**In God We Trust - Week #3**

**Can we have 30 minutes for this talk?**

Introduction - Extra

Add disclaimer about “This is for those who call this their church home.” (Jon F will send verbage)

I want to begin by talking about our “**extra**.” Now, you might not feel like **you** have much but if you live indoors and you eat every day, you are in the top 15% of the wealthiest people in the world. All of us in here are wealthy. We don't think we are because we compare ourselves with people who have more than we have. But the truth is most all of us here are very wealthy. We have **extra**!

Let me give you an “extra” quiz. Okay? Show of hands . . .

* If you spend more than $2 for a cup of **coffee** at least once a week, will you raise your hand? Okay, you have extra.
* If you were **entertained** in the last 30 days, you either rented a movie or you actually went to a movie theater, (you know, took out a second mortgage on your house to pay for the popcorn) or if you have more than 12 channels on your tv, will you raise your hand? You have extra.
* Let's talk about clothing. If you went to bed this week and you have a separate set of clothes that you wear to sleep from the clothes that you put on to go to work or school, and then after work or school, if you put on a another set of clothes to exercise or to relax in, and then after that you got ready for bed and you actually put on a different set of clothes than the clothes you wore to bed the night before, then you have extra. -- Unless you're a man and you wear the same thing every night, but that’s another topic, guys. Raise your hand if pretty much describes you?
* I won't make you raise your hand for this, but some of you actually go to a closet that's full of clothes and say, “I have absolutely . . . (nothing to wear.”) That's a rich person's problem. You have extra.
* ~~Now, here’s the real test. How many of you actually have a jar where you keep change or maybe you keep it in the ashtray of your car? Will you raise your hand.~~
* ~~Look around. These are wealthy people. They have so much money they store it in trash cans!~~

Are you convinced yet? The point is we don't **feel** like we have extra, but the rest of the world looks at us and they say, “You’ve gotta be kidding. I would give anything to have your extra.”

**SCRIPTURE NARRATIVE – RICH FOOL – LUKE 12:13-21**

Jesus told a story about a guy who had extra. He was a farmer and apparently he was having bumper crop after bumper crop. There was so much extra he asked himself, “What shall I do since I have no place to store my crops? This is a rich person problem, isn’t it?

Then he said, “This is what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and I will build extra larger ones, and there I will store all my extra and my extra extra.” **(vs.18)** I'm paraphrasing a little. And here's the problem with this guy. Don’t miss this - this is the heart of the message. He assumed that the extra was for him to **consume**. And so his plan was to horde and consume. **Horde and consume**.

We don't like to say it like that way. We like to say spend and save, spend and save, but too often it’s really horde and consume. And so this guy with all the extra said, I’ll say to myself, ***“You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”*** *(vs.19)*

At this point, everyone who was listening to Jesus tell this story was envious of the farmer who had extra. But the story turns right here when God says to him, “***You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”*** *(vs.20)*

Community, that was a rhetorical question. Everyone knew the answer, “ Somebody else.” The man hoarded all of this so that he could consume it, but he dies. And everything that he had, he lost. All of it went to someone else and he got absolutely no credit for it. None. No points.

Jesus goes on to say, ***“So is the man who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”*** *(vs.21)* And then just a few verses later he says, ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*** *(vs.34).*

Friends, understand this, the man was not called a fool because he was rich. There is no command in the Bible about not being rich. In fact, it says that God freely gives us all things that we might enjoy. So I want you to hear something…

* If you have a nice house, you do not need to feel guilty today.
* If you have a nice car, you don't need to be embarrassed about that.
* If you went on a vacation this year with your family, you don't need to be feeling guilty about that.

It's not about what you have. It's about your attitude toward what you have. He was not called a fool because he was rich. He was a fool because he was not rich toward God. This is not about having **extra**. What you have is not the issue, it’s what you do with what you have because that is a heart issue. Like Jesus said, ***where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

**2 REASONS YOU WANT TO BE ON THIS LADDER**

To help us think through this today, I have what we call the **Generosity Ladder.**

There are two reasons you wanna be on this ladder. The first reason is that if you're on the generosity ladder, you're gonna avoid some pain in your life (on screen: Avoid Pain).

The Apostle Paul offered some great advice to his young protégé, Timothy when he said, ***“For the love of money,*** (not money, but 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."*** *(I Timothy 6:10)*

There's nothing wrong with money, it's how we measure. It’s how we do commerce. The problem or pain comes when you have a love of money. In fact the original word here is actually lust for money. It’s when your desire for money becomes more important than your heart for God. Then it creates self-inflicted pain. And here’s the deal - if you're on this generosity ladder . . . Use “Money” in all these statements

* It will keep you from **lying** about money
* It will keep you from **working more hours** than you need to be working.
* It will keep you from **conflict** with other people over money,
* It will help you remember that **relationships** are more important than things.

**The second reason you wanna be on the generosity ladder is because you're gonna be blessed if you're on that ladder (on screen: Be Blessed)**. God spoke these words through one of the wisest and wealthiest men to walk this planet. He said, ***“Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.”*** *(Proverbs 3:9)*

Scripture never says that if you give money to God, God will make you rich. Bible doesn't teach that. We don’t teach that. Scripture does say that if you get on the generosity ladder, you will be blessed. We don’t get to pick what that blessing looks like. God just says one way or another you will be blessed. And I don’t know about you, but if I get to pick between less blessings and more blessings, I’m picking more.

**STEP 1 – GIVE SOMETHING**

**So the first thing we all need to do is get on the ladder. And you start** by giving away something.

Now, let’s talk about our church a little bit here. This is insider information. Don't tell anybody. I called our finance office and asked them: How many families do we have at our location? And they said that we had \_\_\_\_\_\_ families that call Community Lincoln Square their church home. These are people who come regularly enough they consider themselves a part of the team here.

**Sherry - Can we do both graphics and flip chart?**

So then I asked, “How many of those families gave absolutely nothing to their church to in 2018?” (I didn’t ask for names, just numbers/percentages) And they told me that \_\_\_\_\_ % of our people gave absolutely nothing to their church as far as we can tell. Yea, that’s a lot, huh? (Draw percentage on Pie Chart) I’ll be honest, that bummed me out. These are people who I am pretty sure would say Community is their church home, but have yet to give.

Now, here's what I wanna do. I wanna take this pair of scissors, and I'm gonna cut out this \_\_\_\_\_\_ %, not literally . I still want you in the church and I still love you. (Cut out this percentage on pie chart and place at base of ladder)

And by the way, God still loves you – and he won’t love you any more or less, no matter how much you do or don’t give. I want to make sure we all understand that. None of us get to heaven by what we do or what we give. We get there by the grace of Jesus.

So this group right here, right now - they're not on the ladder. So Step Number One is to get on the generosity ladder. In other words, give something (put the cut-out on the first rung)

And I'm gonna make a suggestion today. I don't have any Bible verse for this, but I'm gonna suggest if you’re a regular attender start by giving $100 a month. Start there. And you know why I say $100? Because if you just give whatever comes to mind in the moment – you might throw in $5 or $10 or whatever is in you pocket at the time. And if you can just casually reach in and do that and not adjust your lifestyle, I’m not sure it helps you become more generous.

To give $100 a month, most of us would have to rearrange our life a little bit. You'd have to change your viewing habits, your entertaining habits, maybe your caffeine intake. There's something that’s gonna have to change, and that's why I would say start there.

And let me just pause right now and say that I know there are some people who are not on the ladder because you can't be on the ladder. I know some here are out of work completely. You can’t give because there is nothing coming in. Do we want to say this? ~~Others here are in debt to a point where you absolutely need to get on the solution side of your finances so that you CAN give~~. And it that’s you, we would love to help you get a plan for your finances. We want to help you.

(Refer to the resources available to help people with their finances)

So the first rung on this ladder is to give something. Start somewhere. Almost everybody can do something, and I would suggest starting with something that will require some sort of change in your lifestyle – maybe it’s $100/mo. You get on this ladder and you will avoid the pain of not giving and God will bless your generosity. You watch.

*Step 2 – Give Generously*

Here's the other thing that we found out, that we found out that X% (X% Give Something) (Find locations specific #s) of our people who are members of our church were giving something. They weren't giving a tithe, but they were giving something.

This needs to be in it’s own section as “Give Extravagantly”

Both of these at the same time? And only X% (Get Location specific #s) (X% give at least 10%) of those people who call COMMUNITY their church home give at least 10% of their income. (draw on pie chart)

You might be thinking, "Ted, how do you know that?" it is actually very simple…We just base it on 10% 8% of the average income of this community.

(Cut out this part of pie chart and put on top of ladder)

Now, here's what I want to challenge those of you desiring to move up the ladder with your generosity…

Those of you who gave something last year,

* but maybe that gift was just a spontaneous gift because you saw a need that was there.
* Or maybe it was an emotional gift,
* maybe you gave it out of embarrassment,
* whatever reason you gave, you gave something.

I want to encourage you to move up to giving generously…to “percentage giving.”

Now, why would I suggest that? I would suggest that because when you give out of emotion instead of giving intentionally and systematically, you have a tendency to think you're giving more than you're giving.

We remember that time that you gave that $20 bill or you gave that $100 bill, but maybe that was 18 months ago. Church, everyone gives like that! You don’t need to have faith to give like that. We have a tsunami, we have an earthquake or a fire.

Anybody can write out a check because of the emotion of the moment.

But it takes intentionality to do what you know you need to do, what can actually make a difference in here (point to heart) and out there (point outside) and that's to move up a percentage of giving.

Now, the Bible calls that tithing, by the way. You may know the word tithe. The word tithe simply means 10%. When you look in the Bible long before the Old Testament Jewish law was given, there were believers who gave 10% of what God had blessed them with **back to God**.

They didn't give it to God, they gave it back to God. And why did they choose 10%? Because 10% was symbolic. It represented the whole… that they wouldn't have been able to make anything without God's help, without God's strength.

And 10% is a statement that says, everything belongs to you, but I'm gonna give back 10%. And 10% is a percentage that represents a significant enough gift that it actually deals with our heart issues, and that's what God's trying to do, is deal with our heart issues.

Malachi, the 3rd chapter says this, it says, "Will of man rob God? Yet you're robbing me, but you say, 'How have we robbed you?' He said in tithes or tenths and offerings. You're cursed with a curse for your robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the whole tithe on the storehouse so that there may be food in my house and test me now in this says the Lord of hosts. If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."

Now, I know I've been throwing a lot of numbers around today and it gets confusing. I understand that. But let me try to just illustrate in a way that will just be simple for all of us that everyone could understand. Okay?

I have, in my hand, 10 $1 bills, okay? Here's what the Bible is saying. The Bible saying is every time God gives you this, you take one of them and you invest it in His church to be invested here and around the world to make a difference for eternity. I know that was fast so let me do it again. All right?

[laughter]

Every time you get 10 of these, you take one of them and you say, "I'm gonna give that to my local church." You know, you look at it and you say, "I get to keep all nine of these. Oh, that- that's too much. Here, here. Okay, I'll keep all nine."

Now, you know, here's the problem. The problem is, that when it's just $1, it's not a it's not really hard because I mean what can you buy with a dollar anyway, you know what I'm saying?

But the problem comes when these things become $10 bills. And you go, you know, you can buy something, you can by two lattes with a $10 bill. And so, you say, but you know what, Jesus died on the cross for me. He made me a home in heaven, he gives me air to breath. I can do this, all right? Ah, but then they become $100 bills and you start to want to- to have somebody see it when you put one of those in there.

[laughter]

Can I get a witness? Here's where the real rub comes on, when these become $1,000 bills. You move out of the house from mom and dad, you start drawing a regular paycheck and then you think about laying one of those down and you- you're wanting change.

We get freaked out about the zeroes. But you need to understand something, God is not freaked out about the zeroes. He doesn't care about the zeroes. He didn't care how big your check is. What He cares about is what it represents in your heart and how big the check is compared to your income. Remember Jesus says, ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*** *(vs.34).*

Let me just tell you something, guys, and you need to hear this from the heart. This is not a sermon that I'm preaching to raise money for our church.

No, it's all relative and this might sound like a big number to some of you, but our church budget every year is $X (Get location specific numbers).

And with that, we ….

*(TP highlight amazing things your doing at your location and the things we participate in together as One Church)*

There's a lot of great stuff we're doing. We have actually way under budget on our expenses this year…because we’re always looking for creative ways to manage our resources a little bit better.

Back when this church started, 30 years ago, our budget was (What was the first budget?). If that's all we had to spend, we would make that work.

This is not about raising money for the church, but I want you to hear something very carefully. If all the people who call COMMUNITY home, I'm not talking about guests, I'm not talking about the occasional attenders, it's just all the people who call COMMUNITY (Your Location) their church home gave 10%, our budget would grow in one year from $X to almost $X (Get location specific numbers).

Can you imagine the ministry and the lives that could be touched if God’s people just gave the $1 and kept the other nine.

And I want to encourage some of you to just think about giving generously, percentage giving…tithing-- and maybe you can't get there in one step. Maybe it's gonna take you several steps, maybe it's gonna take you a while. But think about a percentage giving that's not motivated simply by emotion that we have to stir up, it's just you're doing it because it's the right thing to do to honor your God, to love others.

**Conclusion:**

This is the “Extravagant Section” Need to make this it’s own section with cutting out the piece and put on ladder. For some of you that step might be 10% for other who have a lot of extra that percentage giving might even be higher! God might be calling you to extravagant giving. But here is some good news…You don't have to be rich to sit on the top of this ladder…we can all do this!

Jesus called the disciples over at the Treasury at the temple and he said, "I want you to watch something." And a little widow lady came by and she put two small coins in the Treasury and Jesus said, "Did you see that?" They said, "What Lord?" He said, "Did you see that lady, she gave more than everybody else. She gave all that she had."

Need better transition. Maybe I need to think about moving up the ladder and maybe sending more on to a place where the Bible says moth and dust does not corrupt, rust does not corrode. Is the challenge clear enough?

Here's what the Bible says. What are you referring to?

The Bible says, "If you give up anything in this life, God in heaven will restore it 100 fold. Now, those of you are mathematicians out there you know that that's a rate of interest of 10,000%. Give me some of that stock.

We all have extra, what's important is not how much extra we have, the important thing is how we view our extra. Why did God give us as Americans extra? It was not to be greedy. It was not to hoard and consume. It was to climb a ladder one step at a time to freedom.

Pray

Communion - Ted

Stats from numbers – Tammy talk to David