

“The Gift of Giving”

Romans 12:1-8; Mark 14:1-9

This morning we continue on in our study called “Gifted to Serve”. Throughout this study we have been looking to God’s Word to find out specifically how we have been equipped to serve the Lord in the church. We don’t just attend a church. We aren’t just a part of a church. We have been placed in the Church and have been gifted uniquely with spiritual gifts so that we might serve the Lord and edify the church. The Bible makes it clear that every believer has been given at least one spiritual gift to build up the Body of Christ. Spiritual gifts are defined as “spiritual abilities and skills given to every Christian by the Holy Spirit, so that believers are edified and the church is equipped to function effectively for the glory of God.” These gifts are distributed at the moment of salvation. The very moment you confessed Jesus to be Lord and Savior, you were instantly sealed by the Holy Spirit and adopted into God’s family, and you were also equipped with a gift that is to be used for the common good of His family, the Church. So, if you are a Christian, I ask you today, “What is your gift? Have you discovered it? Are you growing in it? Are you using it for the glory of God and for the good of others?” For Crosslink Community Church to be what God wants it to be, we must commit together to identify our gifts, grow in them, and put them to work for the glory of God. **John MacArthur** summarized it perfectly, “No congregation will be what it could be, what Jesus prayed that it should be, what the Holy Spirit gifted it and empowered it to be, until it understands and employs spiritual gifts.”

For our study we are focusing specifically on the “Motivational Gifts” listed in Romans 12:6-8. These gifts are described in this way because the purpose of each one is to motivate each of us to be a part of the work of God. To be clear, these gifts can certainly be used in many different areas of our life – at home, work, in the community, etc. However, the primary purpose of these motivational gifts is to motivate us to serve the Lord in the Church. So far, we have studied the first four gifts – the gifts of prophecy, service, teaching, and exhortation. Today, we come to the fifth gift and easily the most unpopular and misunderstood – the Gift of Giving.

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It is important, especially when dealing with the spiritual gifts, to recognize that all believers have a calling to each of the gifts. The gifts are not given to say that only those who possess the gift are responsible to do this. There are aspects of each gift that we are called to walk in. For example, there are some who are gifted as prophets. The prophet is deeply burdened for the truth to be known and for people to be right with God. As a result, they are deeply convicted to confront sin and call for repentance and restoration. However, every believer has a similar command whether he is gifted as a prophet or not. In **Matthew 18:15** Jesus commands, “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.” Similarly, there are some who are gifted with the gift of service. These are those who quickly identify the needs of others and are ready and willing to roll up their sleeves and get to work. Some are clearly gifted, but all Christians are called to serve the Lord. **Psalms 100:2a** simply says, “Serve the Lord with gladness.” We saw this also last week with the gift of exhortation. The gifted exhorter sees potential in others, so they come alongside of them and encourage them and motivate them to growth. Yet, clearly

every believer is called to encourage one another. **1 Thessalonians 5:11** commands, “Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.” The point in these is that every child of God should discipline themselves to be obedient in these actions, but some are uniquely gifted in each area. Such is true with the gift of giving.

Every follower of Jesus is called to give to Him, but there are some who are spiritually gifted and give in ways that others of us have never considered. In **Luke 6:38** Jesus Himself encouraged us to give saying, “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure - pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” Paul later explains in **2 Corinthians 9:6-7**, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Clearly, we are all called to give. As a result, we must each discipline ourselves to be obedient to the Lord’s call. However, there are some gifted in giving who not only find deep joy in giving, but also tend to give very generously and sacrificially. We see that in this morning’s text. As we study this gift I want us to see four key observations about the gift of giving.

I. The Explanation of the Gift of Giving

We understand what it means to give something. In our lives we have each given some things and we have also received some things that have been given to us. The Greek word used here literally means “to give over, to share, or to impart.” We can all identify with the importance of giving. In fact, we can understand the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Giving certainly involves all of us. However, there are some who are spiritually gifted as givers. Just as a gifted servant recognizes needs and is burdened to roll up their sleeves and get to work, the gifted givers often recognize needs and are willing to give whatever is needed to help meet the need. **Larry Gilbert** said it well, “The giver honestly feels that the best way he can give of himself is to give of his material gain for the work of God.” Please understand that I am not suggesting that the giver thinks you can fix everything with money. I am simply saying that the spiritually gifted giver recognizes that financial resources are a very important component to the work of God. As a result of this, the gifted giver finds great joy and peace in recognizing that God has blessed them to be a blessing to others. So, they experience great fulfillment, not in getting, but in giving for the glory of God.

I wonder if you have the gift of giving. You may think, “Pastor, I don’t have much in the way of wealth and resources, so how could I be a giver?” But, as we will see in today’s message you don’t have to have much to be a giver. I simply ask you to consider a few questions. Do you have a deep desire to do whatever it takes to see God’s work advanced? Do you have an eye for excellence? Do you ever daydream about what God could do through a church, a ministry, or a missionary if it was fully resourced? Do you feel a burden to make sure that the work of the Lord succeeds? Are you willing to make personal sacrifices for the furtherance of God’s work? Are you burdened by the physical and monetary needs of the church and the members of it? Do you tend to want your gifts to others to be of high quality? If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions, you may have the gift of giving.

II. The Example of the Gift of Giving (Mark 14:1-9)

It is very difficult to find a great illustration of this gift in the New Testament. The reason that it is often so difficult is because those who are truly gifted as givers do what they do for the glory of God and not for the attention of man. As a result, those who are gifted givers usually give in private. Only God truly knows the details. For example, I believe that Scripture indicates that Lydia the seller of purple was very generous to the work of the Lord, though we aren't given a specific reference or illustration of how generous she truly was. Additionally, we see a couple named Aquila and Priscilla who were tent makers. They were often with Paul, and during those times Paul strangely didn't have to make tents. Scripture is suggesting that they were working and providing for his needs, but again we aren't told that clearly. Or what about Joseph of Arimathea? We aren't told much about him, but we know that he was a follower of Jesus and as soon as Jesus died Joseph generously gave Jesus his personal tomb that he had personally dug out of the stone. The generosity of that gift was enormous. Charles Stanley points to the disciple Matthew as an example of a gifted giver because of the details he recorded about giving. While I agree with that evaluation, the fact is that we only have the illustration of a large dinner party to confirm this theory. Please understand that there were certainly gifted givers, but these gave so much for the glory of God that their actions were done in private and, as a result, leave us lacking a solid Biblical illustration. Fortunately for us, there are some moments in Scripture where we are given a little further glimpse into someone's life and generosity. To be clear, their motives were clearly to bring glory to God alone, but the extravagance of their generosity was so extreme that it stood out clearly to all who witnessed it. It is one of these key illustrations that I want us to focus on today. We often look at this as an expression of worship, but I remind us that the word "worship" comes from two Latin words that mean "worth ship." In other words, we worship the Lord when we demonstrate His worth to us. In this example, Mary does something extravagant, beautiful, and generous to express her love and devotion to Jesus. As we examine her actions we will identify five key aspects of the gifted giver.

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A. The Comprehension of the Giver

We are all called to be givers, but the gifted giver comprehends and recognize two things. **First, the giver recognizes needs.** Joseph recognized the need for Jesus to have a tomb. Aquila and Priscilla recognized a need for Paul's provision so that he could continue to preach the Gospel. Matthew recognized that his friends needed Jesus, so he threw a dinner party. Mary recognized that Jesus' time was coming to an end. Something interesting about Mary is that every time we see her in Scripture we find her at the feet of Jesus. She listened to Him and learned from Him and, as a result, had a great sense of understanding about what was truly going on. Because Mary had listened to His Word, she knew that Jesus would soon die and be buried. As givers often do, she recognized the need of the moment. **Charles Stanley** said it this way. "The person with the gift of giving often has an ability to see material needs that others overlook. He is quick to calculate how much is needed, when it will be needed, and how resources might best be applied to meeting the need." **Second, the giver recognizes the urgency of the moment.** Knowing that Jesus would

soon die, Mary knew that she didn't have time to waste. In fact, when you read the account in verse 3, it seems so sudden and unexpected. Nobody had any idea what was going on. Here is Jesus chilling at the table, the meal has already taken place, and He is talking with the guests. Mary had been listening and was understanding the needs and the urgency of the moment so without delay she begins to respond. Gifted givers don't just give to everything that comes along. However, because they are often disciplined in their finances they are prepared and ready so that when they see the importance of the need, they sense an urgency about the gift. Mary clearly had a gift, and in this moment recognized the need and the opportunity so she acted immediately.

B. The Cost for the Giver

Those who are gifted givers always strive to give their best. When it comes to giving, "Good Enough" is never good enough for them. They are driven to give their best to the Lord. **Charles Stanley** said it well, "The person with the gift of giving desires to give gifts of high quality. He does not look for the cheapest or most meager way to meet a need. Rather, the giver wants to give in abundance and quality, just as the Lord has given to him in abundance and quality." In other words, the giver may live very humbly or work overtime just so that they may have more to give. In fact, the gifted giver so greatly wants to give that he is deeply burdened when he feels that he can't.

We see this with Mary. We don't know what all she had or didn't have, but it certainly seems that this ointment was her most valuable possession. Spikenard was a very precious ointment. It was most likely imported from India. It was so valuable that Judas and the disciples estimated that the ointment was worth 300 denarii. That doesn't sound like much to us, but in Biblical times this was an incredible value. In those days a worker would work out in the fields all day long for 1 single denarii a day. This ointment, worth 300 denarii, would've been equivalent to a common worker's annual income. Let me put that into perspective for us today. ****ILL:** Let's just say you work six days a week all year long and your annual income is \$40,000. If that's the case, you'd make right at \$127.80 a day. 300 days' worth of income would be \$38,340. That's almost 96% of one's annual income. Can you imagine giving that type of gift to the Lord?

Remember, we are all called to give. The Bible tells us much about a "tithe", which literally means "a tenth." It means 10 percent. I personally believe and practice that the tithe is the first tenth of all that you receive. This is the Biblical pattern in the Old Testament. There are some who will say, "But, pastor the tithe isn't mentioned in the New Testament, but that simply isn't true." Jesus confronted the self-righteous Pharisees in **Luke 11:42** saying, "But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others." Jesus's clear point was that they were giving right, but living wrong. Jesus said, "Your living and your giving should honor God." The point is that we are all called to give, but the gifted giver sees the tithe as a beginning and looks for opportunities to give well beyond that, even when the cost is great. Mary didn't seem to even blink at the thought of giving such a generous gift to the Lord.

C. The Commitment of the Giver

Simply put, those who are gifted to give see things through. They live modestly and make sacrifices so that they can save. Or they work hard to earn what they can so that they are prepared to give. They seek for ways and opportunities to give. And then when they see the opportunity, they are committed. They see it through regardless of the obstacles. Can you imagine the obstacles that Mary faced? True givers do not want fanfare or recognition. **Charles Stanley** said it this way, “The person with the gift of giving has a desire to live quietly, not calling attention to himself. Persons with the gift of giving are not motivated by applause or recognition. They find their satisfaction in making the gift.” Mary was not seeking attention, she was just responding to the urgency of the opportunity and when she did it brought immediate obstacles and opponents.

Sadly, the biggest opponents in this passage were the very disciples of Jesus. The disciples were so stirred up over the issue that they began to scold her. Hadn't they learned they weren't the Master? Hadn't they learned that they weren't God in flesh? Hadn't they learned Who had the final word? You would think that they would've known Jesus better than this. If there was a question about Mary's actions you'd think they'd look to Jesus and say, “Tell us Lord, is there anything you want us to do? Is it ok for Mary to serve You in this way?” But, they never looked to Jesus for His direction. They just took things in their own hands and assumed that their perception and judgment was right. They jumped to their own conclusions, assumed that they were right, and began scolding her. Can you imagine all that this woman had to endure simply because she served the Lord? They began to talk to her: “How dare you waste that money? What were you thinking? You shouldn't have done that.” In fact, we learn from other passages that it was Judas, the deceiver, who was stirring up all the conflict because he had his own selfish motives. But what I want us to see here is that true givers are committed to the work of the Lord. They don't just give when it's easy. They don't just give when it's convenient. They don't just give when they feel like it. They give when they know it's right and they see it through regardless of the attacks that the enemy brings.

D. The Cause of the Giver

Why does the giver give? What is their motivation? Simply put, those who give for the right reasons simply want to honor God in the best way they possibly can. The true giver delights in partnering with the Lord in His work. They don't need public praise. They don't have to have their name acclaimed. They simply find joy in being a part of the work. ****ILL: The Siberts giving to my first mission trip.** They told me, “It was our privilege.” When I returned I told them some of the stories of what God had done and showed them some pictures, and they celebrated with me as if they were there. And truthfully, they were. They had given, they had prayed, and they were fully invested. **Stanley** says it well, “When a giver makes a material gift, he feels as if he is giving part of himself. He feels personally invested in the ministry or the life of the person to whom he has given.”

Think about Mary for a moment. There is no greater generosity she could have shown. She had nothing of greater value to offer. She takes her most precious item and she gives it all, completely surrendered, in amazing generosity to the Lord. The disciples begin to complain and criticize and then notice how Jesus responds. Jesus makes a profound but simple statement. He said, “She has done a good deed to Me.” This is the motivation of the spiritually gifted giver. They want to honor Jesus and do a good deed to and for Him.

I’m sure Jesus’ words were convicting to the disciples. They have been mocking her and scolding her but Jesus says, “Guys, you have it all wrong. Only one has done the right thing and that one is Mary.” Not only did Jesus openly commend her but her actions are even more amazing when you consider the actions of the others in this passage. The chief priests and the scribes were aggressively trying to devise a plan to capture Jesus and kill Him. The disciples were sitting there clueless as to what all was going on. They are sitting around criticizing Mary for her act of worship. And all the while Mary is generously giving to the Lord. Yes, truly she had done a good thing to serve the Lord. The ugliness of the others’ sins makes the beauty of her sacrifice even more significant. So, Jesus commended her. I think it’s important for every single one of us to realize that no matter what others may say about our worship and service to the Lord, the most important thing is that we please the Lord. Mary hadn’t wasted the ointment because nothing given to Jesus in love is ever wasted.

Jesus went on to give one other word about her great generosity. Jesus said of her what He couldn’t say of most of us. He said in **verse 8**, “She has done what she could.” This was a simple statement with powerful implications. Mary wasn’t responsible for giving to Jesus what she hadn’t been entrusted with. She may not have been given the gift of mercy. Maybe she wasn’t given the ability to sing. The Lord didn’t require of that of her. But she did have something that very few would have. She had this precious ointment. So, she took what she had and gave her gift to the Lord. The picture suggests that she gave the full extent of what she could. There was nothing left that she could give. She took her most precious possession and poured it all out in worship of Christ. Let me ask you, “Could it be said of us that we are doing all that we can and giving all that we can to the Lord? Or would it be said that we give conditionally, comfortably, and conveniently?” If Jesus were speaking aloud here today would He say of us, “These have done good unto Me because they have done what they could?”

I wonder this morning for each of us, “Are we giving and doing what we can?” Are we giving our best and giving our all to the Lord? What about the spiritual gifts and abilities that God has given you? Are they being used for His glory and the good of others? What about the time that He has given you? Are you using it for the Lord or is it being wasted on tv, Facebook, and things that don’t really matter? What about your giving? Are you giving what you are able? Are there any luxuries in your life, which aren’t really needs, that are hindering you from truly giving what you are able? Are there things in your life that you could live without that would give you greater opportunity to be generous? God

wants us to give of our ability, but our ability is far greater than most of us realize. Every single one of us would do well to follow Mary's example.

E. The Celebration of the Giver

Those who are gifted to give find great joy in partnering together for the Lord's work. You may have heard all of this up to this point and have concluded that this could not be you because you just don't have much to give, but I want to remind all of us that this is about the heart of giving not necessarily about the amount. We see this illustrated as Paul writes a letter to the Corinthians about the church in the city of Philippi. Financially speaking, this was likely the poorest church of the entire New Testament. They faced the most difficult circumstances of anyone. They knew what it was like to be down to their last penny. In fact, the phrase that was used to describe them means "rock-bottom destitution." The word was used to describe a beggar who had absolutely nothing and no hope of getting anything. By the world's standards they really had nothing of value. Listen to their eagerness.

2 Corinthians 8:1-4 (Show Text)

We see here that givers long to give, even at great sacrifice, to do the work of the Lord. We see this also with Mary. Her motivation was to honor the Lord and give her best to Jesus, but I personally believe that she found great joy in what followed. I believe that she was personally encouraged when Jesus stood up for her and silenced her critics. However, I believe she rejoiced in her heart when she heard the next words. Jesus said, "Wherever this Gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her." It is amazing isn't it that even here in 2018 we are still talking about this act of generosity. However, I don't believe that was her cause of celebration. Mary's desire was to honor Jesus and bring glory to Him. I believe the thing that she was celebrating was the fact that Jesus said this Gospel, this Good News, of His death and resurrection, would be preached through the whole world. The gifted giver rejoices in knowing the Word of God and the work of God is being furthered, and that their gift played a small part. This is their great joy.

III. The Encouragements of the Gift of Giving

As you hear the example given, there are some of you likely thinking, "Yes, that's me. This is one of my spiritual gifts." With every gift there are amazing strengths, but there can also be some glaring weaknesses. It is important that we know the benefits of each gift, but we must also know how to apply each gift in the Body. If you possess this gift, there are some things that you must know to protect yourself from yourself. There are also some common misunderstandings that you must be aware of. I'm going to list them as actions.

A. Be Content with God's Provisions in Your Life

1 Timothy 6:8-10, "If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all

sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

The giver clearly understands that money is a necessary part of life and a necessary part of the Lord’s work. However, it is vital that the giver not love riches. If riches are his goal, he will end up like the young rich ruler in Matthew 19 who ended up grieved and disappointed because he valued possessions over a personal relationship with the Lord. This leads us to the second key point.

B. Seek the Kingdom of God First

Matthew 6:31-33, “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Pursue your relationship with God and commit yourself to His work. You will be amazed to see how God provides for you and enables you to keep giving when you commit to honoring Him in every decision, in every transaction, and every gift. **Larry Gilbert** said it well, “Make giving your reason for gaining wealth.” If it is truly your heart to give, then make your walk with the Lord and the work of the Lord your highest priorities and watch how God equips you to honor Him further through giving.

C. Always Check Your Motives

Matthew 6:1-4, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” This sounds strange, doesn’t it? “Don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” How is that? The emphasis here is that we are to do what we do for God’s glory. In other words, don’t dwell on what you’ve done. Don’t boast in what you’ve given. Simply thank God for the opportunity that He has given to allow you to be a part of His plan and His work, then ask that He will continue to use you in that way. Literally when God puts it in your hand, let it go and remain open handed, recognizing that it was from Him and through Him and for Him. You were just privileged to be a channel.

D. Trust God

2 Corinthians 9:10-11, “Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.” Don’t give in to the lies of the devil. When you begin to give like you could and should, the enemy will say, “Look at what else you could have done with that money. Are you sure that was a wise investment? You could have bought that new

object if you had held on to it?” You might give generously and the next day the car breaks down, and immediately the enemy is there to accuse and lie. But, friends, trust God. Believe in His promises and cling to His Word.

IV. The Edification of the Body Through the Gift of Giving

Have you ever considered how this gift benefits the Body of Christ? In the case of Mary, God used her generous gift and sacrificial example to challenge the disciples and us here today in how we are to honor God by giving Him our best. But, the fact is that the Church wouldn't be what it is today if it weren't for gifted givers who are burdened to contribute to the work of the Lord. Paul's ministry was sustained by faithful givers. The early church was strengthened by the generosity of faithful givers. Every successful ministry has people who faithfully support the work of the Lord. This gift edifies the body in many amazing ways. Here at Crosslink, I celebrate what God has done here. We are getting ready to complete some offices and open up some new children's classrooms because of the generosity of God's people. In the future, we are believing that God will provide the resources for us to connect the two buildings with a large lobby that will be a great connection center with a large kitchen. In the future, we are believing that we will have a new wing on the facility to allow room for our growing children's ministry. Each of these things will take all of us, and will provide opportunity for givers to honor God and be a further part of His work. Not only that, we believe that God is raising us up to reach this entire Valley for Jesus. This will require strategic efforts in the community and church planting throughout the County. God's direction is inviting us to be a part of His work.

So, I ask you, “Is this your gift?” If so, commit to the Lord that you will be looking for ways to give generously and sacrificially to the Lord.

Second, “Do you have another gift?” If so, then be sure to honor the Lord with the first-fruits of your labor and be sure to still give cheerfully. Also, be sure to finish out the study strong so that you can determine your gift.

Finally, I ask you to consider the greatest sacrificial gift that has ever been offered. You can never outgive God, because He has already offered the most amazing gift ever. **John 3:16** says it simply, “For God so loved the world, that He GAVE His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Have you received His gift? We give to Him willingly because He willingly gave His life for us and to us!