

Reflections on the message by Paul Tarbuck, 14th February 2010

“Giving” Luke 6:20-38

There was a multitude. People had come from the coast, a distance of about 30 miles, to hear the ‘Rabbi. Jesus had to draw on his reserves to give to the people. He had prayed all night and intended to work all day. In Luke 6:20-26, Jesus gave the beatitudes. In Luke 6:27-38 He gave us rules for kingdom living. Some of them were strong words for those who had nothing. Verse 38 is the first law of Christian living. It is a liberal statement. It is unusual because the church is conservative with regard to giving and to theology. In BFC we have a doctrine that people should care for another, and share Jesus’ love with one another.

The message of the passage is this. We have to go beyond what sinners do. Giving reflects God’s character. You will be treated in the same way as you treat others.

Verse 38: Eastern markets are different from ours. There is haggling there. Once a price has been agreed, the buyer presents a pot to be filled with grain. At the time and place of this scripture, the folds of someone’s clothes could be gathered up to hold the grain being bought. The seller would fill it, then press the grain down, then shake it down and then fill it again until it was overflowing. Then it was considered full. Unlike today, grain was sold by volume not weight. God uses the measure that you use. If you are not stingy, God doesn't give you back what you gave, but gives you more. Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and whoever sows liberally will reap liberally (2 Corinthians 9:6).

So this message is about giving. What do we mean by giving? We mean firstly giving of ourselves, and then giving of the fruits of our labours. Giving is an expression of our love for one another. Our number one relationship is with God. That is what you are made for.

Time is our most precious commodity, not money. Where do we put our time? Love is about spending time with other people.

We are to give from the fruit of our labours. We use our labour to work for God, for his services. Everything belongs to God. We are to give of the fruit of our work.

What skills do we have that could be used in the church?

Each of us should give what we have decided the heart to give. It is not to be given reluctantly or under compulsion. God loves a cheerful giver. Our obligations are to God. We do not preach asceticism, nor a one world prosperity view. There is no need in God’s kingdom for us all to be millionaires. In the United States of America, Protestants and evangelicals give the most to charity. Most give 3% to 4% of their income and giving is falling. The Old Testament guide is to give at least 10% of your increase (not 10% of all of all you have). The New Testament instructs us to give generously. The Old Testament guide is a reasonable place to start. The amount given can vary from year to year according to circumstances, but overall the rule is to give

generously. It seems to me that at BFC we are generous with our money but less so with our time, and we often fail to see how our skills can be used in the church.

Our giving is part of our stewardship and faithfulness is the first requirement. It expresses the principles of grace. If we have received grace, we need to minister this grace to others. Giving is our aspect of this, but you can't outgive God.

What kind of giver are you? There is the willing giver like Abraham who was willing to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:1-18). The big little giver like the widow who gave last two mites (Mark 12:41-43). There is the stingy giver like Saul, who sacrificed the sheep he took from the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:15). There is a sacrificial giver like David, who would not sacrifice what had cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24). The covetous givers like the Macedonians (2 Corinthians 9:1-5). Life givers like Peter and John who had no silver or gold but gave life (Acts 3:6-10). There is the voluntary giver like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8). The reward givers like those that Jesus spoke about, who gave only to be seen by others (Matthew 6:1-4). There are the perfumed givers (Philippians 4:17). There is giving in a timely way, as the Philippians did (Philippians 4:14-16). But God is the greatest giver of all, who gave His Son (John 3:16).

Many give of themselves in many ways in BFC-music, leadership, administration, domestic duties, leading Girls Brigade and Boys Brigade, Sunshine club, and so on. Our resources are used to fund these functions. For example, it costs about £15 for tea and coffee on Sunday morning but spending time together after the meeting helps us to support one another.

BFC people gave to people in Belarus to make it possible to improve the living conditions for orphaned children. Recently some BFC members went to Belarus to check that the money that had been given was being used properly – and it was. You are blessed when you give, but not necessarily financially. Giving has made a large difference to the life of these children in Belarus.

Don't give everything away and then expect God to give you a mansion, etc. You'll just end up without a roof over your head. But ask God to increase His work in your life, and ask Him what He wants you to do to bless others.