

We were created to give freely-

Good morning!

How was your week? I had a crazy day in the middle of the week. I had gone to Costco to get some items for our compassionate care lunch today. I opened my car door, then I remembered to grab the list of what I needed.

Well I was doing that-the wind blew my door closed. Now I had a problem. The battery to my car key had died, and with out being able to hit the correct button, I knew my car alarm would go off when I tried opening the door.

I thought of a Plan B, I put my key in the ignition and started my car. That did not work.

The car alarm went off. Soon three people were next to me telling me to do what I could not do.... Hit the red button.

I pulled out my car manual, and handed my key to the woman next to me. She made a joke... I am not helping you steal this car am I?

And she did something amazing.... She put my car key into the lock in my door and turned it... the alarm went off.

While the alarm was blasting- I could not think and for those few moments, I was so overwhelmed I could not remember how to do something I knew how to do.

This is not the first time my car key battery had died. I knew that was the way to fix the problem. But with all the noise

And in the embarrassment of having my alarm go off, I forgot how to do what I knew to do.

You and I were created to be people to give freely.

For some of us- this is not the first time you have heard this truth.

But life gets busy and we forget what is true.. We allow the noise in our life keep us from being able to think clearly.

The craziness of our lives filled with no margin, every moment busy, every dollar spent, and Souls that do not rest... keep us from being people who do what we were created to do.

We were created to give freely.

Some of you have just met Jesus. You're not even sure what you believe yet. Harbor is here to help you find your way back to God.

We would love to have you join us on Sundays at 11 AM.. one room over starting in October. We will have a group of people meeting together to talk about how to find her way back to God. This group is called starting point.

Maybe you have found your way back to God, You're still learning how to live fully, Love deeply, and give freely. We would love for you to join us in this group...

I have been following Christ for a long time, but the years I was able to lead starting point help me to grow so much in my faith.

Part of growing in our faith, is learning how to be people who give freely.

The more time you spend around children... you realize that from a very young age- we know that giving freely leads to joy.

Now, I also know that Young children struggle to share... but they also Love to give. If they find something ..a pretty rock, a flower, they want to share it with somebody.

If you take a moment to think back to the first time you saved up enough money to buy someone present, I am pretty sure you remember the feeling you had as they begin to open it..

There is joy when we give, rather than receive.

I know some of you have been around church long enough to have heard a sermon or two on giving...so you are sitting there today thinking Great... I got up early... and now I have to listen to someone tell me I should give my money to church.

Before I begin today- I want to review an important truth from last week

Romans 8:1

Therefore, There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus for the Law and The Spirit of life is set me free from the law of sin and death.

God does not need our money... he is for our joy.

Giving freely... leads to a life filled with joy.

My hope is as we leave today we will begin to ask God to help us have margin in her life around our finances, around our commitments.. To help us use our time, talent and treasures as good stewards of the gifts God has given us.

So that we can be people who give freely.

This is our final week in our three week Live, Love Give series. Two weeks ago John shared from Acts 2- we are created to Live fully- he reminded us that Peter preached a call of repentance, and 3,000 people were baptized and added to the church.

Last week we looked at Acts 2 and saw what happens when we love deeply...and today we will once again look at the book of Acts and see what generosity looks like.

We have also spent this past year and the series we call Garden to City ...we have moved from the book of Genesis- Where we saw God create all things and say they were "TOV"...and how people were made in the image of God.

Throughout this year we have walked from the OT to the NT and will finish the year in the book of Revelation.

In our final week in the book of Acts we will see people who lived fully, loved deeply- gave freely

Harbor- we are called to live generous lives..

Our lives have been ransomed, redeemed, paid for with blood of Jesus

I think it is important to understand what it looks like to give freely-

When I began to prepare for today, I realized we need to first understand an important word- enough

From the beginning of creation... God has put limits on all things... there is enough.

Another word for that is provision. God provides more than we could ask her thanks

We began the year in the book of Genesis. Many people believe the book of Job occurs during the same time as many stories in Genesis.

The book of Job – We see God speak. And God reminds Job that he always puts a limit to things....

God speaks to the sea in chapter 38- and says this is enough... and the waves go no further

We've all been given one limit that is the same...everyone gets 24 hours in the day...

We've been given limits of health, money, and talents.

And we respond in one of two ways....We say thank you God...because we know that he is provided enough... or we covet, and desire what others have.

In our journals- Emma wrote about the church in the book of Acts...she said "because of the united generosity of the local church, many people found their way back to God"Harbor, we have the ability to have the same effect today!

Matthew Mark Luke and John are the four Gospels... the four books of Scripture that tell the good news.

They tell us about Jesus, what he said, and what he did... and when we read them we see that the only thing Jesus talked about more than the kingdom of God was money.

I don't know why as humans we struggle to believe that what God says in scripture is true.

For instance, He says when someone injures us we should forgive... but we want to push back, we want to be right, we want to see them punished.

The truth is ...Forgiveness leads to joy.
Giving Freely also leads to our joy.

God reminds us over and over again that every good gift is from him. He is for our joy.

We're called to be people who give freely...to hold every treasure he's given us with an open hand. But we want to close that hand and hold tightly to everything..not share it because there might not be enough.

And then we struggle to live with Joy.

The truth is -

We really are God's hands and feet. You and I bring good news. The small group of believers in the book of Acts changed the whole world because they are people that gave freely.

I want us to look at a few scriptures where Jesus tells us the truth about being generous.

Matthew 6: 19 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. **21** Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

(story...window seat)

Matthew 6 :24 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

25 "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? **27** Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

34 "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Worry and anxiety take away the beauty of life. It is amazing that our brain does this to cope when we **feel** that things in our life are out of control.

The truth is that our life is never out of control

God is on the throne

When we don't have enough sleep, or our bills are more than our income, and life seems to busy –I know the last thing you need is someone making you feel bad that you don't share your money or your time with other people.

If you don't hear anything else today, hear this-
Believe this
God does not need our money, he is for our Joy

Gal 5:22

22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, and self-control.

You are the only one in all of history who can do what God prepared in advance you to do

Our lives are a gift from God.

Each day is a gift...we have been given time, Talent, and Resources from God...we are the stewards, not owners.

What does stewardship mean?

Webster's

the activity or job of protecting and being responsible for something

Peace, Joy... they are ours when we believe
We have Enough-

We also have been given provision to do with our strength and resources what God needs us to do for his kingdom.

Last week we looked at Acts chapter 2

The church began to grow and one of the things that attracted people to Jesus and his church was how they cared so well for each other...and the radical generosity they displayed.

This week we will look at Acts 4

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

The Believers Share Their Possessions

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. **33** With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all **34** that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales **35** and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Jesus said where your treasure is- there your heart will be also

Giving freely defined the early church.

Many of you grew up as I did, knowing that in the Old Testament... in the book of Malachi, chapter 3... God's people were encouraged to get 10%... Not any 10%...The first 10%...To God

What is amazing is that by the first few years after the resurrection of Jesus church...we see people giving 100%.

They believed Jesus.

Jesus had a close disciple named John- he wrote 1st John

In **1 JOHN 3:17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.**

And easy prayer to say, but a hard prayer to do with integrity
And God wants us to Have integrity- is to say
Lord what percentage of my income is generous to give freely

I learned this prayer at Manchester Christian church, a church near my home in New Hampshire.

It's startled me to realize even though I thought I was generous... I still had room to grow. We all do...the closer we come to Christ the more we will want what he want.

The more we will want to invest in the Kingdom of God.

The early church needed to be built on truth.. Nothing bothers people more about the church, then when they think what we say and what we do are not the same thing.

They call us hypocrites, which means actor.

I love that this week people have given of their time to serve our community... today we have a chance to go out into the café and find one place where we can use the gifts we've been given to help people find their way back to God.

What would it look like if we all ask God “what percentage of my income is generous to give back to you, for your kingdom?”

But as the early church group we saw last week... that we will always struggle to do what God asked us to do.

People were drawn to communities where people cared so well for one another...All of that could've been shattered if people were acting... pretending...hypocrites

I know last week I encouraged all of us to read through the Book of Acts... the story of Ananias and Sapphira is not what you expect to read after reading chapter 4 of Acts.

Acts 5:1-11

Ananias and Sapphira

5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. **2** With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

3 Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? **4** Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.”

5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. **6** Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

8 Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” “Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”

9 Peter said to her, “How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Is integrity that important?

It is something that's grown in my life. Partly because I married my husband... and he lives a life of integrity. I saw it modeled...and my integrity has grown.

That is what the early church showed the world. People who didn't just give there first to God, They gave their everything.

Ananias and Sapphira did not have to sell anything.

You and I do not need to give our time talent or treasure. God created the world by speaking, and his kingdom will advance.

But there is only one thing that lasts forever. Do we want to invest the resources God has given us into things that last or the end up in a dumpster.

Do you hate that? I think part of the reason we struggle as we get older to clean out our homes and remove the clutter...is that hurts to throw out things that we invested our resources in ...and now broken or worthless...no one wants them.

Or maybe we hate to think about the time we spent on things that don't really matter.

Our time is a gift, what we do with it matters....and we have been given enough...we simply need to learn to say to the things we were not called or created to do.

II Corinthians 8 is titled ***A Call to Generous Giving***

Once again, it's my prayer for today has always been that these words would not cause anyone to leave today feeling condemned.

I love how Paul begins verse seven

II COR 8:7

Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.

I think this is the heart Jesus has for each of us.

II Cor 8:11b give in proportion to what you have. Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly.

Do you get excited to give?

Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly

I recently listened to podcast where someone described being on a diet and one day a week they could eat anything they wanted... the rest of the week they ate healthy food in an appropriate amount.

The first night before that first “cheat day” the speaker described feeling like a little child on the night before Christmas.. thinking about all the greasy food he would eat....The next day he ate and ate and felt pretty sick.

That is so true in my life- how about you? We get excited about the wrong things... he was excited about the food that would literally make him sick....

Yet the food he ate each day that brought him health and strength, was not the food you wanted.

We’ve been given the Holy Spirit...So the power of God in us can make us long for what he longs for

So my encouragement to each of us is simple
Ask God- what does generous look like for me?
What % of my income is generous to return to you for your kingdom. The laws of universe are true....Anything times zero is zero..

But whatever gift we bring...He can multiply them!
When Jesus was here he showed us what happens when we bring our gifts... God is able to multiply our gifts

Maybe today your step of faith just to give financially for the first time.

Or perhaps your step of faith is choosing to serve.

Or today you might ask for the wisdom of God to say no to the things that won’t bring life, so we have space to use our time and talent and treasure to help people find their way back to him.

I want to finish today with a story of how Generosity at Harbor has helped people find their way back to God.

If you talk people here, you’ll probably hear many stories.
That’s why each dollar you give to the ministry of Harbor matters.

A few years ago, we wanted to have one more option for people to find their way

back to God. When Jed asked us to pray, Laurel Hansen felt called invite her friend Maria. one day she called her and to come to lunch...lunch turned into an invite to a Women's Harbor Bible study.

We kicked off Saturday nights...and Maria came...soon her daughters and grandchildren were coming.

Today, my friend Dara teaches in Sunday school and helps other children find their way back to God.. And that's how this works...My friend Shalmal greets people and welcomes them to harbor.

That is what it looks like when each of us brings our gifts, with open hands...Giving freely made it possible for us to have a space for Laurel to invite her friend to that first Bible study... Generosity allowed us to have classrooms where the children come and learn about Jesus... the generosity of our family at Harbor allows us to serve our church, our community, and the city.

We would love to start our Sat nights services again in November, but we need people who will serve, people who will attend and people who will pray.

So in a few moments I will encourage you to ask God the question only He can answer- what does it look like for me to give freely? What percentage of my income is generous to invest in the kingdom of God.

Then take a step of faith and give freely...pray with me?