

# The Giving That God Rewards

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**Bible Verse:** Matthew 6:2-4  
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Please turn to Matthew chapter 6. I'm going to read verses 1 through 4 and see what our Lord has to say to us about the matter of giving and charity in the Christian life and living a life in the presence of God that aims for his glory and his reward and not for the praise of man. Matthew 6, verses 1 through 4,

1 Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2 Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 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. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

To open this time, I think it's fitting for me to give an expression of thanks from the elders to the body of Truth Community Church, and this is historically true from the very beginning. The Lord has blessed our church with everything that we need in by the way of material resources, and you're welcome to talk to our church treasurer, Paul Spires, and to ask him any questions about the finances of our church. It's a blessing to minister amongst people who are so generous, and I'm grateful to God for that; it certainly makes ministry easier to be able to not have to worry about such things. There was, and I want to just, you know, we have a lot of new people here and I just want to share a little bit of church history, this time Truth Community church history, with you to help you understand a little bit about what happens here and why we do what we do. If you've been at our church at all, you know that we do not pass an offering plate. We don't take up a collection here. We simply have boxes outside where people can quietly drop in their giving week by week, or you can give online, whatever works for you, that's okay. But we made a decision from the very beginning that we were not going to pass a collection plate and there were reasons for that. Initially, when I said that I wanted that to be our policy, there was some consternation, you might say, and I say it, you know, in all love and sympathy with those that expressed it, and out of respect for them even. How is that going to work, was the question. How could it hurt? How could it not help to do that? Well, there were reasons why we did that from the beginning and we've never strayed from that. One reason was that when we started Truth Community Church twelve and a

half years ago, a lot of the people that were with us I knew were coming from churches that practiced a heavy-handed approach to their financial situation, and there was a lot of pressure to give, and giving campaigns, and building campaigns, and all of that, and as we started a new work, I wanted people to be free from that pressure. Even more importantly, was that I was confident that the Lord would provide for us apart from that. We didn't need to do that, and I wanted to lay out an approach that would show that the Lord would honor even financially, a ministry that didn't put finances at the center and every fourth message wasn't a message on giving and tithing and getting browbeaten with emails and appeals for money and all of that. And the Lord has done that and I trust him to continue to do that, but even if he doesn't, it's still going to be our policy to de-emphasize that.

Thirdly, there was one other thing that was kind of in the back of my mind, I guess, at the time, is that I wanted to make it plain to everyone, to absolutely everyone that ever came under the sound of our ministry, that we were not after their money. No one at Truth Community Church has ever been asked to give anything by the elders, with the possible exception of the way that we make available opportunity to give to our friends in Mexico, in special recurring opportunities, and we take and we give money there, and we make an opportunity available to that. Otherwise, we say nothing about it. And I like it that way. And I like the fact that when people leave our church, that no one could ever say, no one could ever honestly say, sometimes honesty doesn't restrain the conversation too much, no one could ever honestly say that, "You know, they were just after my money." No one can honestly say that who's been at Truth Community Church at all.

And so there's a long history of that and just to be clear, I have lots of friends in ministry. They pass a plate. I don't care about that. I'm not criticizing them. They can do that. There's nothing wrong with doing that. We just choose to do it differently and the Lord has honored that, and it informs the spirit of our church, and it informs the spirit in which we approach this passage in Matthew. And so that kind of sets an introduction for the things that I have to say here today. Christ is teaching us about a righteous life, how to please God and not men and he's illustrating the point that one of the central responsibilities that you have as a believer in Christ is to rid yourself of all aspects of hypocrisy, of doing things just to be noticed by men. Christ lays forth for us in the New Testament, he laid forth, set forth for us in his own life an example of humility, not calling attention to yourself. He could have really called attention to himself with, you know, making, displaying signs in the heavens. He didn't do that. It wasn't his point to come and to entertain people with signs. He came to redeem souls through the shedding of his blood and the occasional miracles that he did were simply an attestation that he was who he claimed to be. But beloved, the point of the Christian life is not to call attention to yourself. The point is to simply be a godly person, to be holy as God himself is holy, without calling attention to yourself one way or the other. To just live life in the simplicity of sincerity before the Savior, the simplicity of sincerity before the Savior, and let the consequences of that be whatever they may be, simply content to live under the eye of God, under the protecting hand of God, having him guide you step by step, and being content to do that whether anyone notices or not. And that's the point that Jesus is teaching, as we've seen so many times already, as he goes through giving, prayer, and

fasting. He says, "Do it in secret so that your Father who is in heaven will reward you." Three or four times in different ways, he says, "Don't do this to be seen by men. Don't do this to be seen by men. Don't do this to be seen and noticed by men."

And so he comes now and he opens with this first illustration and he talks about the matter of giving there in verses 2 through 4. "When you give to the needy," look at verse 2, "sound no trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and the streets, that they may be praised by others." Notice that he calls on his hearers to recognize hypocrisy, to make a spiritual judgment about what they see going on in the religious realm around them, to judge that rightly, to say this is a matter of hypocrisy and play-acting, and then to make an act of volitional choice that I will separate myself from that, I will not be like that, I will live in a different way. And as you go through the New Testament teaching on giving, and we're going to talk about it, Christ talks about it in terms of giving to the needy, but it would also apply equally well to giving to the church and giving to the support of spiritual ministry, let's say, and I just want to call your attention to a couple of passages in Scripture that talk about how giving is to be a regular aspect of faithful Christian living. It is to be a regular aspect of faithful Christian living.

Now, I want to say clearly and up front that I have no idea, I have never looked at giving records at Truth Community Church in twelve and a half years, and I have no plan ever to do that. I know what Nancy and I give. I have no idea what anyone else gives. So it's impossible for me to be targeting anybody with the things that I'm saying in this message, because it's not about that at all. It's not about any individual. These are about principles. We're speaking at a higher level than simply trying to get our hand in your wallet. We're not trying to get our hand in your wallet. If we were we'd pass plates and make heavy appeals. We don't do that. That said, Scripture places a biblical responsibility of giving upon Christians and what I was going to say is that, in a general way, I didn't know anything about particular giving at that other place that I was in in California for 20 years, but as an elder, I was aware of the fact that there was a preponderance of people, it may have been even as high as 60% or more. I can't remember the exact figure. I should have verified that before I stepped up here today. But at that fine ecclesiastical institution, renowned throughout the world for the ministry of its pastor, the substantial majority or the substantial plurality of people did not give at all. Zero throughout the year. And it was a sign of inconsistency between what was taught from the pulpit and what body life is supposed to be like and what the reality was. It would not surprise me, because people are alike in all regions of the world, you know, and in certain matters, it would not surprise me at all to find out, I have no idea, but it would not surprise me at all to find out that a similar situation prevailed at Truth Community Church. The people with the means to do so do not contribute to the ministry from which they benefit. There are some who are in financial straits and impoverished circumstances, and we would never place something on their conscience under those kinds of circumstances that people endure. But those that have some means or any means at all should be seriously considering what the Lord has to say. And it's not about amounts. It's not about amounts at all. It's about a principle of willingness to give that Scripture teaches us. Remember that the Lord commended the widow who put in two copper coins and said that she had given more than all of those who had dumped big resources in that they were never going to miss in the first place. He

says, she gave more than all of them. She put in all that she had to live on. And so it's not about amounts. It's not about pressure or anything like that but there is, beloved, a principle in the New Testament that says that those who receive benefit from a ministry should materially support the ministry that they benefit from.

So let me just bring a couple of verses to bear on your mind in that regard, and if you've kept your wallet in your pocket, understand that the Lord is coming to bring something to your attention because your wallet expresses your priorities and expresses where your heart is, your checkbook does, your QuickBooks accounts, whatever you use. The Bible calls us to give as Christians. It is an intrinsic part of ongoing worship that Christians give. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16, verse 2, "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that no collecting may happen when I come." Every week, the church was supposed to be putting aside, and each one in the church was supposed to be setting something aside as a part of their act of responsibility, their act of worship before God, the life of worship that they led.

Paul goes on in Romans 15, verse 27, and he makes this point, and listen to me really carefully, beloved. You know, we're just not at liberty to ignore what Scripture says about things that we find unpleasant or things that impact us. That's not the way Christianity works. We don't get to pick and choose things. I like this, I like this, and I'm going to ignore everything else, and I'm going to pretend to be a Christian under those pretenses. No, when you become a Christian, you come under the authority of Jesus Christ. When you become a Christian, you come under the authority of the revealed word of God, the 66 books of the Bible. You come under the authority of what Scripture teaches, and you are obligated by gratitude to Christ and by divine authority, you are obligated to respond to every principle that applies. This is not to earn your salvation, but the fruit of true conversion is a life of growing obedience to the Lord who saved you and being conformed to his image. One of those principles that is revealed that is of great practical consequence is this, that those who receive spiritual benefit from a ministry should support that ministry with their resources. It shouldn't be take, take, take without some response of giving in return. Romans 15 verse 27, Paul says, "if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings." If you've received spiritual blessing, you ought to be of service to those who have helped you in material blessings and that is a New Testament principle.

Now, with that said, Contrary to what some high-pressure, especially Southern Baptist, pulpits like to say, New Testament giving is not according to a compulsory 10% tithe. That is not New Testament giving. That distorts an Old Testament principle that was used to support the operation of the nation Israel. It confuses that Old Testament principle with what the New Testament says with today's church. And everything that you would rightly think about giving flows from a starting point of what you think and how you esteem the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Let me say that again. Everything that you think about giving flows from your estimation, your opinion, the value you place upon Jesus Christ himself. Because what did Christ do? At a most fundamental level, he gave himself for us. He didn't just give outward material blessings, he gave himself for the people of God. He

spilled his blood for the people of God. He gave of himself wholly and completely to secure our redemption, to take our sins upon his body on the cross, to carry them into the grave and come out alive in the resurrection, having buried our sins in his death, suffering the wrath of God on our behalf, and by his grace and glory and infinite generosity, spilling himself, as it were, all over our sins in order that we might be reconciled to a holy God. What you think about that determines the way that you think about how you give of yourself and your resources.

Beloved, we give to the ministries, and let me just restrict it to the local church here, because parachurch stuff is a different matter altogether and I don't want you to confuse what I'm saying about local church and biblical giving with parachurch stuff, one way or the other. The way that we think about giving within the local church is determined by what we think about Christ. If Christ gave himself for us and he's appointed his local church to be the instrument through which his gospel is spread and people become disciples and grow in the grace and knowledge of him, then there's a natural response of a believing, obedient heart that says, "I want to support that from which I benefit, that which Christ appointed, that which is in keeping with New Testament principles." And then, with joy and with generosity, we give in material ways. You think like this. You think like this, "I have received infinitely more from Christ than I could ever give in response, but he was so generous on my behalf that I want to respond with like generosity to the things that he has appointed in his word. I want to do that. I find joy in doing that according to the means that I have." And so then with joy and with generosity, we give in material ways.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 8. 2 Corinthians 8 and as you're turning there, you know, being a Christian, being a part of a local body of believers, it's not like going to one of those cheap buffet places where you've got all kinds of food laid out before you and you stuff yourself till you're sick but you just take and choose what you want and pass over the other things. That's not the heart of a true disciple at all. The heart of a true disciple says, "I've been so blessed and Christ gave his all that I want to give my all. I want to respond from the fullness of my heart."

And so in 2 Corinthians 8, we see this and we see the way the Lord instructs us about giving. The Apostle Paul says, "We want you to know, brothers," verse 1, "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means," watch this, "of their own accord." Out of their own heart, they wanted to give beyond the means that they had. Verse 4, "begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-- and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." That, beloved, that passage has embedded in it the principle of New Testament giving. Notice that Paul doesn't commend them, that they gave a strict 10% tithe of it all, you could go through the motions of that, and I'm confident that some people do, go through the motions of that with no heart of surrender, faith, submission, obedience to the Lord at all. You just write the check, drop it in the plate, and

everything's done. "Got that taken care of." That's not the New Testament pattern at all. These people first gave themselves to Christ. They presented themselves to the Lord, asking for forgiveness, receiving him for a full salvation, free, and giving him their heart in repentance, pledging to him a willingness to obey. They presented themselves first to the Lord in the fullness of their heart, and the heart is what Jesus is teaching us in Matthew to begin with. Perfect consistency with the Lord, with the word of God, I should say. And then, and only then, only after they had done that, once that was established in their hearts and lives, then it was a free and obvious thing for them to give generously as the needs of the people of God required.

That's the pattern. You give yourself to the Lord, and then you respond, and it flows. It's not an external matter. It's not a grudging thing. Oh, got to write that 10% check here today and then try to fend off the pastor as he browbeats me from the pulpit, yet again, wanting me to give even more." No wonder people hate churches like that or take a very superficial approach to involvement with it and pretend and make themselves hypocrites. But that's not the New Testament pattern at all. From the heart, these impoverished believers wanted to give, and they did and Paul commends them for it.

Look over at chapter 9, verse 6, "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart." There's no external compulsion. You're free to choose the way that you want to approach these things. There's no one lording it over you, and I've heard of places which it's just incomprehensible to me, people that actually, you know, church leaders that actually demand to see checkbooks and to give strict account and to get involved in the most intimate financial details of people's lives in order to verify the giving that they're doing. All of that under compulsion. That's not the spirit of it all. Not under compulsion but with a prior work of the Lord going on in the heart, there's a glad willingness to do these things and so each one develops an approach according to his means.

And so, beloved, the overall principle that informs New Testament giving is this. We give thanks to God for our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself up for us. We present ourselves to him in the fullness of our being, heart, soul, and mind. We present ourselves to him for worship and obedience sake. And we're filled with gratitude and worship as we recognize more and more what Christ did to reconcile ourselves to a holy God. And from that spiritual position, then we support the biblical work of the church. We support spiritual ministry. Beloved, hear me on this: it is an act of willing worship of willing, obedient worship, not a matter of obligation or restraint or compulsion against your will. If you're unwilling and unwilling to give and you're hard-hearted in that, you know, I'm not trying to pry a \$5 bill out of your wallet in what I'm saying here, if that's the spirit of your heart, I'd call you to go back and consider whether you're even a Christian or not, because a Christian doesn't have that selfish, keeping, clenching way about the things that he has that the Lord has given to him; having received such generosity, his heart is carried away in the tide of the greatness of the love and kindness of Christ and can do nothing else but to seek to live in that same spirit himself.

All of that perspective informs what we see in Matthew 6 and in the time remaining, we're going to see how Christ contrasts the wrong and the right way to give. There's a contrast in what Jesus teaches us here in Matthew 6. So turn back there with me. Giving is an act of worship, then, from the deepest part of our heart and when you realize that, then you realize that trying to call attention to yourself as you do that, wanting praise and congratulations from others, it's abhorrent to think that that would have any part in it. And I'll say this one more time. I've already mentioned this two or three times, but I just think it's necessary to use the battering ram against the walls of Jericho on this point until that wall falls down. It's appalling to me that there would be places of so-called Christian ministry that have walls that list out the various levels of donors that they have, and people's nameplates are there. On both sides of that equation should be demanding for that wall to come down. They should stand like Reagan did at the Berlin Wall and said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" The people in leadership should be appalled that they're violating such a clear principle of Christ in what's there. The donor who has his nameplate up at the lifetime member or the patriot level or whatever kind of manipulative labels they put on it, the donor should be saying, "I don't want anything to do with that. Take my name down. This is in complete violation of what the Lord does to put on public display the giving that supports this ministry." That's reprehensible. It's reprehensible because it is in direct violation of what the Lord says right here in this passage and if we're serving the Lord, if we're giving to please the Lord, then we ought to want to do it in the way that the Lord commands.

And he makes it plain here, the wrong way to give, point number one, look at verse 2. So this is point number one, the wrong way to give. We're looking at verse 2 now. "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward." Jesus says, don't sound the trumpet before you. I shouldn't have done that when there are trumpet players in the room. Yeah, you don't do that. Some people think that the idea of trumpet here is simply metaphorical in the idea that he blows his own horn. He calls attention to it, and so he calls attention verbally to it, and he's blowing his own trumpet that way. Others think that the trumpet refers to the sense of there would be a blowing of trumpets to call worshipers to the temple, and people would give at that time. And still others think that Jesus was referring to the trumpet-shaped receptacles that were used to receive the contributions of worshipers. So you'd put in your coins and it would rattle and there'd be a sound from the trumpet, so to speak. It would make quite the noise and sound the trumpet that giving had taken place. I don't know. I don't know the exact thing that was in the mind of Jesus when he said this, but the import of what he's saying is entirely clear. What was being done was calling attention to their generosity, "Look at me. Look at what I'm doing." And what Jesus does is he condemns the self-promotion at the heart of it.

These people weren't giving at all in the sense that we were talking about from other places in the New Testament as an act of worship in a grateful response to the God of their salvation. That's not that at all. All they were doing was buying, they were purchasing recognition from men. "Look at what I'm doing." "Oh wow, look at you!"

"Yes, look at me." They weren't giving. It wasn't worship. It's not the spirit of giving that the Lord requires at all. Jesus calls us away from that wrong approach to giving. It's the wrong way to give to see what kind of, you know, what kind of congratulations you can get. Let's look at the right way to give that Jesus lays forth for us here in our second point here this morning. The right way to give, and things like this, you know, look, the Sermon on the Mount is the opening extended discourse of Jesus' teaching in the gospel of Matthew and these words, which were preached on one occasion, contrary to what many commentators will tell you, these words come from the omniscient mind of God, the all-knowing mind of Christ. You remember, Peter said in John 21, when Jesus said, "Peter, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?" Third time, Peter said, "Lord, you know all things. You know I love you. Lord, you can look in my heart and you know that I love you, even though the outward testimony of my life in recent days would seem to contradict it. Lord, you know that I love you." He was appealing to the omniscience of Christ to look into his heart and to see what was true. Well, the Sermon on the Mount comes from that very mind of Christ who can look into our hearts and see what is true. Christ is cultivating the heart of a true worshiper. He is calling forth the fruit of true repentance in the hearts of those who would follow him and belong to him. And so what Jesus says here is addressed to the heart and what he does in contrast to the things, to the walls that need to be torn down in so many places, Jesus calls us to hide our giving from those who would observe us. He calls us to hide it, not to display it,

Look at verse 3, and just to emphasize the point in verse 2, he says, "when you give in that wrong way," he says there at the end of verse 2, he says, "they've received their reward." They're not going to have any reward from God because all they wanted was the praise of men. You wanted the praise of men. You got the praise of men. Transaction's over. There's nothing left to receive from God. The true believer would be horrified, mortified at such a thought, saying, "No, no, no. No, I want reward from God, not from men. My heart is for him, not for those around me. And so, Jesus, teach me what it is that I should do with my giving so that I have reward from God, that I respond rightly to your gift of salvation, and at the bottom of all of it, that I would simply please the one who gave his life and love for my soul. Lord, teach me what that looks like and help me to do it." That's exactly what Jesus does. He's instructing our hearts here against hypocrisy and showing us how to live in a life that gives no room, how to put hypocrisy to death in our heart.

So he says there in verse 3, he says, "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing and in a sense, that's kind of impossible, right? I mean, our hands are right beside each other. Obviously, one hand, metaphorically seeing, sees what the other hand is doing, but Jesus says that's exactly what you want to focus on and to make sure isn't happening. His point is this: give in a way that you're not dwelling on it. Don't keep mental records of your good deeds and say, "Oh, I did a good deed," and congratulate yourself in your heart for how generous you were to the person that you gave to or to the church that you gave to. And it comes back to Christ on the cross once again, beloved. To cultivate a sense of pride about the giving that you do is totally inconsistent with a right estimation of Christ and the cross. Totally inconsistent with a right estimation of Christ

on the cross, because, beloved, your earthly, temporal giving could never match the heavenly, eternal gift that Christ gave to you when he poured out his blood on the cross. There's no comparison. Don't boast of little things in the presence of the great thing by the great one who purchased a great salvation for your eternal soul. There's no place for boasting at the foot of the cross on anything. And so what Jesus is saying here is don't dwell on it. Give and move on. Do it and move on to the next thing. Don't congratulate yourself. That's the idea of keeping your left hand from knowing what the right hand was doing.

That's the negative side of it. He then sets forth the true motive that God will bless in verse 4. Look at it here in verse 4. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Don't dwell on it. Verse 4, "so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." You see, when you give in secret, when you act quietly without calling attention to it, you give no occasion for men to congratulate you and praise you for it. That means that they can't feed your pride because men can't honor or praise what they don't see. And so I'm very grateful for whoever does it; only once in a great while do I see people going up and just quietly dropping something into the box outside the door there. It's deliberately positioned things like that so it can be done in an unpretentious way. Beloved, what matters, what matters, who matters is Christ. The gift that matters is his to us. Anything that would call attention to ourselves in light of what he has done is repugnant to the regenerate mind. To put that in more simple English: we don't want to call attention to ourselves at the expense of the glory of Christ. We love him too much. We want him too much. We honor him too much to want to put ourselves on display in the midst of it. And so give in a way, Jesus says, that doesn't allow for that.

Now, let me address a couple of questions that come up. In times past, I've been careful to point out that what Scripture teaches about giving does not obligate us to give to every beggar on the street. Scripture says, "If a man doesn't work, neither let him eat." And so we shouldn't just automatically give to everybody who asks without any context, without knowing or anything like that. That's not it. Furthermore, and I could see where overly scrupulous people might try to over-interpret and over-apply this passage, this teaching does not forbid tracking your giving for tax purposes, and it's very easy to show that that would not be the case. What Jesus is saying is don't do your giving so that men will praise and congratulate you and you can feed your pride that way. Well, let me make a promise to you that I think I can keep. The Internal Revenue Service of the United States government is not going to come back and tell you that you are really swell for all of the giving that you did in a charitable way in the most recent tax year. They're not going to do that. They couldn't care less. They're going to crunch the numbers and then move on and they might audit you in the process for other things, but they're not going to praise you for your charitable giving. That's not the point. And so to track your giving for tax purposes has nothing to do with what Jesus is talking about here, because he is addressing the inner sin of hypocrisy and wanting the praise of men and the Internal Revenue Service isn't going to praise you for anything. There's an organization that says, give, give, give, right? Not at Truth Community Church.

What's the result of that kind of giving? What's the outcome of it that Christ lays before us? Verse 4, he says, "let your giving be in secret. And," combined with this is this promise from God, "And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." In other words, the principle, let me just step back for a moment, without using the word, the principle of God's omniscience is woven throughout these first 18 verses of Matthew 6. Your Father who sees in secret will reward you. He'll reward you. He sees in secret, he'll reward you. The theological doctrine, the attribute of God that is invoked here is the perfect omniscience of God. He knows everything that happens in the realm of his creation. He knows the inner secrets of the heart. He observes the outward actions of men. He who made the eye sees. He who made the ear hears. He who made the tongue speaks. And on it goes. God knows, and so as we intentionally practice this grateful, secret giving, we can do so with the assurance and the confidence that God sees and that God will honor that as he sees fit in his time, and in that we find our contentment; we find our contentment in the revealed pleasure of God rather than the passing fickle praise of men.

When it's laid out like that, it's easy to make the proper choice. Now Jesus uses the future tense, "your Father will reward you." He doesn't place a timeframe on this. He doesn't discuss when the reward will be given. Certainly there'll be reward in your life now here on earth as you grow spiritually, as you live in obedience to the teaching of the word of God. Sometimes, not always, sometimes God supernaturally blesses those who have generous hearts. And God, in observation, I'm not making a biblical statement here, but just in observation of a number of men over a number of decades, God has a way of blessing materially those who know how to be generous with it. It's pretty remarkable to see that in operation and the more they give, the more God blesses. Doesn't happen for everyone. Not a promise of the word. But they get some of their reward here in this life that way. But for all of us, the more important reward is the lasting reward, the eternal reward, because, you know, we can't take anything to the grave with us.

Look over at Matthew 10, verse 42. Jesus hints at a future reward that the giving to the needy, that the New Testament generosity will bring forth in that final day when we stand before him and give an account of our lives and he rewards us according to the pattern of our life. And Jesus says in verse 42, again, you see the underlying principle of the omniscience of God underlying this, that he sees all and he forgets nothing. Verse 42, Jesus says, "whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water," the liquid equivalent of two copper coins in the temple treasury, "whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward." Beloved, God knows all and he sees all, and he's faithful, and he honors us and he blesses us when we obey him. He honors even the smallest service done in the name of Christ, saying, "he who is faithful in a little will be faithful in much."

So let me encourage you to forget about men and rules, unhook your boat from the anchor of the 10% compulsory tithe and look to Christ as you give. Let his love inform your approach. Let his love, his generous love inform your generosity. Let his promise of reward be sufficient for what you do now and store up, as it were, treasures in heaven as you handle the treasures he's given to you here on earth. And beloved, I promise you, and on this, I don't need to worry about my promise not being kept, I promise you that the

smallest reward from God in heaven will infinitely exceed any kind of praise or little cheap plaque on a wall among men could do for you. Give in secret and your Father who's in secret will reward you.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank you for the gracious, generous Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, how he loved us and gave himself up for us, not in limited measure, but he gave himself without measure as he came to earth and laid down his life. And then Lord, when you saved us, you gave us the Holy Spirit without measure, you gave to every believer the fullness of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and you promise an endless, infinite duration and beyond time even, reward in heaven as we are with you and see you and praise you throughout all of eternity, singing the song of the Lamb redeemed by the blood of the lamb. O dear God, how good, how gracious, how generous you have been to us and we pause and step back from the world and step back from the cares and concerns of our lives, and we recognize that, dear Lord, and we thank you for it. We recognize your supreme generosity and ask you to work in our hearts by your Holy Spirit through your word to turn us into the right kind of generous people, not grudgingly, not under compulsion, not by rules, but with a heart transformed by grace, gladly being generous after having received such generous grace from your righteous right hand. We love you. We praise you. We seek to serve you, and we present ourselves to you here as we close our service. In Jesus' name, amen.*

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