

# “Whatever It Takes...to Multiply” // Luke 6:20–38

## // *Whatever It Takes* #2<sup>1</sup>

### Announcements (out of Nathan R. video)

- Summit, take this in: Weekly >1k families watching services
- 20 house churches throughout Iran that have sprung directly out of this ministry, and vision for another 15 more
- As he said, last month they saw 17 Muslims come to faith in Christ...

### Introduction

I’m listening to a British podcast right now called “Noiser,” and they’ve got a series on Dictators I’m really enjoying. I’m not thinking of becoming one, I’m just fascinated by what circumstances coalesced to produce each of them.

I’ve done all the ones you might expect: Stalin, Lenin, Mao Tse Tung, Napoleon, Pol Pot--the usual suspects. Hitler’s is particularly fascinating: One of the things that allowed him to rise to power was the collapse of the German economy. Germany had been a prosperous, financially conservative nation, but after the Treaty of Versailles, which laid the fault for WW1 almost entirely on Germany, Germany’s economy went into a freefall. Slow at first, and then like an avalanche.

Consider this: on the eve of WW1, 4 Reichsmarks were equal to \$1. By 1921, the value had dropped to 1000 to \$1. Then it went to a million Reichsmarks for \$1, and ended up in the billions for a dollar. Jokes like this went around: “A German man gets a letter from the bank that says, ‘Sir, your balance is so small that we can’t afford the service on your account. Would you please come and collect your balance?’ So the man takes a wheelbarrow to collect all his paper money. On the way home, he was accosted by a robber who jumped out from the alley and stole... the wheelbarrow.”

Family fortunes, which had taken generations to accumulate, evaporated overnight. Sometimes in the minutes it took to travel from your home to the grocery store, the cost of a loaf of bread would quadruple. A train ride cost 250 billion marks; a glass of beer, 150 billion. Germany had been a fiscally responsible nation of savers; now they were penniless. Eventually, people resorted to bartering because cash in Germany meant nothing anymore.

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<sup>1</sup> Sources consulted: Craig Groeschel, “Reap and Sow,” sermon on Luke 6; Crawford Loritts, “You Get What You Give,” a sermon preached at Fellowship Bible Church on August 20, 2017; Robert Morris, “The Principles of Multiplication,” guest speaker at LifeChurch.tv; Timothy Keller, “Love in the Neighborhood,” a sermon preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on April 11, 1999; Timothy Keller, “Blessed are the Poor,” a sermon preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on April 5, 1998; John Piper, “The Kind of People God Blesses,” from Piper’s “Look at the Book” series on Luke 6:20–26, posted by DesiringGod starting on June 7, 2019.

It's hard to get our minds around that, because dependence on money is such an ingrained part of our lives. It's like the air we breathe. But Jesus' teachings on money could be considered as revolutionary as the mindset change the Germans lived through. Unlike what happened with them, however, Jesus' revolutionary teachings lead not to tyranny, but to freedom.

Now, let me acknowledge: People get nervous when we talk about money... And that's understandable. Money is our livelihood. But the facts are that Jesus talked about money more than he did Heaven and Hell combined. And that's because money is the most reliable indicator of what we most love and trust in our lives. Money is, for both religious and irreligious alike, the greatest competitor to God.

I said this last week, and let me say it again: Maybe me talking about this brings up some bad experience you've had, you've been in an unhealthy church environment, and you can't help but think this is nothing more than a manipulative attempt to get your money. If that's you, let's just take off the table you giving to our church for a while. As I said last week, it's much more important to me for you to learn to follow Jesus and I see you in heaven than it is for you to give here. So let's remove that obstacle. If you feel yourself all bowed up right now and want to walk out, let me ask that you apply this teaching by giving somewhere else. OK?

Again, we're in the Gospel of Luke, this time in chapter 6, and we'll start in vs. 20. This is from a section of Luke's Gospel called "the sermon on the plain." It's pretty early in Jesus' ministry, and we're right on the heels of him healing a bunch of people. Everybody's buzzing about Jesus, and crowds are flocking to be around him. Jesus is trending on Twitter and has thousands of new followers on Tik Tok. So, Jesus takes his newfound fame to let people know what kind of movement he's building. And **he starts by rewriting all the rules on money**:

6:20, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God... 24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation."

The first revolutionary thing Jesus taught his followers about money is that riches and God's blessing are not the same. "Blessed are the poor... for yours is the Kingdom of God..." That would have **blown their minds**. As I said last week, these people were steeped in the book of Proverbs which taught that, generally speaking, wisdom, blessing and wealth went together. And that's biblical—to a point. But, it's easy to use that idea to start approaching service to God like it's some kind of means to an end.

**There are two heresies** regarding money to avoid in the Christian life--they are the poverty gospel and the prosperity gospel (and different ones of you are susceptible to each of these)

**The poverty gospel is the belief** that it is virtuous to be poor and, essentially, a sin to be rich. You may give lip service to riches not being inherently sinful, but if you automatically look at a rich person with suspicion, this is you. After all, the book of Proverbs does teach that wisdom often leads to wealth; and that an abundance of material things is part of how God blesses us. He gives us richly all things to enjoy. We'll see that today.

**The prosperity gospel, on the other hand**, teaches that an abundance of possessions is the essence of, and proof of, God's blessing. The prosperity gospel promises that if you do things right, God will reward your faith with financial success, and a great career and lots of kids—and if that's not happening, something is wrong.

People who buy into this heresy say things like, “Well, God promises to give us the desires of my heart, and what I desired was... this car, this house, this raise and because I believed God gave it to me.” The prosperity gospel cannot conceive of serving God faithfully but going into suffering or poverty.

- **There are two major problems with the prosperity gospel. First, there are plenty of examples in the Bible** of people doing things God’s way & ending up in poverty. Job, for a while; Joseph, for a while. David, for many years. Not to mention, Jesus, who served God perfectly and yet had nowhere to lay his head and ended up on a cross—and then told us as his followers to expect what he experienced. And of course, you have the Apostles, whom Paul said were the poorest and most despised people on earth.
- **The bigger problem with the prosperity gospel**, is that it grows out of idolatry, which is what Jesus focuses on in Luke. It treats God like a means to an end—if you serve him, you can have what you really want—material blessings. But God should not be a means to anything else—the greatest blessing of God is God. And anything else you are seeking God for as a means of ultimate happiness is idolatrous.
- **James, Jesus’ half-brother, had a really gripping analogy on this.** In James 4, he tells a lot of us that our prayers are not answered because we pray as idolaters, which he compares to spiritual adultery. **“You ask and do not receive, because you ask... to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people!” (James 4:3–4 ESV)** That’s a pretty gripping analogy. Say you have a man who gets married and for several months just lives as a model husband—I mean, he’s just killing it: always thoughtful, brings her gifts, treats her like a Queen. Well, after about a year he comes to her and says, “When you got married, you promised to meet my romantic and sexual needs. I would therefore like to ask for you to arrange a liaison with your friend so-and-so--because that’s what I really need to be romantically and sexually fulfilled—and I think I deserve that because of how good of a husband I’ve been over the last year.” Any woman who would say, “That sounds like a request I’d feel honored by.” No, that’s not what she signed up for in marriage—she promised to meet those romantic desires in herself, not to serve as a pimp to set him up with others.
- When you and I serve God so that we can get material blessings, we’ve essentially turned God into a divine pimp. That’s stark language, but that’s the point James makes. The prosperity gospel makes us adulterers who seek to use God not worship him. That’s why I rail against it—it’s not just that these famous preachers have a different way of talking about things, it’s that they are in danger of creating idolaters and turning God into useful tool rather than a beautiful, divine Person to worship.

The primary blessing God gives us is not material blessing--it’s more of himself, and often, as we saw last week, riches can get in the way of that--we get so full of riches that we lose any sense of need for God. So, Jesus says, “*Blessed are the poor*” because they are more likely to yearn for God. It’s better to be materially empty if that’s what it takes to put you in a place where you are ready to seek him with all your heart.

So that’s **Revolutionary Truth #1: Seek blessing in God more than you seek it from him.**

Let’s keep reading, because **Jesus now turns to Revolutionary Truth #2: 27 “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not**

withhold your tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. 31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

Vs. 31 is the infamous "The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (The Golden Rule might be the most well-known teaching of Jesus after "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Even if you're not a Christian, you likely know this one. Microsoft Word even autopopulated that phrase as I was typing it, and MS Word almost never recognizes anything Christian. It still tries to autocorrect "complementarian" when I type it, and it doesn't recognize "disciple" as a verb (it always puts the little squiggly line under disciple when I use it as a verb and irritates me. I always stop and pray, "Lord, please let someone at MS Word get saved so they can correct this.") This week I typed in "the widow's two mites" and it autocorrected it to "the widow's two mates," which I thought sounded like it would make for a pretty interesting sermon, but not the one I planned to preach. **And yet, even the pagan MS Word recognizes the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**

**You say, "What's revolutionary about this?"** Well, it's in contrast to the "natural" rule (maybe we could call this "The Flesh Rule: which is, Do unto others as they have done unto you." This is instinctive: *'I'll treat you as you have treated me,' or 'I'll treat you in the way I hope you'll treat me.'* Either way, there's a calculating motif in our goodness: our niceness to them corresponds to their niceness to us. For most of us, this is the rule that shapes our interactions with our spouses, our friends, our co-workers, with strangers, whoever.

Jesus said, "Get rid of that mentality, and love other people like you love yourself, treating them at all times like you'd want to be treated whether they can do you any good or not."

32 "For if you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? (IOW, what would be remarkable about that?) For even sinners love those who love them. Everybody knows to treat people well who might be in a position to treat you well. Jesus is talking about loving people who don't love you back and likely never will.

33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

35 But love **your enemies**, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Jesus says, *"Treat other people how your Heavenly Father has treated you."* Because then you'll be *sons of the Most High*--IOW, you'll be acting like God. If I could be so bold, I'd call this The Platinum rule: "Do unto others as Jesus has done to you."

- You see, sometimes people treat the Golden Rule like it's some kind of karma, pay-it-forward system, "Do unto others as you want them to do to you"—and one day the universe will pay that back to you.
- **But Jesus means much more than that.** He's saying *act like your Father in heaven*, who is good to people who will never be kind to him in return. Every day he makes his glorious sun shine on people who will never acknowledge him—even his enemies.

- **I once heard about a Madison Ave exec...** He treated her not as she deserved, or with some kind of calculating forethought about how one day she might be in a place to help him. No, he treated her like Jesus treated him. He was like a son of heaven.

When you do this, you're not even doing it primarily to convert somebody; that may be the result, and that's great. But you do it because it makes you like your Father in heaven, whom you love and want to be like.

- Dan Cathy, former CEO of CFA, was here recently talking to our staff--and one of the things he talked about was CFA's legendary "second mile" service. He told us the idea comes from this teaching of Jesus, where Jesus says, "When someone takes away your cloak, give them your tunic also." (In Matthew's account Jesus adds, "When someone compels you to go a mile with them a second mile.") **The context was this:** in those days, Roman soldiers were allowed to force subjects to carry their packs for a mile. They could ask anybody, any time. But legally, that's all they were allowed to do—1 mile. When they required a Jew to do it, it obviously ticked the Jew off. Jesus said, "Not only do that, go a 2nd mile." They could force you to give them your cloak. Jesus said, "Give them that, give them your tunic also." Dan said that at CFA, they've turned that into a customer service value--not only do they attempt to give you good food, quickly, correctly, and with a smile—that's what you're owed for your money; they also offer to refill your drink or carry your bags out to the car or chase down a pickpocket if necessary—if you saw that story. Dan said that what is most remarkable is not the change this second-mile service makes in the customer, but what it does to *you*, the employee, when you show it. There's very little joy in just giving someone what they are obligated to give. In fact, it almost leaves you a little bitter. But when you do the extra thing, go that 2nd mile, that they weren't asking for and you not required to do—it produces joy in you—because now you are loving voluntarily, and that makes you like God—which brings joy to your heart because that's how you were created.
- Do you get that? If you've had the privilege of walking with a family who has adopted a child, especially a special needs child, you've seen the joy it brings them. On one level, it doesn't make sense: the child is not bringing a lot of value, as such, to the family, but there is something about showing that kind of love that brings a joy like nothing else. It's **because you are acting** like your Father in heaven.

**So, here's Revolutionary Truth #2: Upgrade** (from 'the Flesh Rule' and even the Golden Rule) **to 'The Platinum Rule'**—*Do unto others as Jesus has done unto you.*

**For revolutionary truth #3—and this may be the biggest one of all—**jump down to vs. **37: ...forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."**

### **Revolutionary Truth #3: Learn the law of the harvest**

The first part of verse 38 always made sense to me: "*Give and it will be given to you.*" But then the last part always confused me and I was always too embarrassed to ask: "*Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap.*" It sounds like a dance or something. (I mean, put a little beat

behind that and it's like the Hebrew version of the electric slide or something. Good measure, pressed down, running over, in your lap...)

- **As far as I know, this was not a Jewish wedding dance.** Jesus was using a farming analogy, because most of these people were familiar with farming. It was supposed to be a little humorous. In those days, the way harvesters got paid was at the end of the week they could take home a basketful of wheat. They carried these big baskets from the field to the barn, and normally, because the wheat was so heavy, you would only load it up half or  $\frac{3}{4}$  full before bringing it in. But for that last basket, the one you got to keep, guess what they did? They would press it down, shake it so it settled, and fill it up to the brim so that it was running over. When Jesus said that, everybody would have laughed because it was a known technique.
- It reminds me of this little Mongolian restaurant my friends and I would eat at when I was in seminary. A bowl was \$7, and you'd choose your ingredients from this raw bar, put them into the bowl and take it up front for the chef to prepare your culinary masterpiece. The deal was \$7 for a bowl--they gave no parameters, just whatever you could fit in a bowl. So me and my friends would carefully line the bottom with thinly sliced meats, making sure there was no empty spaces, and then we'd mash it down, then put on a layer of vegetables, then mash that down and put on another layer of meat, and then another thing of vegetables and we'd do this until it was running over, and then you'd stack up chicken as high as you could and carefully walk to the wok. By the time we were done it weighed like 9 lbs. The owner caught on to us... when we came back for 2nd semester and there was a big sign up that said, "No bowl packing" and he stood there watching us. But our mentality was, "I am allowed one bowl; I will get that maximum amount into that bowl."
- The opposite is what the Dorito company does with its bag of chips--you pick it up in the gas station because it looks so full but yet get it back to your car and you open it up and I swear there's like 4 Doritos in there, total. Doritos says, "You are buying one bag. What's the least amount we can put in there and have you still count it as a bag?"

Here's Jesus' question: "Which of those two best describes your approach to generosity?" Are you like, "OK, Jesus requires a bowl—a tithe. What's the least amount I can put in there and have it still count as a bowl?" Because here's the deal **"For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."** Or to quote the Apostle Paul, those who sow sparingly, reap sparingly.

**This is called "the Law of the Harvest,"** and listen—it's taught from cover to cover in your Bible. A lot of times people think We wrongly twist this principle out of a couple of misinterpreted passages. **It's cover to cover** in your Bible. For example:

- **Proverbs:** **"The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself." Prov 11:25**
- **"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with (the finest non-alcoholic grape juice) new wine." Prov. 3:9–10**
- The Apostle Paul, in Galatians: **"Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap... 9 Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Gal 6:7–10)**

- The Apostle Paul: “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

A few years ago I taught something here called “[The Laws of the Harvest](#),<sup>2</sup>” that I had compiled from these Scriptures and with the help of some other Christian leaders. Here they are: (They are very biblical, though few Christians understand these laws! They will change your life).

### Law 1: The harvest is limited to the planting

God only multiplies what you sow. In order for him to multiply it, you have to give it away.

One of the **best illustrations of this occurs in John 6**, where Jesus, wanting to feed 5000 hungry people, takes a **little boy’s lunch**—5 loaves and 2 fish, a Hebrew Happy Meal, a Levitical Lunchable—and he blesses it and distributes it to the disciples.

- **The text says that *\*as they gave it away\****, the loaves and fish multiplied so that there was enough to feed every person in the crowd and still leave 12 baskets of leftovers.
- **Notice, Jesus did not take the bread and fish and multiply them so that there was a big pile of it and then they distributed it.** As they took it out of his hands and gave it to others, it multiplied.<sup>3</sup> Technically, the miracle happened in their hands, not his.
- **I point this out because some of you say, “If it multiplies, I’ll give it away.”** God says, “The act of faith comes first; the multiplication follows. Give it away, and it will multiply!”
- Some of you might say, “I can’t afford to give money away.” Jesus would say, “You can’t afford not to.”
- I love how one of our **church planters says it: “Generosity is an invitation for God to infuse blessing into your finances.”** Generosity is a prayer; it a way of inviting God in.
- When Veronica and I were first starting out, and money was SO tight... oh my goodness. I used to lay in bed and I’d hear the heater kick on right outside our bedroom and I’d think, “Oh, how much is that costing me? It’s like I could hear money draining out of my account.” But she and I determined to give to God the first and best regardless of whether we felt like we could afford it. And sure, we’ve had lean years but I can stand up here and say, “We’ve never lacked anything. God has always blessed our finances so that we’ve always had all that we need.” You will find, as many Christians have through the centuries, you cannot outgive God.

### Law 2: The harvest comes *later* than the planting

The **hard part of harvesting** is that it takes time to see your efforts pay off. That’s why so many won’t do it--we’re an **instant gratification** generation.

- **I’m like that. When I diet**, I want to see results *immediately*. I want to eat one salad one time and be able to look in the mirror the next morning and see the difference. I want to do 30 push-ups one time and look in the mirror and see the curvature of a Greek god. **But results take time.**
- **This is even more true** with agriculture. You **sow in one season** and don’t see the return until the next!
- **Listen: *What you harvest today is the result of decisions you made yesterday.***
  - **Pastor John Muller, one of our CP’s**, told me that one of the best practical jokes he played as a kid growing up in Gilbert, SC, was after his neighbors had aerated and fertilized their yards he and his

<sup>2</sup> This list is compiled with the help of, Robert Morris, “[The Principles of Multiplication](#),” The Blessed Life 2015, Gateway Church, accessed October 31, 2017; James MacDonald, sermon on Gal 6:1–10; Charles Stanley; Andy Stanley; and Tim Keller.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, “The Principles of Multiplication.”

buddies would sneak out at night and go strew random seeds in their yards—corn and watermelons and sunflowers. **He said the hard part was he got no immediate gratification for the joke.** But sure enough, 6 months later, his neighbors had watermelons and sunflowers growing in their yards. **BTW, for you all at CPC,** this is the man to whom you have committed the shepherding of your souls. Be encouraged.

- **The “law of later” is why we so often give up on doing** the right thing. Harvesting takes patience—weeks, months, even years.

Equally as important is **law #3, the law of greater...**

### **Law 3: The harvest is greater than the planting.**

**Not only does the harvest come later, what comes back to you is greater than what you sow. Plant a wheat seed** and it turns into a wheat stalk that produce hundreds of new seeds. **Plant an acorn** and it produces an oak tree that produces thousands of acorns.

**The harvest is not just later than the planting, it’s greater than the planting. This also works for the things we don’t want to see multiplied.** Anybody who has ever tried to grow a nice lawn of fescue knows that if you get even the smallest amount of Bermuda grass, the Bermuda, like a little band of guerilla soldiers, just takes over. In my previous house, my neighbor planted Bermuda grass and my dad said, “Well, unless you put down a barrier, that pretty much means your lawn will be Bermuda in a few years.” So, I just moved. Let the next guy deal with it. **The law of greater.** What you plant comes back at you in abundance. Jesus talked about a harvest of 30, 60 and 100 fold!

BTW, this is not just true in regards to money. It’s with almost everything. Paul said in Galatians that it’s true with sinful habits you sow into your lives. It’s true with what corrupt thoughts you fill your mind with. It’s true with how you raise your kids.

- **Many Christian** parents are surprised when their kids go off to college, for example, and walk away from the faith. And they always say, “But we raised them in church.” **Yes, but maybe church and your walk with God wasn’t THAT important to you—it as there, but it wasn’t a priority.** You came sporadically. You didn’t volunteer. You weren’t in a small group. You didn’t do missions together as a family or read the Bible together. You frequently opted out of student ministry for sports events or dance or trips to the beach. **God was really a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier priority compared to other things.** Well, that multiplied in your kid’s life, so when they went to college they left the faith behind because they figured getting up and going to church in the face of such a busy and hostile culture was just not worth the hassle. See, **your half-committed heart multiplied in them.**
- (BTW, I want to be clear: I know **sometimes a kid walks away** from the faith and it has nothing to do with any unfaithfulness in a parent’s life. The son in Jesus’ prodigal son story didn’t walk away because of any shortcoming in the dad. I’m just saying sometimes we need to at least ask if what we are seeing in our kids is the multiplication of those seeds of half-hearted commitment we sowed. Billy Sunday used to always say...

**When Scripture applies “the harvest law of greater” to money,** it teaches that in **two different ways.**

- First, **the sheer magnitude of what you reap is greater than what you sow.** This is the promise in Proverbs: “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing...” It’s greater.

- So, the sheer **magnitude** (the amount) of what is sown comes back is greater. But also, and this is important, the **kind** of fruits are also greater!
  - **In 2 Cor 9, when Paul is talking about giving generously, he says, “God will... multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.” (2 Cor 9:10)**
  - Notice, Paul promises God will do 2 things in response to your generosity: he will increase your seed for sowing (that’s the magnitude); but he will also increase the harvest of your righteousness through your giving. Sometimes the greatest thing God does through your generosity is to change you.
    - **Let me ask you to do a thought experiment. Say you encounter a genie in a bottle who says, “I’m going to offer you a choice. I’ll give you 100 million dollars--but you’re always going to be unhappy, jealous, and fearful--think just about every famous Hollywood star. Your other choice is I can give you the ability to be overflowing with joy, fully content, happy all the time, without increasing your bank account one penny? What would you choose? When you think about it, it would be foolish to choose the money,** because the reason you want more money is to be happier, if you knew it wouldn’t bring you that, especially when there was another way to get there, why choose that?
    - **Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”** The word “blessed” is makario, and literally means “happy.”
    - All your life you thought you had to have a certain amount of money to be happy, and that your happiness quotient would go up as you got closer. What if Jesus says there is a better way there?

God wants to offer you something even better than money. He wants you to be **like a son or daughter of the most high!**

- I heard a great example of this: [Tom Monaghan](#),<sup>4</sup> **the founder of the Domino's Pizza**, shared that what drove him to succeed in life was really the desire to have more than everyone else. But after seeing how miserable it had made him, he decided to take a new approach. He adopted a very simple lifestyle, set a limit on what he’d live on, and committed to give away everything else to the Kingdom of God. **He says that filled him with more joy than all the stuff he used to buy with his money.** He’s the guy we always talk about who says that he spent his entire life climbing the ladder of success...
- Listen, I agree with Craig Groeschel: I have never heard an emotional “keeping” story. “Well we were thinking about helping someone, really stretching ourselves to give to the church above the tithe. But thank God we shirked that feeling off! There is a single mom who was not going to be able to have a Christmas and we could have helped, but Hallelujah we did not give. What a great day.” But I’ve heard lots of incredibly emotional giving stories.<sup>5</sup>
- This is why we say, “Generosity is not something God wants from you, it’s something he wants for you.” Newsflash. God has no needs. He doesn’t need your money. He calls you to be generous so you can experience what it’s like to be sons and daughters of the most high.

#### **Law 4: The harvest is proportional to the planting**

Jesus said, Luke 6:38, “With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” What’s in your giving basket? More like a Doritos bag or my Mongolian grill bowl?

- **Here’s another verse in Proverbs: “Whoever is kind to the poor is lending to the Lord— the benefit of his gift will return to him in abundance.” Prov. 19:17** **IOW, God gives an incredible ROI on investments made in his Kingdom.**

<sup>4</sup> <https://vimeo.com/19495108>

<sup>5</sup> I owe this insight to Craig Groeschel.

- **Solomon, who wrote this, was the wisest and richest of all the Israelite kings.** And there were many reasons for that, but one you should not overlook: Solomon was **himself a man of generosity**.
  - For example, it was a tradition for the king to sacrifice one bull during his inauguration. Go to **1 Kings 8** tells us that Solomon sacrificed 1000 bulls. He went 1000x beyond what was required.
  - **I ask you, “Is it any coincidence that the only time God said to someone, ‘Ask me whatever you want and I’ll give it to you,’ was to an extravagant giver? God made Solomon, who was an extraordinarily generous man, extraordinarily wise and wealthy.**
- With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. God is generous to the generous.
- **How do you think about your giving?** Doritos bag or Mongolian Grill bowl?
- BTW, when someone asks, “Should I tithe on the gross or the net?” I think they betray that minimalist mindset. When someone asks me that, I always say, 2 issues: “A. It’s God’s before the government’s, so I tithe on the gross. But second, and even more important: B. I want God to bless it all!” I’m tithing on the gross b/c I want him to bless the whole thing, not just a portion of it!

Last one, **Law 5: We can’t do anything about this year’s harvest, but we can change next year’s.**

- **You reap today what you sowed yesterday.** That’s true in regards to your money, your marriage, your parenting, your physical fitness, your career, your savings. You are reaping the harvest of past things you’ve done. You can’t change that—even if you pray about it. You can get forgiveness for past mistakes, but you can’t un-sin. The consequences and damage of those sins stay with you long after you’ve been forgiven. That’s the bad news.
- The good news is that *you can start to change your future by sowing seeds of obedience today!*
- Some of you **right now, today, are experiencing the bad harvest** that comes from an ungenerous life.
  - No matter how much you make, and even though you’ve got a lot more than you used to, you feel dissatisfied.. (You are experiencing the truth of **Prov 11:25, “The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the stomach of the selfish will always be hungry.”**)
  - Some of you are experiencing financial strain in your marriage. Unhappiness in your singleness. The fast and free do-whatever-I-want life has let you down. Maybe you are experiencing materialism in your kids. The feeling that you are wasting your life. Maybe you’re going through genuine financial hardship right now--and you recognize this is **the harvest of an disobedient, ungenerous, untrusting life. We can’t do anything about this year’s harvest, but we can change next year’s.**
- **The old proverb states:** The **best time to plant a tree** is 20 years ago. The second-best time is today. Start sowing different seeds today so you can reap a different harvest tomorrow.

At the beginning I talked about needing a new way of looking at money; a change even more revolutionary than the transformation the Germans went through: Money does not equal the blessed life. Holding money is not what brings the happiness--living in a Christlike way is. And the way to reap a bountiful harvest is not to hold onto your money, but to give it away. Are you ready to start living by these new rules?

**Let me close by addressing 2 groups:**

- **Some of you have never really given to God--at least nowhere near a tithe.** Are you ready to start that process--maybe you can’t quite go to 10% yet, but you can make a big step in that direction.
  - **Malachi 3:10 “Bring the full tithes into the storehouse... And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”** Test him and see. Give it back to him!

- Or, a second group--maybe you do tithe, but you are ready to take your giving to the next level--instead of just saying, "OK, how much is the tithe," and giving the minimum, maybe you're ready to say start packing that generosity bowl full to see how God blesses and multiplies.
- Recently I was with a rising leader in our church--he happens to be a very wealthy man, but fairly new in his walk with Jesus. He said, "I've heard you tell the story of the widow with the 2 mites. Is that a true story, or is that a parable?" I said, "Sure enough, it's true. It's right here in **Luke 21**: Jesus was ***watching an offering*** with his disciples where a poor woman came to the treasury and put in 2 mites, think 2 half-pennies. Financially, it amounted to nothing. [3] And Jesus said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. [4] For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." (Luke 21:3-4)
  - This guy said, "So, if that's a real woman, I'll meet her in heaven, right?" I said, "Right." I don't want her to be able to say she outgave me. Whatever she gave there, by her standards, I want to give by my standards."
  - God measures our giving and our faith not by how much we put in, but by what kind of sacrifice it represents for us. So, the question is: "*How much do you want God to bless and multiply you?*" And then give accordingly.
  - I remember hearing this great little story about **Alexander the Great...** don't know if it's true or not, but it goes like this: AtG was riding back into a Athens after one of his big victories and there was a poor man on the side of the road, who had just collected his daily bowl of rice that the palace gave out to the poor each day. AtG said to the man, "Give me that back." The poor man gave back 2 kernels, AtG waved his hand at his treasurer and the treasurer gave the poor man 2 silver coins. At which point, of course, the poor man tried to give the whole bowl back but it was too late, Alexander had moved on. **I've always thought that was a pretty good picture of us at the end of our lives, but it will be too late. Don't let that be you.**