

The Eighth Word: Stealing from Your Neighbor

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[0 : 0 0] Yeah, good morning, everyone. If I haven't gotten a chance to meet you yet, my name is Ed, as both Jen and now Matt have introduced. I'm a pastoral intern here, and in the mini-series of the Ten Commandments, within the broader series of preaching through the book of Exodus, we've now come to the Eighth Commandment.

That's in Exodus 20, verse 15. That's Exodus 20, verse 15. Please bow your heads in prayer as we just pray one more time for the reading and preaching of God's Word.

Father, God, I am your humble servant. All that I am, I'm just a herald of the King. God, help me to preach faithfully to your Word, that you would speak mightily to our hearts, to our spirits.

God, I humbly offer this. We all humbly offer this time to you. God, anything of this manuscript that is not of you, please show me.

Show me now. That your name would be glorified. God, we want to trust in you all the more. I pray this time would be a reminder of your faithfulness to us.

[1 : 2 3] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand, if you're able, for the reading of God's Word. I'm going to start from verse 1, go to verse 3, and then we're going to skip ahead to verse 12, and then get to verse 15.

So it's Exodus 20. And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. Verse 12. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. And today's verse, you shall not steal. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

Please be seated. The act of stealing is almost as old as we are.

[2 : 3 0] Despite having complete access to every other tree or fruit in the garden, Adam and Eve commit the very first act of theft in human history by partaking of the one fruit that isn't given to them by God.

That one act of stealing has then cascaded and multiplied to produce all kinds of stealing in this world. For all of us, there's not one day.

We live that's not affected by that first theft, as there are over 10 million acts of theft each year in America. And that makes us live in fear or suspicion to make sure that our car doors are locked, that our checkbooks are somewhere safe, and that our Amazon packages are picked up quickly.

And some of you have gone through firsthand the terrifying experience of being robbed in person. But Adam's fall didn't just produce sin in the world surrounding us.

Adam was our representative too. So we have that same sinful desire and impulse to steal. Yet it's not surprising to feel like the Eighth Commandment is one of the more doable ones.

[3 : 53] Me? A thief? I've never scammed somebody out of their money. I've never robbed somebody. But God, knowing who he is addressing, knows we are exactly the type of people who need to be told don't steal.

When packing for the retreat two weeks ago, my wife, Christine, who graciously packed my bag, she sat me down in front of my duffel and slowly explained step by step of what to do when I'm packing, unpacking, what to do when my clothes got dirty.

This is where the socks go. This is where the t-shirts go. And out of my pride, I got a little irked. She was talking to me like this, like, babe, I'm not a child. I don't need to hear this.

And to that she responded, you are exactly the type of person that needs to hear this. And in the end, for both Israelites and for us today, we need to be reminded of this Eighth Commandment because Jesus himself summarized the law into two commands in Matthew 22, in which he says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

And you shall love your neighbor as yourself. We need to be reminded of this command because it's essentially all about love. So today we'll explore a couple questions about the Eighth Commandment.

[5 : 20] I think this sermon structure, I think you'll find familiar, tried and true. We'll talk about what the Eighth Commandment prohibits or the scope of the command. Then we'll talk about the spirit of the command and how we can obey as new covenant believers.

Finally, we'll see how Jesus fulfills both the scope and the spirit of the law in his life, death, and resurrection. And ultimately, the heart of the sermon will drive home that we shouldn't steal because we can trust in our generous Heavenly Father who will provide for our every single need.

So first, what does the Eighth Commandment prohibit? This commandment itself is a simple command given without much explanation or pretext, similar to the latter half of the Decalogue as the latter six words focus all about how we can faithfully love our neighbor.

In fact, in the Hebrew, it's actually only two words that could be roughly translated to no stealing. How simple. And for the most part, we can intuitively understand that this is wrong without much explanation.

We have a sixth sense of knowing stealing is wrong, especially when it happens to you. Just try letting someone steal your place in line or have someone borrow something of yours without ever returning it.

[6 : 44] And most of us would define stealing as taking something that doesn't belong to you. And I think that's a very clear and intuitive definition. But from the Christian worldview, knowing that God owns the earth and everything within it, we can expand that definition by saying stealing is taking something that isn't given to you by God.

for what do we have that hasn't been given to us freely? And that slight change in definition, I think, helps us understand that while stealing most clearly shows a lack of love for your neighbor, it also shows there's something not right between our provider God and us.

So we have a definition, but what about some examples? Both the Westminster and the Heidelberg Catechism helpfully lay out some examples forbidden in the Eighth Commandment, like fraudulent stealing, extortion, plagiarism, bribery, and gambling.

And while I won't go through every single application, I think it would be helpful for us to go through some of them to understand the scope of what were prohibited in the Eighth Commandment. So let's start with physical acts of robbery or theft that are most clearly prohibited here and elsewhere in the Pentateuch.

For example, in Exodus 22, in a couple different scenarios, God prohibits Israelites from stealing their neighbor's oxen or sheep, most valuable possessions in an agrarian society back then.

[8 : 15] God also prohibits moving boundary markers, essentially stealing land, in Deuteronomy 19, 14. The Bible also gives and often condemns other examples of stealing in historical narratives.

For example, even when God commanded the Israelites to devote everything to destruction in Jericho, in Joshua 7, Achan, he stole a beautiful cloak, he stole five pounds of silver, and one and a quarter pounds of gold.

It's about what an average worker would have made in an entire lifetime back then. He was then met with decisive judgment from the Lord. The Eighth Commandment naturally extends to prohibit deception or unfaithfulness for personal gain, and this is a sad reality that we see far too often in our day and age.

For example, take Mr. Bernie Madoff, public enemy number one back in 08. Mr. Madoff was a previous penny stock trader who would then go on to manipulate and lie to over 4,800 clients to run the largest Ponzi scheme in all of human history.

In total, he would end up embezzling over \$20 billion from his clients, many of whom entrusted their entire life savings to his hands. And this likely played a massive role in his own son's suicide.

[9 : 48] Given the scale of financial damage, it's no surprise to see the massive cost of fixing this mess. It's estimated that law firms have and still are pocketing over \$800 million from all the litigation and legal fees.

This is just how destructive one man's sin of theft can be to our society. It's not hard to see then that God also forbids the act of false advertising or lying about how efficacious your product is.

This too is sadly commonplace today, even in the industry that I work in. In a study by the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy, researchers analyzed the claims of randomly selected TV ads for drugs that aired between 2008 and 2010.

And they concluded that in roughly over 15,000 ads, about 66% of those claims were either blatantly false or potentially misleading.

That's two-thirds. That's crazy. That's insane. Where are the Christians in those companies to oppose these kinds of decisions and say, no, I won't mislead millions just to make a buck?

[11 : 09] To lie and cheat on your tax forms is also a violation against the Eighth Commandment. Jesus himself commanded that we render to Caesars the things that are Caesars, meaning that if we are members of a civil government, we should pay the appropriate amount of taxes and obey the established laws.

I've heard of a tactic that immigrant families who own small businesses might use to cut the amount of taxes that they owe. They take some or all the income that they earn in the States and they send it back to a contact in their native country as, quote-unquote, a gift.

The money is then sent back with a small cut to the launderer and it can then be considered non-taxable income. I don't know if this still works.

Please do not try it. But they often justify cheating the system because of their economic situation. But in the end, this is still wrong.

The sin of stealing goes beyond financial matters, however, as God in Exodus 21.16 also prohibits man-stealing. We in this world are woefully guilty of this command.

[12 : 30] We are guilty of kidnapping, of forced labor, and sex slavery. It depends on which source and how they define slavery to estimate the number of slaves today, but one thing is clear.

Unequivocally, there are more slaves today than in any point in all of human history. 50 for Freedom writes, there are more than 40 million people around the world that are victims of modern slavery in 2016, including 25 million in forced labor and 15 million in forced marriages.

In our own backyard, including, in our own backyard, the Global Slavery Index estimates that there are more than 400,000 modern slaves in America today.

These are appalling numbers, knowing that these people were made in the image of God. And just as a side note, the Bible, while it doesn't condemn all forms of slavery in their day and age, this verse in Exodus, the biggest 19.13, Deuteronomy 24.7, they all make it clear that God hates all forms of chattel slavery, meaning that a human can be our personal possession, that we could be their quote-unquote owner, that we can be their God.

Only the I am can and should sit in that place of absolute authority over our lives. Now, so far, I've been using examples of stealing that violate the Eighth Commandment, that as a church, we're more likely to say yes and amen too.

[14 : 16] It's easy to point fingers, just like the rich young ruler in Matthew 19, and say, see, I've obeyed this command. All those other people are in the wrong. But we know that when the law came, sin increased, seized an opportunity through the commandment to produce in us all kinds of sin.

And it seared many of our consciences. So much so that some stealing has become quote-unquote respectable. I know it's seared mine too. We can easily avoid sociopathic forms of stealing that we talked about, but we often justify these seemingly quote-unquote victimless acts of theft.

One of the most overlooked acts of theft must be taking money or resources from your employer and being unfaithful to the agreement that you set with your employer.

A study from the University of South Florida reported that up to 75% of employees admit to stealing from their employers at least once in their lifetime.

Typically, about 10 times is stolen more by insiders and employees than by customers. And about \$350 billion is stolen each year from misused sick days.

[15 : 36] I've had to spend time myself repenting, stealing from my employers, taking snacks, which some of you guys may have previously enjoyed for that.

I'm sorry. For office supplies, using the company printer for personal use, all the while justifying it because, hey, I work hard.

I deserve these things. Of course, I'm not saying that we should now become obsessed with productivity, anxiously making sure that every single moment on the clock is productive, especially because I know that our church works very hard.

Our church works very hard for our employers. But I also know personally how easy it is to justify unfaithfulness in our jobs. Back in my own college days, I was guilty of breaking my contract on various jobs by reading Christian books or working on ministry tasks while all on the clock because I was justifying it, saying I was doing a holy thing.

I was doing a Christian thing, but I wasn't doing what I would say I would do, what I'm getting paid to do, and that's wrong. What about illegal downloads or streaming?

[17 : 00] In this digital world, we often have become desensitized to illegal streaming of movies and music, downloading student textbooks, sharing Netflix passwords, even creating new email accounts just to save a couple bucks to get a free month of Hulu.

All under the guise of frugality and stretching your dollar. You might oppose that last one because, hey, that's the promo, right? That's the promo. But I don't think it takes a lot of humble reflection to see that that violates the spirit of the offer.

And this kind of theft feels inconsequential because we're stealing from non-personal entities like corporations or businesses that don't have feelings. there's an extra barrier between you and another person.

But rest assured, they are still there. We are still affecting somebody's livelihood. It's been estimated that Netflix is missing out on up to six billion dollars in revenue because of the simple issue of account sharing.

I don't claim to know that this is a sole cause of their financial struggles this past year, but recently, as you guys may have heard, they've cut up to 16% of their staff. There are always consequences to our sins.

[18 : 26] One of which is that sinning like this is contagious. That's what makes stealing in some contexts feel okay, not that bad. Some of us are quick to feel that if another Christian brother or sister is slacking off at work or financially cutting corners somehow, we feel justified to do the same or feel like we're missing out on some kind of life hack.

But the opposite is true as well, that righteous living can be an example for us all. Back when I was in college, some friends and I decided that we were going to watch Inception.

So my immediate gut instinct was to get on my computer and start scouring the internet of how I could watch it for free. And by the time I found something, I, by which I probably got a virus on my computer, one of my friends already paid \$4 to rent the movie, just \$4.

But me, super confused, I protested. I said, why would you do such a thing? You could watch it for free right now. And he just remarked, because it's the right thing to do.

And he was right. He set the standard for us moving forward of what was the righteous thing to do. because in the end, the eighth commandment goes beyond billion-dollar Ponzi schemes and kidnapping for child labor.

[19 : 52] It condemns this attitude of scouring for steals. We use that phrase so gleefully, don't we? Hey, there's a sale going on.

It's practically a steal. We got such a good deal on our apartment. It was such a steal. videos go viral for sharing life hacks or loopholes that would save us some marginal amount of cash or make our Chipotle bowls just a little bit bigger.

And we feel like we've won as insiders and we beat the system. And don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with sales or getting good deals. Those are often clear blessings and answered prayers from God.

But speaking from my own experience, things get murky when scouring for steals is our only objective in life, just to stretch our dollars as much as possible, to get the most stuff, and to see our network steadily climb.

Some of us are savers who live with a scarcity mindset, who live feeling emboldened by the security that a bank account brings.

[21 : 05] So no matter what happens with our jobs or our health will be okay. Because why? Because we have money. Therefore, we're quick to justify not giving or taking a little extra because what if?

What if this? What if that? We're constantly living in the what ifs. For our spenders, we feel our level of status or respect go up as we steadily upgrade our lifestyle, our clothes, our possessions, or we need to feel that we need to enjoy that next gadget with the new bells and whistles, and we slog through the work week just to live for the weekend or that next vacation.

Either form of excessive saving or spending, it's greed, and it's a disordered love for money. And with that love for money, immoral acts of stealing really aren't too far away.

Corners are cut, justifications are made just so that our lives can be a little more convenient. Speaking of which can be most inconvenient to those who have this objective in life, tithing, which comes to our final example of stealing, robbing God.

Withholding their tithe is how the Israelites ended up robbing God. We, of course, never can truly steal from God in a literal sense as everything in the end belongs to him.

[22 : 39] But following the example from the Israelites in Malachi 3, we can rob God by not giving him what he is owed. Malachi 3 reads, return to me and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.

But you say, how shall we return? Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, how have we robbed you? In your tithes and contributions, bring the full tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts.

If I will not open the windows of heavens for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. God. In Leviticus 27, God establishes a financial system to support the Levites and the priests, namely that a tithe or a tenth of all the produce in the land be given to the temple staff so they can focus on serving God and maintaining the tabernacle or later the temple.

Fast forwarding roughly a thousand years after their exile out of the land, after 70 years, a remnant of God's people return and they rebuild the temple. But in Nehemiah 13, during one of Nehemiah's absences to serve the Persian king, the Israelites began to rob God and refuse to support the temple staff financially, forcing them to abandon their temple duties, their posts to support themselves.

The entire nation then was unfaithful to God's commands and desires, despite God's faithfulness to them throughout their entire national history.

[24 : 31] So, I've gave some examples of how these acts of stealing can financially ruin your fellow neighbor, cause him to live in fear, and set an ungodly example in this world.

We steal ultimately because we're motivated by fear instead of faith. And we deem our own wealth or comfort more important than the well-being of the people around us.

Now, having addressed the scope of the command, we can now discuss the spirit of the command, that as new covenant believers who know the eighth commandment is all about love, we know that it's not enough for us just not to steal.

This is most clearly demonstrated by Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan. I know some of you heard Sean's message on this passage pretty recently, but I think it's helpful for us to look at it again through the lens of the eighth commandment.

To give context, in attempts to minimize the scope of righteous living and to justify himself, a Jewish lawyer asked Jesus, who is my neighbor? To his surprise, Jesus doesn't minimize the scope of the law, but instead he expands it.

[25 : 43] That's where we'll pick up in Luke 10. But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor? Jesus replied, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place, he saw him pass by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, take care of him.

And whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back. Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, the one who showed him mercy.

- [26 : 59] And Jesus said to him, you go and do likewise. As Edmund Clowney puts in his book how Jesus transforms the Ten Commandments, Jesus does not suggest we ask who is my neighbor, how many must I love, but he wants us to ask to whom am I a neighbor, to how many can I show unmeasured love.

And when we're looking at this parable specifically through the lens of the Eighth Commandment, we must have learned that technically all three men who walked by the helpless man, including the priest and the Levite, didn't steal.

But it was only the Samaritan who displayed righteous, generous love. He was the only one who obeyed this Eighth Commandment to the fullest.

He exhibited God's compassion by using his own resources, sacrificed his own comfort by putting the man on his horse, forcing himself then to walk, gave up his own time, and generously gave to make sure the man would be taken care of.

This is the spirit of the Eighth Commandment. It's not enough just not to steal. But God is calling us to give generously.

- [28 : 22] Therefore, our questions about the Eighth Commandment shouldn't just be limited to, is this particular act sinful or not? Or even, how much can I get away with?

But Jesus compels us to ask, who around me is in need of help? To whom can I show generosity? Paul, in Ephesians 4, 28, teaches us the same message.

He writes, let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Do you see this radical transformation from taker to giver? Yes, we must work hard to provide for ourselves and for our families, but both Jesus and now Paul expand our responsibility that we are duty-bound to help anyone in need.

Paul also challenges our motivations to work hard. Why do we arduously labor to publish that next paper, to plan that next meeting, to help that next patient?

- [29 : 36] Is it to give or to have something to give? Is it outward or is it inward focused? We as former thieves should no longer steal, but work hard to give, meaning that we cannot be hoarders of blessings anymore.

We must be a means for blessings to go forth. And it doesn't take long to take a look at this broken world and see the need for Christ's church to go and make disciples, to feed the poor, and to feed the robbed.

Understanding all the needs in this world, John Bisagno, the late preacher in Houston, once proclaimed, God has all the money in the world he needs to help the needy.

He has it all. It's in your pockets. God desires for us not to steal, but to give generously because ultimately it's for our own good.

Because that's how we store our treasures in eternal secure places. You often hear about smart, safe investments, but there is no smarter investment than in the kingdom of God.

- [30 : 51] Jesus commanded us to store our treasures in places where moth and rust cannot destroy and where thieves cannot break in and steal. He assumes that on this side of heaven, no investment is ever secure.

Your money, your car, your house, it will all depreciate, let alone the fact that none of us will ever take this stuff into the next life. And giving generously continually reminds us of those truths.

So easy to forget that. It kills our idolatry of money. And one of my all-time favorite quotes is from Jim Elliott. I'm sure many of you know it.

It goes like this. He is no fool who gives what he can't keep to gain what he cannot lose. I love that. And if you're laboring for the kingdom right now, as I know many in our church already are, be encouraged that it's not in vain.

You're making the smartest, safest investment with your life right now. But that's not the full picture just to say that earthly investments don't amount to anything because storing our treasures here on earth alone ultimately does reap something.

[32 : 12] It reaps judgment because it ultimately brings disrepute to God. We started reading from verse 1 of today's passage to remember the context in which this command is given.

The prologue to the Ten Commandments starts with, I am the Lord, your God. I am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

We must remember that God has been so incredibly faithful to the Israelites. He intimately heard their cries, their struggles and their bondage to Egypt.

So God performed crazy miracle after miracle to free them. He fed them daily with miraculous manna and gave them water from a rock.

Water from a rock to drink. Every single need that they had, he provided. He is so sensitive to our needs.

[33 : 19] So any kind of stealing or excessive hoarding or spending ultimately is a rejection of God and his kindness because it says to God and to the world, I don't or I won't have what I need.

God is insufficient for me. Or it says my convenience is more important than obedience to the king. So in the end, stealing actually robs us of greater treasures.

Almost every law regarding stealing demands that the thief either pays more on top of what he stole or he pays with his very own life. And even if you get away with stealing in this life, the God who is omniscient and omnipresent, will he not see your folly?

And at the end of the day, our sins of theft and unbelief deserve eternal condemnation as 1 Corinthians 6-9 teaches us that thieves will never, they will never inherit the kingdom of God.

But if we continue to read on from verse 9, Paul teaches that though we were like them, these thieves in these world that ruin lives, create havoc, though we are like them, we were washed.

[34 : 43] We were sanctified. We were justified. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God, how? It's only because Jesus fulfilled both the scope and the Spirit of the Eighth Commandment with an unwavering trust in his Father's good portion for him.

In Luke 4, during Jesus' fast for 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, Satan continually tempts Jesus throughout the feast, which culminates at the very end with three final temptations.

First of which, Satan knowing that this is when Jesus' physical body was at its weakest, he asked, if you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.

He's asking, why does the so-called Son of God need to suffer in this way? And maybe some of you going through rough seasons in life are asking the same question right now.

Why do I have to suffer? Satan tempted Jesus and tempts us to use then our power to satisfy our own desires rather than trusting in God to supply all that we need.

[36 : 03] But Jesus, out of an intimate love for his Father, he didn't justify sin. And he clung to faith as he quotes Deuteronomy 8.3, man does not live by bread alone.

Jesus did not move a single inch when it came to stealing because he knew the Father's good desire to provide for him. We also know that Jesus was not just not a thief, but he was a generous giver, fulfilling the spirit of the Eighth Commandment.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he always looked outside himself. He served and he gave even when he was weary and tired. Mark 6, after the apostles returned to Jesus, after their short-term missions trip, after being sent two by two, Jesus initially desires for them to hide away in a desolate place to rest and to eat.

But upon hearing the masses eagerly waiting for him, Jesus has such great compassion toward them and sees them. He sees them as sheep without a shepherd.

No complaining, no excuses, just compassion. Then he abandons his plans for rest to abundantly feed over 5,000 mouths.

[37 : 27] No physically small task. Jesus, in every moment of his life, oriented himself towards loving his Heavenly Father and loving others.

No matter what the cost. Not unlike the Good Samaritan. And we see just how far his love would go.

That despite Jesus living in sin, living a sinless life of trust, generosity, and sacrifice, he died the death of a convicted thief on our behalf.

In Gethsemane, though agonizing through prayer and wrestling with the Father, sweating drops of blood, in the end, Jesus didn't rebel in taking something that God hadn't given to him. But he, for the joy that was set before him, he endured an unjust trial, beating, mocking, humiliation, and ultimately was hung on the cross next to two thieves.

he lovingly gave his body and blood as a propitiatory sacrifice for those of us who have fallen short of this Eighth Commandment, for those of us who feel the pangs of our sins of theft, unbelief, and self-preservation.

[38 : 48] He himself bore the cost of the thefts we've committed, and he withheld absolutely nothing from the one he gave, he loved to give his very own life.

We read this passage earlier, the thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. We have been reminded of that in sinful example after example in this broken world.

But Jesus, our wonderful Jesus, he came and he gave everything that we may have life and have it abundantly. There is no one like him.

There is no one like our wonderful Jesus. And what that means is that poor thieves like you and me and the thief on the cross next to Jesus will no longer have a future inheritance of hell, but we will be rich heirs of the kingdom in eternity with our precious Jesus.

Why should we gain from his reward? We cannot give an answer to that, but this we know with all our hearts that his wounds have paid our ransom.

[40 : 03] Brothers and sisters, behold Jesus. Isn't he so lovely? Isn't our communion with him so precious?

Beholding Jesus is the only way we will ever begin to lovingly and sacrificially be generous.

And this is by far the most important application point in the whole sermon. Only by beholding our unbelievable inheritance in the person of Jesus Christ in whom the fullness of deity dwells bodily can we ever be transformed from takers to givers.

I pray we've all come to the point in our own spiritual journeys and maturities to say, who are we kidding? I can't be super generous to the needy and even to my enemies by myself.

That's just not possible by myself. Personally, in my own pride, I used to think I could do this, but years and years of trying to muster up this love within myself, I know for certain I can't do this.

[41 : 18] We cannot do and be what God requires of us by ourselves, but it's only through the past, the present, and the future work of our forever faithful king.

We must behold the free riches bestowed on us through Jesus. that's why meditating and savoring scripture is just so good because it's full of these reminders of Jesus' generous promises and blessings to us.

We read this passage too earlier. Take 2 Corinthians 8-9, for we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor.

so that by, so that you by his poverty might become rich. We are so rich in him, so rich in Jesus Christ.

Behold, all our spiritual blessings are already yours in Christ. The spirit himself has been given to you as a down payment, as a guarantee of your future inheritance of the kingdom.

[42 : 34] That's Ephesians 1, 14-16. Romans 8-32 is one of my favorite promises that if God did not spare his only son but gave him up for us all, how will he not with him give us all things?

If God spared no expense, he's given us the greatest thing, the greatest inheritance already, and proven his unbelievable generosity, why would the most generous God suddenly be stingy?

We have clear proof on the cross that God will provide for us all things. How will he not with him give us all things that we need?

Do you trust him? Do you trust him that he will provide for you all things that you need? Then our perspective of giving and living for others changes by understanding how well we are provided for, how rich we are in Jesus.

how then can we not generously give and live in freedom? In the gospel of grace that Jesus freely gives, we are enabled to be truly content in all that we have.

[44 : 02] Then we can see money as what it really is, a gift, not our God. We can budget, we can set financial goals, all wise things, knowing that we can save and spend money as intended, in trust, in faith, in our provider God.

We don't have to obsess over having the perfect amount to budget, to give, or spend on ourselves. When it comes to tithing, while we are not under the same obligation from the old covenant to give a tithe in the same sense that the Israelites were, with Jesus instituting a new and more glorious covenant, as Don Carson has said, we should value our riches in Christ so highly, our freedom from sin so highly, the gospel so highly, that we should simply love to give.

There are many examples throughout scripture and church history to show that Christ alone is the catalyst of that transformation from stealer to giver.

We see this in Zacchaeus, who is rejected by society, but accepted by Jesus. He commits then to give back fourfold anything taken in fraud.

To the early church instituted by Jesus through the Holy Spirit, where they give so freely, everything they had was in common, no one had any need.

[45 : 38] To the church addressed in Hebrews, in which the author praises him, for you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property.

Why? Since you knew you had yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. From church history, one of the greatest testimonies from a stealer-turned giver must be George Mueller.

We often know him as the incredible man of faith and prayer that led orphanages in England in the early 1800s.

But I think it's less well known that he was a thief and a drunk at a young age prior to meeting Christ. He would steal from his father and was thrown in jail even for a couple nights, neglecting to pay for a hotel room.

But after being invited to a meeting not too different from our own community groups that we have here, he encountered Jesus' love for him there and wrote, and therefore apprehending in some measure the love of Jesus for my soul, I was constrained to love him in return.

[46 : 50] What all the exhortations and precepts of my father and others could not affect, what all my own resolutions could not bring about even to renounce the life of sin, I was then enabled to do, constrained by the love of Jesus.

The individual who desires to get power over sin must likewise seek it in the blood of Jesus. George Mueller got that only through the blood of Jesus and being constrained by his love can we go and be the salt and light of this world.

Only then did Mr. Mueller go on to live a life of faith and dependence on God for every one of his needs. Later in life in one of his early ministry roles he became a pastor of a small church who wanted to pay him a salary.

But a salary is only possible if they continue the practice of selling the front seats of a church service at a premium to the rich. So then the poor then had to sit in the back.

Such an opposite trend that we have in our own church I guess. But seeing how wrong that is he altogether stopped that practice and refused then to take a salary trusting in God to then provide for him.

[48 : 08] Which he did. Walking through Bristol and seeing the poor orphans on the streets Mr. Mueller then felt God's call on his life to start an orphanage to take care of these very children that God loved.

But again having no resources he simply prayed. Prayed for a building much like a church that I know. People to oversee it.

Furniture and money for food and clothing. And he resolved to operate his orphanages on prayer alone. Asking God for their needs.

And time and time again God answered these prayers. And over Mr. Mueller's lifetime he recorded over 50,000 answered prayers.

Sometimes with no time to spare right before children's mealtimes or rent due dates. But always in the end God richly provided. For the truths of scripture will never fail.

[49 : 11] My God will supply all our needs according to the riches of his glory by Jesus Christ. For our every need and desire may we carry everything to God in prayer and trust in his great faithfulness to us.

Finally let me close with an invitation to anyone who's joined us today. And if you haven't put your faith in Christ please consider this invitation to hear this parable and consider that the cost benefit analysis really does work like this.

In Matthew 13 the kingdom of the heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

It says in his joy. It's in his joy because he did the simple math and saw that the value of the kingdom of Jesus Christ is greater than anything that he owned.

That's Jesus' claim for you today. That he is more valuable and more precious than all your possessions and anything else you could be striving for in this world.

[50 : 29] Whether it's a degree or a nice house, a promotion, marriage even. And I encourage you to find that out for yourself.

Look him up. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father we trust you.

God you are a faithful, generous God. Would you help us to stop looking to other things and see that your hand is open.

See in our lives your faithfulness to us. Every need that we've had you provided. How will you not also give us all things in the future. You've never disappointed us.

You've never left us alone. So no matter where we are, what we're struggling with, would we pray and trust that you will provide richly. We are your needy children.

[51 : 38] Help us God. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.