

Proportional Giving

Mt. Kilimanjaro is the tallest Mountain in Africa. It is 19,341 feet or about 3 and half miles in the air. There it is towering over the African Savannah. Anyone every been? I recently heard of one lady who made it her mission to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro. Our staff was at a conference and we heard of Jennie Stevens Sabbatical or time off of ministry, and her goal during this time was to climb that mountain. So she went to REI, got the equipment and prepared for the long climb. It was a brutal climb at points, and she remembers reaching out to a friend for prayer. After the power of prayer she reached the summit. However her summit was not the summit, in fact she did not go much further. It was the place she was proud to get still a ways off from the top of the mountain. She had reached her goal and for her that was enough.

It's a story that reminds me a two very powerful letters - PR. If someone has ever run a race you or is used to working out you may know what PR stands for. Personal record. PRs are great because what it says is I know there are greater out there. I know the winner of the Chicago Marathon came in this year at 2 hours and 5 minutes - Lawrence Chenero from Kenya did that. But when I have a pastor buddy running for the first time breaking the 4 hour mark - that is still good. PR for me it's knowing yes Zach La Vine did a 360 dunk in a game this week - that's incredible good for him. But when I was able to touch the rim and pull it down for me based on who I am - that's pretty good. Not saying I can do it anymore but that was my PR. PR says that I know I'm not eating clean all the time, but the fact that I didn't go back for the 3rd cookie is saying something for where I'm at. A personal record breaks it down to say based on who I am and the circumstances I'm in this is the best I've achieved so far. And this is so important in our Facebook and Instagram society. For in comparison you can always find someone who did it better, faster, prettier, smarter, funnier. And there is no win in comparison. Because what we should be cognizant of is simply how we are doing.

As we've come to meet with God do you know that's all he cares about to. *God is simply looking for your PR.* See here's what he knows. I gave different gifts to different people. Zach La Vine has mad ups, and Seth and Jenna have incredible musicality. And I am not asking for you to be them, but to be the best of what I gave you. A Scripture that reminds us of this is from Romans, "I tell everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think in a way that results in sound judgment, as God distributed a measure of faith to each of you." (12:3) That measure of faith results in different giftedness. It means some have greater gifts mentally some less some pr passing the test, some do not pr if they got an A!, some greater gifts physically some less - some pr running a 10 min mile, some do not if they ran a 6 min, some greater gifts emotionally some less - some pr when you don't go off on two people and instead you say nothing, some don't pr without encouraging - some greater gifts financially some less - some pr at 100 dollars, some wouldn't pr at 10,000. And God is asking for our whole selves to be brought to him and glorify his name, but that is going to result in different PRs based on different people. And guess what he's ok with that.

That's so important for us to understand in this series 10 for 10. What is the 10 for 10 challenge even if you're just joining us or watching online that 10 for 10 challenge is to give 10% of your income for the next 10 weeks. You may wonder why this series, why money?

I was inspired by a Pastor David Washington in Roseland Chicago. Got to hear him speak of how he is engaging the problems of his community with the power of God's love. For him it means engaging gangs and drug dealers and being out in the community. He told stories of sharing Christ will another was putting bullets in a clip. He called for us to engage our communities and the darkness affecting our people. Then I look at Frankfort and what this family of believers deals with. I've yet to counsel someone out of gang, or to stop selling drugs. But we face spiritual warfare in the suburbs. Money and what money can buy I believe is what is decimating the hearts and spiritual lives of people here. Money for some has been the kingpin from the first trip to Disney, from the moment you bought that house or car, or got that job. It's taking the top spot or at least vying for it in our hearts. So we must talk about money it's how we fight the battle against what otherwise could steal our hearts from God now and forever.

So let's get into the Word of God. Our lesson today comes from the disciple Mark who observed Jesus as he was at the temple during offering time. And Jesus finds one lady who was the greatest by comparison to the rest, but she had PR'd in a way that was flat out astonishing, glorified God, and even brought the praise of Jesus. Turn to your neighbor. Because of the Spirit I can PR.

The church is imperfect yes? Who has ever been to an imperfect church? (Hint: You're in one now) The church is imperfect but it's important and should not be given up on. Because we find in the church a perfect Jesus and the ability to collectively carry out his mission for us. The church is his plan a to win the world to his side, and there is no plan b. But part of the churches imperfections have been seen when dealing with money. And perhaps most famously for a time were the scandal sheets. The scandal sheets were when a church would post every member of the church and by their name exactly what they gave for the year. (Which is what we brought back today:) While the upside to this is it may have provided intrinsic accountability for the idea of giving, what it did not reflect is what we are talking about today - proportional giving. While you knew what everyone gave, in a sense you really had no idea what they gave because you couldn't see how much they had been given by God.

As Jesus sits with his disciples at the temple. They could watch and witness the scandal sheet going on. This was instant instagram. Rich families coming perhaps making a show of their offering. My mind imagines trumpeteers. "Dun dun dun - hear thee, hear thee, the church can rejoice, the Zombrowski family is here with 6 bags of gold." I believe there was for many a show because in other teachings of Jesus he says, "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others." (Matt 6:2) And then you have the widow. You can almost see them look down at her. Give her brass coins worth not much at all. You could imagine them saying why is she even giving? What is that gift going to do anyway?

Until Jesus sets the record straight. Jesus reads the only metric that matters not the gifts themselves but the hearts behind them. He says about the scandal sheet everyone was reading, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put **more into the treasury** than all the others. (uhh Jesus I don't want to question your math skills) They all gave out of their wealth (the overflow); but

she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on. (literally it means her whole life.) (43-44) And here is a take away. *Unless you understand PProportional giving you can have either false pride or false guilt.* That day those who gave from the overflow probably thought, “I’m a pretty big deal, God is sure glad to have me on his side.” For all we know they were giving 3%-5% like average Americans who give \$5500 (usatoday, jul 6, 2018). Consider this chart. Look how the percentage drops by income. Some parts of the world would be like wow - that’s a bag of gold more than I can earn. But Jesus what did Jesus pick up on was someone who gave not 10% not 20 not 30 not 40, what percent did the widow give 100%.

So how does this relate to us? If you haven’t heard it recently following Jesus is an all in proposition. It’s not dipping your toes in the water, it’s a cannonball. He said very clearly, “25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?” (Matt 16:25-26) How are you at giving it away at PRing lately? Not just in money but in all the gifts God gave you? In the talents you use, the time that has been given? And yes what is the pr for giving. For some of you 10% is a stretch that will take planning, and to get there for the first time and continue in for 10 weeks that will be a pr for sure. For others of you, you’ve been given so much. There are times when you think of new ways to spend money because you are so blessed. Perhaps for you 10% is merely a starting point, because you’re sick of wasting money on things that don’t matter anyway. For all of us though at some point we need to repent. And say God I don’t want this way anymore. Dipping my toe in when I could cannonball. I don’t want to give you part of my life - have it all. I fight the battle waged against my soul when it comes to money. Lord come and change me.

And friends good news. The war is won. There is a conqueror on the field named Jesus. Those who cling to him will win, will overcome and already have. But this conquering King says *Give it all to me, because I gave it all to you.* I had a great text message this week. It read, “Is it possible that God sacrificed his only Son just to show us/prove exactly how much he loves us...not just to wash our sins away.” Yes, yes, yes!! It’s such questions that now start to grasp how wide and long, deep and high is his love. Jesus could have just waved a wand made another deal from the beginning of time to work out salvation. But his death was the payment, and the atoning sacrifice. And Scripture reminds us exactly what he gave, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed... but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet 1:18-19) And redeemed you are, won you are. Because he didn’t give 10%, he gave 100% in time, talent, and treasure. For some of you new to church or joining us online your cannonball today has nothing to do with money and everything to do with this message. You have been rejecting the Word, worldly comments and objections have clouded this Word, your cannonball is simply to believe he would love you this much and this is for you. For all of us we need to dwell deeply in the significance of this act. For it is then and only then you see things correctly. God is not needy and he is not trying to kill your joy - he’s waging war for your soul once again so he says give as I gave to you. So what could God do with this proportional giving. Let’s talk more.

When I was growing up we talked a lot of children in Africa. Finish your food because they don’t have any in Africa. You would see commercials with children on TV and after showing you the need they would encourage you to give. Now I believe these have been

replaced with pet commercials. Tells you where our society has gone. (This doesn't mean I don't like your dog, just that people are more important). But there are times where giving has been needs based and this has even gone on in the church. Good hearted people say, "Well what is the need, and to that need I will give." But proportional giving is a response to spontaneous need-based giving.

Proportional giving requires a plan, and a personal scorecard. Proportional giving is not bent out of shape with the need, because it has made a plan. Proportional giving does not need an emotional appeal that finally prompts because it's an intentional plan of generosity. So that every time there is a pay increase you also raise your level of giving. Every time you hear of need you don't have to decide in the moment, but can go home make a plan to meet that need. Proportional giving also asks a different question. It doesn't say, "What is the need?" rather it asks "What could I do 'cause frankly I haven't pr'd yet?" Paul speaks of planning and a personal scorecard when he said, "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made." (1 Cor 16:2) Look I don't want to present the need though I will, it'd be better if you planned and gave proportionally.

Reminds me of the famed football team Alabama. They have won 5 national titles in the past 10 years under Coach Nick Saban. And Saban is famous for knowing who they are competing against - not the need to beat the team, but against themselves. He said, "You're not really competing against the other team, you're really competing against yourself. Are you really playing as well as your capable of playing?" So they are known for blowing out teams like New Mexico State 62-10. Why? They are competing each down to bring their best. There are enough Christians to meet the need of most churches through tithing. But meeting the budget needs of a church is the wrong goal, and should not be the metric for competition. The better goal is "What's my pr, and what might God do through that?"

But perhaps my favorite question in this whole lesson is this, "What happened to the widow?" Did you ever ask it? So now she has nothing, and Scripture leaves us with a cliffhanger. What happened?

Before we get into that what I recognize is that to some her fate is a very scary proposition. What if I woke up tomorrow and had nothing? Some of you know what it is to live pay check to pay check and always wonder if there will be enough. You know the way you get cold sweats when you look at the bank account or credit card statement. And some offer peace. Like Dave Ramsey. And it's a good system. Lots of practical advice in the steps. But if you don't start with Give - you won't have peace. If you do all those steps and haven't given proportionally - you won't have peace. Jesus talked about this in the NT - a parable a man who just built bigger barns to store stuff, but before he could use it died. No peace in just getting finances right. So how do you have peace? It's having nothing, or being willing to have nothing and still have God. So much so that people who have gone through bankruptcy, or had to scale down, or lost things beyond just money say this, "You never know God is all you need until God is all you have."

So what happened to the widow? Wouldn't it be cool if Jesus went over after this, and did like the feeding of the 5000 - but with money he gave to her. He like opened the floodgates of riches, and she's walking away with bags of gold. Or like the fairy God mothers and

Cinderella - rags to riches. Not sure he did that it might have missed the point. Or maybe she went away and out of no where someone offered her a meal seeing her need. He often works through natural needs to provide. Or what if she like Enoch got a go to heaven free pass. Or what if she went out from here starved to death and died. You're like that took a twist. Where would she be, and who would she see, and what would the condition be after. To live is Christ, to die is gain. She'd be in the best state possible, all through two brass coins. Whatever happened - *Her heart had the right to peace*. Because her life just declared I know who is in control! I know who's got me, and he can have it all.

You've been living with fear of money some for all your life. If I know nothing else I know this: *Giving proportional may be the gateway for greater peace*. I believe with all my heart. For I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. He clothes the flowers and feeds the birds. He knows our needs and will provide. You can live with the peace the widow had. 'Cause the reality is we don't know what happened to the widow. I have no clue how God blessed her and showed his faithfulness. But I sure as heck want to find out, what about you? Amen.