jesus' name, and all your efforts to build the Kingdom of God (including your giving) is paid to your account. Is your trust account in God? Well, that's where your heart will be also.

ILLUST. In the Tate Gallery in London there is a famous painting by Watts entitled "*Sic Transit Gloria.*" It is just the body of a man stretched on a bier, with a robe thrown over it. As one looks at it he notices the little touches the artist has given it.

There is a half-open book. The man must have been a lover of literature. The lyre near by tells us he loved music and was charmed by it. The sword and ermine robe show us that he was a warrior and a statesman. The feather of a peacock hints at the lighter side of life, vanity and romance. On the edge of the canvas the artist has inscribed these words, letting the man tell us what he has learned too late: “What I spent I had; what I saved I lost; what I gave I have.”²

Amen.

BENEDICTION:

God wants you to really live, not be plagued with doubt or guilt. God wants to bless you with abundant life, here and in the hereafter. Go in peace, and give hereafter until it brings you joy. Amen.

¹ Introduction to a Jim Henry sermon, *God's Guidelines for Giving*, p. 150, [Southern Baptist Preaching Today](#) (Allen & Gregory)

² Ibid., p. 132, #1037, Frederick Keller Stamm, *The conversations of Jesus*.