



καιρός
Sowing and Reaping
January 14, 2018
scriptures: Galatians
6:1-10, Matthew
13:31-32, 2 Corinthians
9:6-7, Proverbs 11:23-25,
Acts 1:8

Every year or so, we give a pretty detailed teaching on giving... People clench up a bit when we do it, but we would be doing you all a massive DIS-SERVICE if we avoided the topic, because it shows up A LOT in the Bible. One time we talked specifically about the tithe, the time before that we taught specifically about the first fruit offering, which we will give a little context about today... But today is going to be one of those days... and it will be a little more broad.

And if you are here, especially if you have not been here very long, it may be easy to think “oh, they are just here for my money...”

“all they want is my money” -

please... we are not here for your money. In fact, my prayer is that in our community, our generosity proceeds us... we want people in our neighborhood, before they even walk through those doors to know “**THAT CHURCH IS FOR ME.**” and **they will do everything that they can for me to help me get whole if I am broken.**

we have always lived in the reality that **IF WE TAKE CARE OF PEOPLE, GOD TAKES CARE OF US...** and so its easier for me to give hard messages like this one than maybe it is for some others, because I am so incredibly confident with what Courage Church does with what we are given.

But God has **ALWAYS** taken care of Courage Church, no matter who shows up, or who gives what. We teach these things because they are in the Bible, and because we believe that what God is doing in Detroit is good

soil to plant seed in, and because we want to cultivate a culture of generosity in our community.

So Today is our first fruit offering...

we will talk about it a lot, but just a reminder that you can give on the app or with a check or cash with an envelope, just write first fruits somewhere so we know that is what it is for, and if you use the app just designate it for first fruits. And for today's message we are going to talk about first fruits, as well as giving, as a principle for your life today.

For those of you who have not been here the last couple of weeks and missed the fact that it is first fruit Sunday, what we are doing is asking everyone to pray first... God... what would you have me to give?

consider fasting... and the first fruit is a seed into your 2018 as well as Courage Church's 2018, so we are going to leave it open for two weeks, starting today and running until February 4th so again, if you don't give today because you missed it... please pray about it, and prayerfully consider the things we talk about today, and the things that you feel like the Holy Spirit is saying to you. We don't ask for a number or a percent, we just ask for faithfulness to what God speaks to you. And every year God has provided for our church.

We have been in this mini series since the start of the year called "*kairos*" and today we will bring it to a close... we have been studying our verse for the year, which is Galatians 6:9 and it says "let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up." - in the first week we just stayed right there, on that verse, and then last week we expounded a little further and looked at verses 9-10, and today we are going to open it up even more, and look at the passage starting all the way back in verse 1...

so Lets open our Bibles to Galatians 6:1-10

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **Bear one another's burdens**, and so *fulfill the law of*

Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Lets Pray

Let me start by saying this... as I wrote this sermon, and prayed about it and studied and prayed about what I had studied and what the Lord was speaking to me... originally I really didn't pull any punches... It was pretty extreme... and before finalizing it all I scaled it back a bit...

but there is a lot in my head, so I may say a thing or two that you may be like... Ummmm... did he really just say that? thats pretty extreme... I will try and tread lightly, but the truth is... when it comes to the topic of giving... of generosity... of taking care of the poor AND of taking care of the church... the bible really couldn't BE MORE EXTREME...

but we in our culture have totally dumbed it down so that we don't offend people, because there is nothing that people hold more dear to than their wallets, therefore the quickest way to alienate people is to make them think that you are trying to get what is that wallet.

And it is obvious that it was no different in Galatia in Paul's day, because here Paul writes this passage that is in so many aspects, ABOUT MONEY, and yet he does it without even saying the word "money"

So Paul takes a familiar concept... the concept of sowing and reaping...

but he gives it a bit of a paradoxical spin.

See, everybody is familiar with investing... we are used to putting our money in something that will give us a return on our investment that is higher than what we put into it.

And when we invest... who we usually have in mind is who? ourselves. maybe our children, or our families... its not bad, and as long as you learn to be generous when you have a little and continue to do so when you have a lot, I believe there is great value in Christians doing well financially... but the point is that usually you invest so that YOU will get a financial result that positions your life in a more stable way.

but when we sow into the Kingdom of God, we do it not for what we will get in return, but because of the eternal value of the impact that seed will make is so much bigger than this world or this life. And a lot of times, it seems like the farthest thing from "stable" to do.

but people are dying without Jesus, and yet we are worried about cars and TVs... and this is not meant to be condemnation... I drive a car and own a TV... I even watch it sometimes. But the currency of the Kingdom of God is different than this worlds... Christians have to understand that while certain luxuries may be nice, they aren't actually VALUABLE. True value is found in people...

Jesus says in Luke (16:11) that if you can't even be trusted with something as insignificant as money, why would you expect that he would trust you with real treasures? Malachi 3 talks about how God's real treasure is people.

people with souls, people with eternities that are at stake. and there are going to be moments that God will put before you, needs of others... in which the right way to respond to that is by planting a seed that will have eternal rewards, whether or not you see any fruit from it in this life.

Jesus tells this parable in Matthew 13:31-32 -

"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown

it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

what you do with even the smallest amount of faithfulness will have a reach that will go so far beyond you... and some of us will never know the impact that the little things had on others this side of Heaven... because it is a seed. Seeds are small... Jesus says the Kingdom is like the smallest of all seeds... and yet he says that is the absolutely safest place to put your investment because it is the one thing that, when it is fully grown, it will be larger than everything else in the garden.

You can NOT stop the Kingdom of God... but you certainly can get on board with it. Its like, my friend told me several years ago, “you need to buy bitcoin” and bitcoin was so incredibly cheap back then but of course I didn’t do it... it was all so weird to me, and still is... and there was no way to know for sure where it was going... and since then it has grown and grown, so much bigger than it was back then... but all I can do is get on board with it... or just ignore it. But me not being a part of it is not going to stop it from what it is going to do.

But Jesus tells us, yes... your seed may seem small... but its a guarantee... if you sow into the Kingdom you are sowing into the one thing that will change the whole world.

So sometimes we talk about blessings... about being blessed for being generous, because there are principles that we stand on when we give, and I will share some of them with you. **BUT THAT RIGHT THERE IS THE BIGGEST ONE.** You are planting a seed into eternity.

Do I believe you will be blessed for it? yes, and I will show you... **BUT WE DON’T GIVE TO GET BACK.** If you come up, and you put your money in the giving box because you **THINK** that if you do that, God is going to return it to you 100 fold... I am sorry, but thats not going to happen. God searches our hearts, he knows our thoughts, our motivations... and those things matter to Him.

he loves a cheerful giver, not a selfish one.

“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

We give because there are needs that are so far beyond our own needs. There are people who are hurting... there are people who don't know Jesus... and Jesus has given us a mission, to reconcile those people.

but that is part of why we ask you to pray before you give, especially during the first fruit season.... you need to know “this is what God wants me to give” or else there will be an element of reluctance with the gift.

but right before this verse, 2 Corinthians 9:6 says that: if you sow SPARINGLY... if you know you can do more but you don't... you will reap sparingly... but if you sow bountifully... guess what you will reap? bountifully... the harvest is out there... but its about value. How much is it worth to you? That will determine how generous you are with what you have! Nobody is reluctant when they are doing something for someone that they love. A boyfriend is not reluctant getting an engagement ring for his girlfriend when he wants to marry her... he values her... he values life with her and the future they will have together. its worth every penny because it is something that will change their whole life.

and if you want to reap a harvest that will have great impact on the kingdom of God... Paul says “sow bountifully.” Again, please hear me... your seed.... you are buying into something with an eternal reward. Thats what is guaranteed... and that is why do do it. We will talk about the principle of the first fruit in a moment, and the idea is “we give not knowing what our harvest will be this year. Its an uncertain gift, and we don't give it to GET BACK MORE MONEY. We give it to give God our very best and show that we are putting the thing most of us value the most, into His hands.

But that doesn't mean we won't be blessed for our generosity.

and where we will never stand up and tell you that if you give money to the church or to the poor, or to whoever, that suddenly all of your problems will just be gone... I will tell you this...

The Bible says in Psalms that “I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging for bread” (Psalm 37:45) it doesn’t happen.

Another one of my favorite verses in the Bible is this Proverb... this is such an amazing principle... Proverbs 11:23-25 -

“The desire of the righteous ends only in good, the expectation of the wicked in wrath. One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he *should* give, and only **suffers** want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. ”

If you really look at this, just like we talked about last week, here you get that sense of *kairos*... that sense of, if you are creating moments where people are seeing the love of God in tangible ways... God responds to that.

When you water... you yourself will be watered.

There is something so profound about this passage, and its rarely talked about. and this is why I try and show people the value of being generous when you don’t have a lot... because people often say “I can’t give right now... but when I reach such and such a point in life, then I will start tithing... or start giving...” whatever it is... but you won’t. Generosity is a habit that has to be developed in your life or it will never happen. It takes intention, and IF you can make excuses why you can’t give five dollars on every 50, of course you will make up reasons why you can’t give 10,000 on every 100,000.

But Proverbs says that people who withhold what they should give, YOU WILL ONLY SUFFER WANT...

see... when your financial life is “what can I get for myself” you will NEVER get there... the Bible says the eyes of man are NEVER SATISFIED (Proverbs 27:20).

There will always be more you want...and you will suffer from not being able to get it.... but it says that other people... with whatever they do have, they give freely... there is a spirit of freedom, of this understanding that it is

all God's anyway... they have a view of the bigger picture and they plant into that, and somehow, they always have enough.

Have you ever met anyone like that? I know with the people that I have seen be the most generous, I have noticed that over time, not only does God take care of their needs... but they keep being even more extravagant in their generosity... which is a sign that even more has come to them to be generous with.

but the truth is, and this is why so many people resist this: it is that WHEN you sow into the Kingdom of God, you AREN'T doing it for yourself. And any return that you may get honestly CAN be chalked up as a miracle, because it is counter-intuitive to give what you have to something that will never pay you back.

and the only people who learn to live like this, and plant those types of seeds, are the ones who have come to understand that there is an eternal value that far outweighs the cares of this world.

and as hard as this is to say... EVEN IF NONE OF WHAT YOU GAVE EVER CAME BACK TO YOU.. it would still be worth it, if it meant MORE people were reached. BUT IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT, then you have no reason to give.

but just to show you how paradoxical this all is... lets go back to Galatians... because in THE SAME SECTION THAT PAUL SAYS TO BEAR ONE ANOTHERS BURDENS, Paul ALSO says in verse 5:

each person will have to bear his own load...

so we bear each others burdens... but yet we have our own load.

WHY?

I have always been fascinated with a passage in Genesis 4, there is a very significant conversation between Cain and God. Cain had just killed his brother Abel, it was the first murder in history... God asks Cain "where is your brother"

and Cain said something significant to God in response... he said (Genesis 4:9) "how am I to know where my brother is," then he asks God this question:

"am I my brothers keeper?"

now, obviously in this situation, Cain was 100% to blame for what happened to Abel... he did know where Abel was... but he touched on something very significant in what he said, something that mankind still struggles with today...

we love to think that we are only responsible for ourselves... that we are not our brothers keeper and that you are responsible for you, and I am responsible for me... and if you don't do something right, maybe I can step in and lend you a hand now and again, but ultimately you are NOT my responsibility.

but what Paul says here is that YES, you are responsible for yourself...

BUT YOU ARE ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHERS. on an individual basis, and for the church.

see, if all of us understand that we have to take care of ourselves... that we have a responsibility before God for what we do with what we are given...

but yet we also understand that **WE ARE INDEED OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER** - how much more would the church look like the one we read about in Acts? How many more needs would be met? How many people would meet Jesus? And how much more would we hold both ourselves **AND** each other accountable... to right living, and generous giving.

and lastly before we get into some specifics for this year... verse 7-8... so these are the two verses that lead up to Galatians 6:9, our verse for the year... 7 and 8 say:

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap

corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

there is a lot in here... more than we can cover today... but do not be deceived into believing that you can sow nothing and reap a harvest... also don't be deceived into believing that God will not make good on his word the bring the harvest with your mustard seed. We keep coming back to this thought this series, of how the Devil wants to convince you that what God has spoken to you is a lie... that you wont ever be who God said you would be...

The Devil wants you to believe that your seed doesn't matter, that it doesn't make an impact, or even that you need it more than whoever you are giving too... and maybe you do need it more... but Paul says that God will not be mocked. If he says he will do something, He will do it... and He says a lot in his word about what He does when we are generous... AND WHAT HE DOES WHEN WE ARE NOT...

both in the supernatural AND the natural... today is not about tithing, but just for example, tithing is THE ONLY THING that God says "test me on this!" It is Malachi 3... it says "test me on this, and see if I don't open the floodgates of heaven and pour down a blessing until there is NO MORE NEED."

When it comes to tithing... there is a promise with it. And God will not be mocked.

And yet, some people will say this to me:

"tithing is OLD TESTAMENT" so I don't do it...

and the way that we all apply the old testament commands and principles to our lives today, I think that there IS some room for that... we are under a grace dispensation now... but the thing to remember about the Old Testament, because people so often want to do away with it... they say the laws don't apply to us, and so on and so forth... and that is fine... but WHAT WE FORGET is that, ESPECIALLY with the commands involving how you give you money... the blessings that are promised in the bible far

out way the amount you are commanded to give... and the only way to abolish the commands of old, means you are also abolishing the promises on the other sides of the commands of old.

Not to mention, anyone who takes the New Testament at its word is going to be giving far more than the tithe anyway. The New Testament approach to generosity is FAR MORE RADICAL.

if you just take Jesus at his word, he says "give to whoever asks" - we live in Detroit, and a lot of people ASK!

if you take Acts 2 at it's word, it says that everyone brought together what they did have and nobody had a lot while others had a little...

you are going to give a whole lot more if you base your giving off of Acts 2, than if you base it off of Malachi 3.

I believe strongly in following the Holy Spirit promptings to give and meet specific needs, giving to missions and the poor and the church... but I am also still a firm believer in the giving principles of the Old Testament because I am a firm believer in the giving PROMISES of the Old testament.

FIRST FRUIT OFFERING:

Every January, after really intentionally depleting a lot of our funds being as generous as we possibly can to families in the community at Christmas, we take an offering called a first fruit offering, and that offering gives the church a boost to have a little wiggle room to make things happen that God puts on our hearts... the last two years offerings combined ended up allowing us to buy our first ministry house...

this year we really want to finish that and fully get that place open, and we want to build the reconciliation table on the side lot that we bought with the house that will allow us to in the absolute most practical, beautiful way, really love our neighbors as well as the least of these in our community.

and this is the reason that every single year we ask people in January to first pray about, and then give a first fruit offering for the year out of the

uncertainty of what the year may bring... after so many were so generous already just last month...

you see, when you give a tithe, it is 10% of what you earn... it is a tangible gift that you give when you first earn money... before you spend it, you give it to God...

but the difference between the tithe and the first fruit, is the tithe you give knowing how much you have... you give it knowing what it leaves you with... its actually incredibly practical...

But Nehemiah says that at the beginning of the year, you bring the first fruit of the year to the Lord... First Fruits in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word "bikkirum"

The bikkurim is the part of the harvest that ripened and came forth before the rest of the harvest did.

The farmers would gather that early fruit, and take it to the priest as an offering.

But the thing that makes this so powerful is that the farmer didn't know whether the harvest was going to be large, or if much of the fruit would not survive. All he knew for sure was the bikkurim. The only certainty was the bikkurim.

Which of course, to us is almost incomprehensible!

If he would have waited for the harvest, he would be able to know how much he could afford to give for the year, but the bikkurim came first. It was given *before*.

you bring what comes first, and you give it, not knowing what the rest of the year may bring... it is a seed into the year... saying, "God, I don't know what this year will hold... I don't know what the harvest is going to be, or what ways you will bless me... but out of that uncertainty of not knowing, and BECAUSE I BELIEVE in what you are doing... I will plant a seed."

We did a full teaching on the first fruit called “They gave out of uncertainty” - you can watch that on our website if you want to learn more about the powerful principle... but in a nutshell that is what it means to give a first fruit offering... it means “giving out of uncertainty.”

And we do it every year... and every year God uses it to launch us into the year, to begin practically working toward the things He put on our hearts...

and I want to share this with you... its one more thought on Galatians 6... on bearing one another’s burdens, and on sowing a reaping, and really, even the way that we all read the Bible and then apply it to our lives and circumstances.

Charles Spurgeon says something about it to the extent of “often times we read scripture, and we read things like “**Bear one another’s burdens**, and so *fulfill the law* of Christ.” and we read it through this lens: “ok, where is the man who is going to help me?”

Who is going to bear my burden???

but we should read it this way: “okay, where is the man that I am to help?”

“we say: this text is a cow and I will milk it..

not: This text gives me something do, and I will do it!”

And if I were to be COMPLETELY HONEST with you guys... it has been easy for me to think that way... to think... okay, who is going to help us? rather than “okay, who are we going to help?”

because the fact is, even in the denomination we are a part of, we are considered a “home missions church” - we are considered a missionary church and so we are always raising money, trying to rally others and get others involved... we know that our own mission field is absolutely massive and our vision is far beyond ourselves and where we currently are. So it can be very easy to constantly be looking around to see “who is going to be the next person to help us get where we are trying to go?”

and again it comes back to what Paul says... we should bear one another burdens... BUT WE ALSO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR OWN.

Can you just imagine, if all of us take ownership of our own community, realizing and understanding that at the same time, we are our brothers keeper... what an impact we could make?

and that goes for you and that goes for me as it goes in our own life, and that goes for us as a body... a community of people trying to bring about real change in our city... even beyond Courage Church in Detroit, MI, we are our brothers keepers... and this year, in addition to all of the work we will continue to do in the city, and projects we will complete... we are also going to be a part of the gospel going around the world.

Acts 1:8

you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

We need to get on board with this whole “to the end of the earth thing”

and I absolutely believe that what we are doing here in Detroit has a reach that is greater than just this room... we have already seen some of the content we have released slowly begin to makes its way around the world... and thats awesome... but this year I want us to also be a part of sending and supporting people who are physically willing to answer the call and go to hard to reach areas.

just so you guys know, our church has ALWAYS supported missionaries... we give monthly to a handful of them already... but we have not done a very good job of getting them front and center in front of you all... sometimes we don't even realize what we are a part of. So I want to show you the six missionaries/missions organizations that I want us to commit as a church to supporting this year. And as long as they are in the mission field, I don't want to pull back from supporting them to support someone else... I want us to keep adding more... keep growing in our generosity and doing more.

Because we are a missions church, we know the impact of having support, and then someone not supporting anymore. But people support what we do because they believe in what we do, even though they know they themselves aren't called to be here on the ground with us... well, it is like that with these organizations and families.

These are the organizations we want to support this year:

Home Missionaries:

The New York Dream Center
The Los Angeles Dream Center
Revolution Youth

NYDC - Dawn and I were a huge part of seeing this church launched in Manhattan, and the work being done there is incredible. But New York City is the most expensive city in the entire country. Obviously, we had Pastor Brad here last summer, and I am sure we will have him again before too long, to share what has been going on there.

The LADC is the church that America built. They own a 400,000 square foot hospital and have live-in ministries including ministry to homeless families, veterans, addiction recovery, human trafficking victims...

Much of what we want to do is modeled at the Dream Center, and they are good soil to plant seeds into that type of work. You want to talk about sowing and reaping? Lets sow into something that is already doing so many of the things that we want to be doing.

And we want to also support Revolution Youth, the ministry Pastor Chilly is launching in Vermont. It is one of the most unchurched areas in the entire nation, and Pastor Chilly is taking a very unique approach to reaching it. He will be here speaking next week, and we are so excited. Pastor Chilly is the founding pastor of Courage Church, and I am absolutely determined that our church will be a part of what he is doing in Vermont. He has poured and poured and poured himself out for Courage Church and the city of Detroit, and we want to show him how much we love him.

These are the world missionaries we want to support this year:

World Missionaries:

Caleb and Corey Hubbard - China

Mark Anthony and Erica Licea - Cuba

Kenny Jones - Haiti (hands and feet project)

So here is what we are asking you to do today, and we will leave our first fruit offering button on the app for the next couple weeks because I know some of you weren't here the last couple of weeks and you are just now hearing about this today for the first time... if God speaks to you to give today, do it... but if not, we just want you to pray about what you would do...

the first fruit offering is all going to go to COURAGE... the work being done here in the city. We want to build the reconciliation table this year, we want to finish the Courage House this year so we can properly house students and launch a short term missions department... we want to close the gaps on the projects that we have started, so that we can begin planning our next big move... God has put dreams on our hearts... and we feel strongly that as soon as we complete the things that we have started, he will open the doors to see the next steps coming into place...

but what we are asking you to do is plant that first fruit seed into Courage Church and the work being done in Detroit...

and then starting today, *ongoing* we will have a "missions" button on our app and giving, and anything that is designated to missions will automatically go to missionaries, none of it will stay here... you can start giving today to that, too. We already use a small portion of our general fund to go to missionaries, but this entire fund will. We will commit a monthly amount to each of them, and then when someone feels compelled and donates generously to that fund, we can do one time gifts that are larger for these missionaries, and potentially to others.

I know for me, its so easy to just say “lets keep it all in Detroit... Detroit needs it just as much” and maybe that is true, but there is a biblical principle to giving, and to missions. and even though we have supported some of these missionaries from day one, we haven't really given you guys a specific chance to BE A PART OF THAT, and I think that was to our detriment.

ANYTHING between now and next week that comes in for MISSIONS, 100% of it will be given to Pastor Chilly to go to Vermont to start REVOLUTION YOUTH MINISTRY.

and I know that this is a horrible time to be doing that, because its first fruit Sunday, and a week that we really lean on for launching into the year for outreaches... but I believe that this is a praying church...

a church that hears from God... and I believe that whatever God told you to do for first fruit, you will do. and whatever God tells you to do for missions, you will do.

but also, like we talked about back in November... WE ARE A SENDING CHURCH.

and sending out the man who is responsible for our church even existing, that is an important cause. Even if it slows us down a bit here.

And thats all I have for you guys today. I want to see the world changed... and I want our church to be a part of it. And we will be.