

**Attitude - Why I Give**  
Series: ABC's of Giving  
Luke 10:30-37  
November 20, 2016

During the middle of the Sunday morning message, an elderly woman by the name of Mary fainted and struck her head on the end of the pew. Immediately, an EMT in the congregation called an ambulance. As they strapped her to a stretcher and got ready to head out the door, Mary regained consciousness. She motioned for her daughter to come near. Everyone thought she was summoning her strength to convey what could be her final words. The daughter leaned over until her ear was at her mother's mouth. She whispered, "My offering is in my purse."

That elderly woman was a remarkable person. Her last words before going to the hospital showed what was of highest importance to her – to be a steward of gifts God had given her.

Yes, it is that time of year, when we talk about stewardship. Yes, we talk about it every year. Do you know why?

Of course, one reason is to encourage you to help fund the projected financial plans for the coming year. VBS and church dinners and Sunday School material and music for the choirs and supporting our missionary and our staff; without our offerings, none of that happens. So we talk about this every year because we plan on doing ministry every year; we're not stopping January 1 and closing the doors, are we?

But there are other reasons why we talk about stewardship every year. We do it because we have to continually fight the societal push towards self-centeredness. An example is the car commercial: "Got bad credit? Come buy a car from us." Really? People don't have the money to pay their bills, and you want to sell them a car on credit. I bet those interest rates are high.

It's just what society wants us to do; focus on ourselves, acquire as much as you can whether you can afford it or not, and go into ridiculous levels of debt. Even when they appeal for charity, they say, "It will make you feel good." Society wants you to focus only on yourself. So we talk about stewardship every year to combat society's 24/7 influence of lies and deception.

But there is another reason we talk about stewardship every year: it's important to God. We talk about Christmas and the birth of Christ every year. We talk about the passion, death and resurrection of Christ every year. We talk about the birth of the church every year. Why? Because these are important to God and to us. Likewise, stewardship is important to God. Jesus talked about stewardship more than any other topic: more than salvation, more than repentance, more than the end times, more than anything else. So we teach about stewardship every year because it's important to God.

And this year, our stewardship series is called, "ABCs of Giving." Today, we are going to talk about "A – Attitude."

I probably should define what I mean by stewardship, and here I'd like you to turn to page 5 in your bulletin so you can follow along and take notes.

Stewardship means using God given abilities to manage God given resources, to accomplish God ordained results.

That's important. When we think of Stewardship, we often only think of our money, the giving of our resources. But giving money to church is not stewardship, it is merely part of stewardship. Though in truth, you can't be a steward without giving of money.

Well then, if stewardship isn't about money, maybe it is about doing ministry, the giving of our abilities. But what you do in ministry for God is not stewardship either. It is a part of good stewardship, and you can't be a steward without giving of your abilities.

Ok, if stewardship is not about what I can give, and not what I can do, what is it about?

Write this down:

Stewardship is about having the heart of stewardship.

In other words, good stewardship is a matter of attitude that stands behind your giving and your service. It's not what you give or what you do for God, it's WHY you do it.

If you give money or resources to God with the wrong attitude, you're not being a good steward. If you do ministry (serve the church) with the wrong attitude, you're not being a good steward

The famous parable of the Good Samaritan is a parable about the attitude of stewardship. There are three attitudes on display in this parable, and many church goers exhibit one of these three.

The first attitude is this: What's yours is mine and I'm going to take it. Let's look at verse 30.

READ VERSE 30

The attitude of the thieves on the road is not an attitude we'd approve of. In fact, even the world understands that robbery is wrong.

And yet, in Malachi 3:8-10 God speaks to Israel:

*Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, "How are we robbing you?" In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me – the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.<sup>1</sup>*

The tithe was commanded in the Law, and I can't picture God feeling much different today. He's still pretty much not about the whole killing or stealing or adultery thing. The tithe is important to God.

Let's say that you've gone to eat in a fancy restaurant (not a cafeteria, not a fast food establishment). We're talking a nice restaurant with pretty tablecloths on tables and a candle in center to set the mood. A waitress attends to your every need. You eat a sumptuous meal and at the end, you are very satisfied. What's the last thing you do before leaving? You give a tip. What is a "Tip?"

Now, if a patron leaves the restaurant, and puts no money (or something less than a tip) at their table, what's that waitress likely to think? She might think "Did I do a poor job?" More likely, she's going to think, "That guy's real skinflint. He robbed me!"

Tell me, did you owe her that tip? I say, "Yes." If she's the type of waitress she should have been, such a "Gratuity" shows appreciation for her service – for what she's

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<sup>1</sup> Malachi 3:8-10 (NRSV)

done for you. How could we do any less for a God who does so much more than bring us a refill on our drink?

For the Christian, I believe the tithe is required of us. And if God is important to us, if we really love Him, the tithe is a powerful way of showing your appreciation of who He is to you.

But the first attitude that some church goers exhibit is the same as the robbers in the parable: what's yours is mine and I'm going to keep it.

The second attitude is: What's mine is mine and I'm going to keep it.

READ VERSES 31-32

Who does Jesus say passed by this man in the ditch? A Levite and a Pharisee. These were men of ministry. These were religious leaders. These were the doers in the congregation. They were trained to serve God, but they were not going to do anything for beaten man.

In order for them to help this man, they'd have to give up something important to them: their time, their resources, personal comfort.

They've been trained to do "religious things." They've been trained to do ministry. But when the time comes to do "real ministry", they turn their heads away. Their attitude is "What's mine is mine – I'm going to keep it." They were not good stewards.

This is easy for us to do, and it's an attitude that happens all the time. Let me give you an example.

I don't get away to go to other churches a whole lot, but I have been to a few. And when the offering plate comes around, there is typically a hesitancy to say, "What's mine is mine and I'm going to keep it." So I will reach into my wallet and place just a few bucks in there – kind of like a payment for using that seat this morning or getting a drink or using the bathroom. My hour of time was worth about this much. That's really not a good attitude, is it? Sure, I can easily justify it because that's not my church home, but stewardship is about attitude, and my attitude is that the money in my wallet is mine, and I'm going to keep most of it and be magnanimous and give you a little.

There are people who have this same attitude in their own home church. Someone who puts \$10 dollars in the offering plate every week might think they are being a good steward, but they're not. They have the "What's mine is mine – I'm going to keep it" attitude. If they give \$10 every week, and you do the math, then that's \$520 a year, and if they were tithing, that means they have an annual income of \$5,200 a year. That might be a teenager working at McDonald's 15 hours a week, but it certainly isn't anyone else here.

The Levite and the priest in the parable were not good stewards because their attitude was "What's mine is mine – I'm going to keep it."

The third attitude is: "What's mine is Yours – I'll share it with you."

READ VERSES 33-37

The Samaritan was not "trained in ministry." The Samaritan was probably not any wealthier than the Levite or Pharisee. This Samaritan probably had other things to do in his life. And yet, he stopped where the others walked on by.

What made the difference? His attitude. The Samaritan's attitude helped him to overcome his prejudice, ignore the inconvenience, and give up his possessions to take care of this man. His attitude was what made his story worth telling.

What's the right attitude for a "good steward" of God? It's the attitude of ownership.

You know what a "steward" is? A steward is someone who takes care of something for someone else. If you're a steward, you don't own what you have. So, if I'm going to be a "steward for God" I need to make up my mind that I don't own my time, my money, my possessions, my relationships.

They're all God's. They belong to Him. I just manage them. And if I master this attitude, I'm a good steward.

At one time at the City Temple in London, there was in the congregation a restaurateur named Emil Mettler, who was a close friend and missions agent of Albert Schweitzer in Britain. Mettler would never allow a Christian worker to pay for a meal in his restaurant, but once he did happen to open his cash register in the presence of a Secretary of the London Missionary Society. The Secretary was astonished to see among the bills and coins a six-inch nail, and he asked, "What was it doing there?"

Mettler explained, "I keep this nail with my money to remind me of the price that Christ paid for my salvation and of what I owe Him in return."

The idea behind this series of sermons is to get all of us to that level of Stewardship. The level of Stewardship where we are constantly reminded of the price Jesus paid for our salvation.

Today, I want to challenge you with your attitude and ask you, "Are you a thief with the attitude 'What's yours is mine and I'm going to take it.'? Are you a Levite or priest, a religious leader, with the attitude 'What's mine is mine and I'm going to keep it'? Or are you a Samaritan with the attitude 'What's mine is Yours – I'll share it with you.'"

Attitude is one of the ABCs of Giving, and the right stewardship attitude is "What's mine is Yours – I'll share it with you."

On the last Sunday of this series, I'll especially be challenging those of you who have never tithed, to put God to the test and tithe if only for that one week, and see if God is faithful to His promise.

Malachi 3:10-12 reads: "Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it... Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land."<sup>2</sup>

If the promise was good for those under the Law, how much more do you think God will be faithful to us who are under His Grace?

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<sup>2</sup> Malachi 3:10-12 (NIV)