



November Sermon Series: Live to Give

Message #1: The Good Life

Getting the Nod:

Opening Video: **Our Generous God**

Our sermon series for November is “Live to Give”. (Book of the Month) This series is about being a people who live to give. The world around us is constantly bombarding us with messages of self-fulfillment. We are told to find ourselves and do whatever makes us happy. But that message is completely opposite of how Jesus lived and taught. In fact, Jesus gave everything—his very life—so that we can find peace, fulfillment, purpose, and meaning in a relationship with the God of the universe. Because Jesus gave so that we may live, we now give to Him and others. As Jesus followers, and as His church, we are to live in the same manner as our savior—a life of irrational generosity.

Socrates said, “Not life... but a good life, is to be chiefly valued!” Are you living the GOOD LIFE? If you aren't... I know you wish you were! The problem with my question is that people define the good life differently. **And consider this... what's the alternative? A pointless, guilt-ridden, miserable life?**

Obviously, we all would choose the GOOD LIFE, yet we often don't understand how to make it happen and what it looks like! In a recent online search I found that THE GOOD LIFE consists of five things...

The Cultural Definition of the Good Life:

- 1. Happiness.** Definition: That which results from possessing what one calls good. In other words, happiness is wrapped up in what we call good. **So, the online search goes on to define for us what OUR GOOD LIFE IS...**
- 2. Accumulation.** Definition: The act or process of collecting for the purpose of increasing one's value. **So, the good life is all about collecting stuff that makes us feel more valuable. He who dies with the most stuff wins!!!** And the next thing that culture tells us is an ingredient to the good life is...
- 3. Respect.** Definition: The state of being honored or esteemed by others. **Again, the GOOD LIFE is living in such a way that we are thought of positively by others. The GOOD LIFE is a form of popularity with others.** The good life in culture is the presence of...
- 4. Excitement.** Definition: The emotional state of being excited because of people or things that stimulate or thrill us. **So, the GOOD LIFE is influenced by those people or things that we have surrounded ourselves with to increase the thrill factor in our lives. The GOOD LIFE then is fueled by things and people outside of us... not that which is inside of us.** Lastly...
- 5. By comparison, better off.** Definition: the GOOD LIFE is seeing ourselves better off than others. **The GOOD LIFE ends up being a comparison game where we categorize those worse than us as the reason for our sense of goodness.**

Illustration of the Two Hungry Robins: Two robins were sitting in a tree. One of the robins turned to his buddy and announced that he was hungry. The other robin said that he was hungry

too, so they flew down to find some lunch. **As they came down, they saw an entire field full of worms.** They ate and ate until they could eat no more. "I'm so full I don't think I can fly back up to the tree," said the first robin. The second one agreed so they just plopped down and basked in the sun. No sooner had they fallen asleep than a big fat tomcat snuck up and gobbled them both up. As he sat washing his face after his meal, he grinned, "I love baskin' robins." **The moral of this story is this:** If we truly believe that those five things are the answer to a good life... then we're just basking through life... to someday be startled to what they bring us. **There's a story in Luke 12...**

The Story of the Rich Farmer: NLT | Lk 12:16-20 Then he told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. 17 He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' 18 Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. 19 And I'll sit back and say to myself, 'My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!'" 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?'"

Thoughts on Luke 12 and the Farmer:

- Jesus didn't accuse this rich farmer of dishonesty or injustice or corruption.
- For all we know, he may have attended the Synagogue faithfully.
- And for most of us, we would say that farmer was living the GOOD LIFE!
- So, why did God call him a fool? Why did God react so firmly to this man's life?
- The answer to the parable is this... Jesus is applying the rich farmer's experience to that of others who will live to lay up treasures for themselves and not be rich toward God.

Transitional Statement: We live in a world that screams "Seek those five things and you will be happy!" **There's just one problem with that statement... it's a lie.**

Connecting Us:

Let's read some scripture to support what I just said,

The Message | Ecclesiastes 8:12 **Even though a person sins and gets by with it hundreds of times throughout a long life, I'm still convinced that the good life is reserved for the person who fears God, who lives reverently in his presence... According to this verse, the good life is found in living for God and His presence!!!**

NLT | Jn 10:10 **The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. This verse tells us that the enemy of our soul will steal, kill and destroy us... but God's purpose is to give us the good life.**

The Message | Ac 20:35 **In everything I've done, I have demonstrated to you how necessary it is to work on behalf of the weak and not exploit them. You'll not likely go wrong here if you keep remembering that our Master said, 'You're far happier giving than getting.'" Paul is saying that generosity is directly connected to a happy life... a GOOD LIFE.**

The rich fool stored up treasures for himself as if he were the center of the universe. In the world's eyes, the rich farmer was a great success. In our day... he would be admired... but in the end, all his success meant nothing. Jesus used the story as a warning label to keep us from living for the temporary instead of the eternal.

Illustration of Crazy Warning Labels: Most products we purchase have labels warning about improper use. I found a great list of these kinds of warnings. Believe it or not, these are all real.

- Found on a snow sled: "Beware: sled may develop high speed under certain snowy conditions."
- Found on a fishing lure: 'Harmful if swallowed.'
- Found on an electric saw: "This product not intended for use as a dental drill."
- Found on a baby stroller: "Remove child before folding"
- Found on underarm deodorant: "Do not spray in eyes"
- Found on a cartridge for a laser printer: "Do not eat toner"
- Found on a car windshield sunshield: "Do not drive with sunshield in place"

Who would fail to heed such warnings? Greater yet... who would intentionally step over the Bible to pursue the GOOD LIFE?

A BIBLICAL DISCLAIMER: God's version of a GOOD LIFE doesn't exclude wealth or pleasures. In fact, God's GOOD LIFE says yes to greater and lasting wealth and pleasures and respect... they are found when we cheerfully partner with God for His Glory and Honor!!

Transitional Statement: Here's a past reminder for us all... God is in the business of blessing our business when we make it His business!! And His business is the business of GENEROSITY!!

God's Take on Generosity:

NKJV | Jn 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Jesus calls Himself LIFE to prove He is the Ultimate Giver:

- He is the Bread of Life... so He gives to feed our souls.
- He is the Light of the World... He gives us clarity about the world and exposes the darkness.
- He is the Resurrection and the Life... so He gives us hope for eternity.
- He is the Way, Truth, and Life... so He gives us a map to heaven; an understanding of what is real truth; and He is the Source of the GOOD LIFE!!

Caesar Augustus boasted that he found Rome as a city of bricks... but he left it a city of marble.

Transitional Statement: Jesus GENEROUSLY came to this world of sin and depravity... lived a compelling and supernatural life... died on the cross for our sin to break the curse... and rose from the dead to set us eternally free... and gave us His Holy Spirit to get us safely through this battle ground!! He came to leave this world a better place!!! We too, are called to leave this world a better place because of our generosity.

Our Response to God's Word:

So, what does a GOOD LIFE look like?

The Good Life According to Scripture

1. Those who have found the Author of life.

- NLT | 1 Jn 5:12 **Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.**
- **"Life"** in this verse is the Greek word **"Zoe"** and can be translated "The absolute fullness of living." **God's version of life is fullness and filled with hope.**
- **St. Augustine** once said, "God is always trying to give good things to us, but our hands are too full to receive them."

2. Those who have the treasure that no man can steal.

- NLT | Jn 7:38 **Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'**
- "Anyone who believes..." comes from a word that means **"Someone who has an inner prerogative and law of the soul."** In other words, those who have trusted their lives to Christ will find life flowing out of their hearts.
- **Illustration of grandfather's well.**

3. Those who have learned the return on generosity.

- NKJV | Proverbs 19:17 **He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.**
- The Hebrew word for **"payback"** here is better translated **"Reward". Generosity... according to scripture... will bring heavenly rewards.**

4. Those who have unlocked the power of love.

- NLT | Mt 25:40 **"And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'"**
- Jesus is saying that when we are generous to the needs around us... it will be like we gave the money directly to Jesus... which is an act of love. If we love Him... generosity will close by!!!

Transitional Statement:

Drawing the Net:

Illustration of Saved by the Weight of Another: : Some years ago, there was a small tribe of Native Americans who lived in the state of Mississippi. They lived along the banks of a very swift and dangerous river. The current was so strong that if somebody accidentally fell in, they would likely be swept away to their death downstream. One day this tribe was attacked by another hostile Indian tribe. They found themselves literally with their backs up against the treacherous river. The only way out was to cross the current, which would mean sure death for the children, the elderly, the weak, and the ill and the injured... and likely death for many of the strong.

The leaders of the tribe huddled up to devise a plan. The logical thing, the reasonable thing, the expedient thing, the sensible thing was to leave the weak ones behind. They were going to be killed anyway... why risk losing the strong in a futile effort to save the others? That was the rational answer but they couldn't do it! Instead, **they chose to be extravagant in their generosity...** and they decided that **those who were strong would pick up the weaker ones and put them on their shoulders.** So, the little children, the elderly, those who were ill or wounded, were all carried on the backs of the stronger. With great fear, they waded out into the rapid waters of the river and they

were met with a great surprise. **To their astonishment, they discovered that the weight on their shoulders enabled them to keep their footing through the treacherous current... and to make it safely to the other side.** Their own extravagant generosity saved them. What they did was not the reasonable thing to do, but it was the right thing to do.

People of God... in our generosity we will find our blessings!!! And in our generosity of giving... we can fulfill the calling of God on our lives.

Final Video: We Give