

The Giving Tree

I want to begin our lesson tonight by bragging on Sean Cauthen...

This past Sunday, Sean got up and made an announcement that nobody told him to make. I didn't even know he was going to be standing up and making that announcement about giving... Timothy Hill Boys Ranch.

Something dawned on me. Not something good.

And I'll take complete responsibility for it. And here's what hit me: when was the last time we did a service project? I'm serious. Can you think of the last time outside of We are the Sermon Day that we did something? It's been a while, and that's not really a good thing.

The Giving Tree

I was thinking about that idea of giving, and I thought about a book that probably a lot of you read when you were younger. In fact, maybe you've never read it! Maybe you've only had it read to you! How many of you have read it or had it read to you?

Read The Giving Tree.

I'm not sure what strikes you about that story. But to me that story to me is kind of like a parable.

The Giving Tree is the story about a tree that loved a little boy so much that it gave and it gave and it gave until it hurt. And it keeps on giving.

If you think about it, the cross is God's Giving Tree, and it tells the story about a God who loves you and I so much that He gave and He gave and He gave until it hurt. And He keeps on giving.

The tree where God gave us everything. His all. His one and only Son. And Christ gave up His all, laying down His very life. Why? All because He loves us.

John 3:16 is probably familiar to you but it fits so nicely here. (quote it)

Tonight there's one question I want you to spend a lot of time thinking about: What will you give?

Luke 21:1-4 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, **2** and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. **3** So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; **4** for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

Think about this scene.

-Rich people. Sure! Yeah, I'll drop a check in the collection plate!
-But then here comes a poor widow. Nobody's paying her bills. Her husband is dead. And so she comes into the church building there may be some around who look down at her and think, "Oh, man. Another beggar. She's going to come and ask me for money."

But that's not what happens at all!

Imagine seeing a beggar on the side of the road that when you stopped to give them something they said, "God has blessed me" and they give you \$20!

Jody showed me this video this week and it's pretty powerful. It's a pretty cool video that illustrates the beauty of giving what you have.

Watch this. (Show video)

This woman was “supposed” to be doing what she was doing here! SHE WAS POOR AND SHE GAVE. That’s not “supposed” to happen!

So what’s Jesus saying here?

Someone says, “Hey, can I have \$1?” And you’ve got \$100. What’s your answer? You’d probably say, “Ok. Sure.”

But what if someone asks you for \$1, and the only thing you’ve got to your name is \$1. What would you do then?

Jesus says “It’s easy to give, when it’s easy to give. But do you give even when it hurts to give? Do you give when it costs you something?”

Maybe you don’t have money. What do you have to give? How about your time? Giving of your time can cost you something. Maybe time not playing video games, or time not sitting on the couch watching Netflix, time not playing Minecraft.

And so as we wrap up tonight, let’s close with that question that we’ve been asking you to consider all night: what will you give?

We want you to be thinking about that this month. I want to introduce you to our Giving Tree.

Tonight, we’ve asked you an important question and we’ve asked you to consider it over and over again for the last several minutes: what will you give?

Ornaments. I want to challenge you to write something down.

Money, maybe it’s your time, maybe you help tutor someone, or you decide to clean that bathroom at home, or cook for your parents, or maybe you give an old friend that moved away a phone call, encouragement, it could be your lunch money, it could be a full tank of gas,

it could be someone else’s meal at the drive thru, you guys dream up whatever you want to dream up!

We’re going to give a couple of minutes to gather your thoughts and we want you to write that down on the ornament that is your hands, and then pass them to the end of your aisle, and we will pick them up and hang them on the Giving Tree. So by the end of our class, we should have a tree full of ways that you guys have decided to give.

*I need about four high school boys who don’t have anything in mind to raise your hands who would be available to help with a special project this coming Saturday. The time is flexible.

Don’t put your name on it, just put what you’d like to give this week.

So write down what you will give, pass it to the end of your aisle, and we’ll hang it up on the Giving Tree.

We’ll give you a couple of minutes to write something down, and then we’ll sing some songs about giving, and whenever you finish your Giving Tree Ornament, just pass it to the end of your aisle.

Lesson 2:A Giver Delivers

Listen to this. These are the things that you guys hung up on our MJYG Giving Tree last week. I love these.

1. i can give a dollar or two.
2. Give food to the one who does not have any.
3. Buy someone lunch
4. teach kids at school about God
5. play with little kids after church
6. love
7. my life
8. time to visit old folks at nursing home
9. give to the needy
10. donate blood
11. give someone words of encouragement when they are down
12. my strength
13. friendship
14. encouragement to make phone call to elderly family members
15. dinner to a family
16. What will you give? This person said: what people have given me
17. to give my time to a sick friend. to take and/or send an anonymous gift to this family whose young wife and mother is dying of cancer.
18. invite to church
19. buy a meal for someone in the drive thru and leave a devotional thought for them
20. pay for kids lunches who can't afford it
21. sit with someone who's alone at lunch, so they have someone to talk to
22. give a box full of gifts to a waitress
23. time to listen to someone and help them with problems and try to help them out
24. talk to a far away person
25. meals for the needy
26. prayer
27. money to the homeless
28. patience
29. bracelets for El Salvador kids and 25 cents for veterans and childrens ranch
30. tutoring
31. give time for relationships
32. attention
33. money for Amanda Ray foundation and visit her
34. give money to a teacher that has cancer
35. give \$10 to 5 homeless people

36. hold doors open for the elderly
37. give money to program that Shaun is doing
38. give some of my time to read Bible
39. my attention to other's at school who may not get much attention
40. give food and coats to homeless because they don't have heat or meals everyday
41. give \$ to a friend who needs it
42. a sympathetic ear and a kind word to however many people need it
43. if in the the middle of the road i see a poor person i will give him some money if i have some money in my pocket (or food)
44. I'll give a Bible
45. a smile
46. gratitude
47. give money to the man who stand outside near target with his dog selling papers
48. give my time to my family to be with them
49. help others fix something
50. give time to someone who does not have as many friends
51. spend time with the mentally challenged kids at school
52. step out of comfort zone in order to comfort someone
53. my heart, my ears
54. extra clothes to people who need it more than me
55. my hands
56. time to write letters to my cousin
57. the money i've saved for shoes
58. Help for french homework
59. talk to someone who looks lonely,
60. spend quality time with my friend who i haven't talked to in a while
61. effort
62. help tutor some of my friends in algebra
63. I will help the special needs children at school
64. give donations to centers for the homeless
65. i'll give my time, to those who need it, my tears to people who need someone to cry with, my money, and anything that God tells me to give.
66. i can help my older neighbor do lawn work
67. my knowledge of Christ,
68. give compliments
69. play with kids after school
70. make those around me happy
71. pay for someone at the candy cart at school

72. play with the new kid across the street

When I was in middle school and in high school, there was this man, this extremely wealthy man, that went to church with me. He sort of looked like Colonel Sanders, dressed like that. And I'm pretty sure he was a racist. He had a statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest constructed on the side of the Interstate in Nashville. NBF was the guy who started the KKK.

Well, anyway this guy that I went to church with was loaded with money, and everybody who knew him knew that.

And every week, he would write a check for \$0 sign his name and drop it in the collection plate. What kind of message did that man send?

Tonight, I just want to make a simple point and the lesson is yours. It'll be a short and sweet lesson tonight, and we'll have more time in cocoons.

Here's my point: a giver delivers. A giver follows through. A giver doesn't just talk about giving. A giver gives. A giver delivers.

Givers deliver. They see something. They feel something. They do something.

James 2:14-17 14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

"Hey, man! You look cold! You look hungry! Well, stay warm! Don't eat too much!"

What's James saying?

He says

17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Oh, you're a Christian! You're a person alive in faith! James says, not if your faith doesn't do something! A faith that doesn't act, is dead.

You see, it's not enough to just to see someone's hurt: we must follow through and give something. A giver delivers.

1 John 3:16-18 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

A giver delivers. They see something. They feel something. They do something.

Tonight, we want to challenge you to be a giver that delivers. We want you to see something, feel something, and do something. By the way, that's exactly what the Good Samaritan did. He saw the man, he was moved with compassion (he felt something), and then he did something to show he cared.

And so tonight everybody was given an ornament with something already written on it. We want you not just to get an ornament with something written on it. We want you be givers that deliver. Follow through. Do what's written on the card.

Let me share with you some of the things that are on the cards tonight. We've got some really cool opportunities for you to be a giver that delivers.

12 Days of Christmas Dinners! (James Edens)

1. Bring a frozen TV dinner to class next Wednesday (12 Days of Dinners for James Eddins)

2. Play with a little kid after church.
3. Sing songs with the little kids on the stage on Sunday at 5:45
4. Cook dinner for your parents
5. Clean the bathroom at your house.
6. Call up a friend that moved just to say you miss them and see how they are doing.
7. Bring a coat to class next week for a homeless shelter.
8. Make an extra lunch and give it to someone at school that needs it.
9. Give your lunch to someone that doesn't have anything for lunch.
10. Pay for someone's gas at the pump.
11. Buy the car's meal behind you at the drive-thru.
12. A pair of socks for the homeless
13. Some spare change for Timothy Hill Children's Ranch
14. Diapers for Agape's pregnancy center
15. Write a card to Chandler Williams
16. Send a letter to someone
17. Send a letter to the Fowlers. (Missionaries in Brazil)
18. Bring a pair of gloves to class next week for a homeless shelter
19. Send someone a yeti bear
20. Bring your teacher breakfast one morning.
21. Mail a card to an elderly person at Church.
22. Pitch in money to support a Thanksgiving meal for a preacher family in Latin America
23. Buy a meal for a homeless person.
24. Give some money to a homeless person.
25. Meet someone new in the youth group and buy them a small gift (candy, etc.)
26. Bring a friend to church
27. Rake leaves for someone without being paid.
28. Leave a gift in your neighbor's mail box.
29. Write a note to your past bible class teachers before being in the youth.
30. Write a note to an elder and his wife and send a small gift.
31. Bring a pair of shoes to give to a homeless person
32. make a handmade gift for someone
33. pick up trash in the park or road or street in you neighborhood
34. bake cookies or brownies for someone
35. thank the police officer who directs traffic after church
36. The next 49 are for Homeless Care Packages...how they work.
37. The final 42 are items for our food pantry to feed hungry people here in the city of Mt. Juliet.

This week, be a giver that delivers. Let's all follow through and take responsibility with what we have been given! Let's pray.

Cococonversation Starters for this week:

1. Begin by going around the room and letting everyone share what is on their ornament.
2. What's the greatest physical gift you have ever received?
3. Does giving come easily to you or is it hard? Why?
4. Look up 1 John 3:16-18. How is physical giving connected to our spiritual walk?
5. What are some lessons that you've learned yourself when it comes to giving?

Lesson Three: Giving Jesus

Recap: The Giving Tree.

Last week: We talked about how a giver delivers. And so we really pushed hard for you guys to follow through on what you're supposed to give.

Have you ever asked for something and what you got was way more than you asked for?

Hey, I like your shirt.

Really? Do you want it?

Ummm...seriously?

Yeah seriously. It's yours take it. I want you to have it.

(HeMan poster)

Acts 3:1-10 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. **2** And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. **3** Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.

Even since the days of the Bible, people have known that if you're in need of money, go to a place of worship, because there are typically good-hearted people there that will help you out if they can. Churches are known for being places where people can get help in their time of need.

It would blow you guys' minds to know how many people come to the church building every week that need something, whether it's food, or gas money, or their electric bill, or their gas bill, or some kind of other financial need.

Here's a guy who needs some money to live and he's sitting outside of the temple and Peter and John walk up and he asks them for money.

4 And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." **5** And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. **6** But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" **7** And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. **8** And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. **9** And all the people saw him walking and praising God, **10** and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

I asked you minute ago if you had gotten something that was way more than what you asked for?

Story of Tanner Primm & Emilie Shannon. He said, "Hey, tell your mom I'm coming over for dinner tonight." He was probably flirting, and he was asking for a meal. He didn't realize he was begging for Jesus.

People are begging for Jesus, some of them just don't know it yet.

Here's a man who asked for something, and he got more than he could've ever begged for!

And the natural response is "Yeah! He asked for money and ended up being healed!"

And yes, that's true, but notice that this miracle wasn't just about doing something nice for a beggar. It was an opportunity to share the Name of Jesus Christ our Healer. That was the true gift of Peter and John: the message of the healing power of Jesus Christ.

What he received from Jesus Christ was more than he could've ever asked for.

Every year, we take a trip to El Salvador for a mission trip. Btw, how many of you are going?

You won't be able to give them hundreds of dollars, even though you'll want to. You won't be able to bring back 30 orphans from the children's home there, even though you'll want to. You may not be able to meet the physical and financial needs of everyone you meet.

But it's just like Peter said, "I don't have silver and gold, but let me give you what I do have."

And he gave him the healing power of Jesus.

"I can't do that! I can't perform miracles! I can't heal the blind! I can't make the lame walk! I can't part the waters! How am I supposed to give people the healing power of Jesus?"

The healing power of Jesus isn't about making the lame to walk or the blind to see. The healing power of Jesus is about how He brings about healing to our sin.

That's why we can give Jesus to our neighbor. Show Jesus to your waitress. Show Jesus to the guy in your class that you know is searching for something.

You know, mission trips like the one in El Salvador are so unique. I love how we're able to do so much down there. But the truth is, we could give away houses, medicine, iPads, and bundles of money to the everybody we meet in third world countries, and it still wouldn't save their souls. We could meet every physical need, but it still wouldn't meet their need for a Savior.

Why take mission trips? Because we believe in giving that the one thing that people need most, is Jesus Christ.

That which we have, we give to them: Christ.

People all around us are begging for Jesus, some of them just don't know it yet.

The atheist at your school needs Jesus. The bully at your school, the one who was a jerk to you this past week, needs Jesus. The teacher that everybody hates needs Jesus. The new student in your class needs Jesus. That guy who gets high all the time and laughs his way through school needs Jesus. That girl that's just a little bit awkward needs Jesus. The lunch ladies in the cafeteria need Jesus.

The girl with the bad reputation needs Jesus. The Goths at your school, the group that dressed out in all black needs Jesus. The people on your football team, your baseball team, your soccer team, your softball team, need Jesus.

The guy that sits next to you in your 1st period class that always looks so sad needs Jesus.

Will give Jesus to them?

Over the last three weeks in our Giving Tree series we've talked a lot about giving to people's physical needs. We gave you ornaments the first week and said what can you give? And then last week we gave away a bunch of ornaments filled with different items that we wanted you guys to bring in each week.

But tonight, as we wrap up this series we wanted to present you with an opportunity to give spiritually. We've been thinking a lot about physical gifts but tonight we want to focus on meeting people's spiritual needs.

Post-It Notes to ornaments. We want everybody to take 5 of these and pray over them this week...

-In Cocoons, everybody take time to pray over the requests that they will have in their hands.