

Sermon Note: Give All You Can

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

This is the final week of *Dreaming the Future*, our October stewardship series. As United Methodists, we promise to support the ministries of the church with our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, and John Wesley's third rule about money is "give all you can." Most of us can remember someone bringing a meal when we were sick or giving us a ride to an appointment. How do we say thank you for what we've received? In Luke 19, Jesus is passing through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, and a tax collector named Zacchaeus wants to see him. In Psalm 90, the psalmist closes a prayer by asking God to prosper the work of our hands.

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ6c115g-28>

In this clip from *Cinderella Man* (2005), Jim Braddock walks through a crowded relief office to a window, where he leaves a note alongside repayment of every cent he received in assistance...

Why This Video?

Jim Braddock's family received government relief when his boxing career stalled during the Depression. Now he's earning money in the ring again, and he chooses to return the aid he once needed. From a legal perspective, he has no obligation to repay it. Perhaps we can see gratitude in his choice to do so anyway.

Video Discussion Questions

1. Braddock walks through a crowded relief office. What do you notice about the people around him? Do you think they recognize him? What do you think it was like to ask for help there? What do you think it's like being back under different circumstances?
2. Have you ever needed help with something you usually handled on your own? What was it like to ask for help, and what was it like to receive it?
3. Braddock has no legal obligation to repay the aid. What makes his return seem like an act of gratitude to you? Could you understand his choice another way?
4. Braddock brings a note, a roll of bills, and some coins to the window. What do you notice about what he brings? What do you think this level of precision says about this visit?
5. Braddock chooses to return money he wasn't required to repay. Have you ever had a chance to help someone because of help you once received? What was that like?

Luke 19:1-10 (NRSVue)

¹He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him,

“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” ⁹Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17 (NRSVue)

¹Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.

²Before the mountains were brought forth
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

³You turn us back to dust
and say, “Turn back, you mortals.”

⁴For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past
or like a watch in the night.

⁵You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;

⁶in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

¹³Turn, O Lord! How long?
Have compassion on your servants!

¹⁴Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

¹⁵Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us
and as many years as we have seen evil.

¹⁶Let your work be manifest to your servants
and your glorious power to their children.

¹⁷Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us
and prosper for us the work of our hands—
O prosper the work of our hands!

Scripture Study Questions

1. Luke describes Zacchaeus as a chief tax collector who is rich (v2). When Zacchaeus runs ahead and climbs a tree (vv. 3-4), what do you think he wants from seeing Jesus?
2. In verse 5, Jesus calls Zacchaeus by name and says, “I must stay at your house today.” What do you think that invitation means to Zacchaeus?
3. The crowd calls Zacchaeus a sinner and grumbles about Jesus visiting him (v7). Why do you think they object? Would you object? Where would you place yourself in this story?
4. In verse 8, Zacchaeus says what he will do with his possessions. Why do you think he responds this way?

5. Zacchaeus speaks about giving to the poor and repaying anyone he's defrauded. What do you think is the difference between these two uses of his money?
6. Jesus says, "Today salvation has come to this house," and calls Zacchaeus a son of Abraham (v9). What do you think salvation means here? What do you think being called a son of Abraham means, both to Zacchaeus and to the crowd?
7. In Psalm 90:14, the psalmist asks God for steadfast love so that "we may rejoice and be glad all our days." Would you want to add anything to that prayer? If so, what?
8. The psalm ends with "prosper for us the work of our hands" (v17). What work would you ask God to bless, whether it's paid or unpaid work? What would you hope for that blessing to look like?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. In *Earn. Save. Give.*, James A. Harnish describes "charity" as a response to a particular need and "stewardship" as a lifelong practice. Do you see this distinction? Has giving made a difference in your life? If so, how?
2. Dr. Harnish describes three kinds of givers: "tossers," "tryers," and "tithers." Tossers give occasionally without a plan, tryers are developing a regular practice of giving, and tithers give a tenth of their income. How would you describe your own giving, and how do you think God is calling you to give?
3. In *Enough*, Adam Hamilton asks what people would want to be remembered for. Who do you remember for their generosity? What did they do? How do you want to be remembered?
4. Rev. Hamilton writes about fear and the desire for more possessions as reasons people hesitate to give. What helps you decide what to share while still caring for your own needs?
5. Rev. Hamilton describes giving as a way to thank God. When have you been grateful for something God has done in your life? Who have you told about it? How have you responded?

Weekly Action

Set aside quiet time to thank God for what you've received and ask for guidance about your commitments for 2027. Read the letter and brochure, consider your financial giving, and fill out your pledge card. Bring it to church on Commitment Sunday (or return it by mail, drop it off at the church office, or complete the [online card](#)). Spend time in prayer about supporting the ministries of your church with your prayers, presence, service, and witness, too. Write down on a note pad (or a note on a digital device) how you feel God is calling you to pray, to participate in the life of La Jolla UMC, to serve others, and to share your faith. Talk with a trusted spiritual partner or family member about the commitments you're making.

Prayer

Generous and loving God, we thank you for the people who have fed us, cared for us, and shared what they had when we needed help. All we have comes from you, including what we offer in return. Help us use our money and our time to care for our neighbors, and give us words to tell others what you have done. Through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

This content was developed by Rev. Bob Rhodes using source materials from Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church, his own original writing, and AI tools in alignment with La Jolla UMC AI Usage Guidelines. AI assisted with drafting and iterative refinement. All final text was reviewed and approved by Rev. Rhodes.