**Tapping the Source**

My grandfather on my mother’s side, the one who is descended from John Wesley Hardin, lived near Florence, Missouri. It was and still is a rather primitive place. The last time I was there I was about 9 years old.

Grampa had outdoor bathroom facilities and water came from a hand pump. Each day before you could draw water you had to prime the pump by pouring some water into the pump itself, then when you worked the handle you could draw water from the well.

Hand pump water supply is so foreign to us that few know or understand the way it works. A hand pump taps into an aquifer, a geological formation like a cavity that contains water or an underground river. The aquifer supplies the water for the well.

If you don’t pump water regularly, like every day, the underground river changes course and the tributary that feeds that well dries up, so there is no water supply.

The source of the water is the underground river, not the well. The well is the means by which you tap into the source. There’s a difference between the source and the means.

For my grampa, the source was the underground river. The well was the means through which the water got to him. To enjoy fresh water my grampa had to continually tap into the source by means of his well.

We can learn an important lesson from this. We enjoy plentiful material blessings. All of us here are among the richest people in the world. To most of the world we are the 1%.

The source of our riches is God. The means through which through which God gets those blessings to us are our jobs, our bank accounts, our intellect, our savings, our parents, our land, etc. Learn this lesson, **God is the source. Our material resources are means**.

Some people recognize that God is the source of all material blessings and honor Him accordingly. Some people never do. Yes there are people who don’t honor God for His blessings and still enjoy the means. That’s up to God how He chooses to handle that. He can choose to bless or withhold His blessings however He wishes. I’m not going to second guess God.

Today I want you to think about how this aforementioned lesson applies to what we give in our offerings. If we trust God, recognizing that He is the source of material blessings, He promises to bless us with the means of material blessings. God says, by giving generously out of our love for Him, we tap into the real source of blessings.

I’ll make this simple. I’m talking about money; about what we give or don’t give through our offerings at church, or support for ministries and missions.

Today and for the next two weeks I’m going to teach about money and I do so without apology. That’s not all we talk about here at ACC, in fact I have been rightly criticized for failing to teach this often enough.

As one former Elder told me, I’m keeping blessings from some people when I don’t teach this. So if you want to learn what the Bible says about giving tune in right now and come for the next two weeks.

I’m certain that some people here are missing blessings God has prepared for you because you don’t believe He’ll do what He promised. Maybe you don’t know or understand His promise so I’ll do my best to make it clear.

Statistics about giving in American churches:

        80% of Americans give, but only 2%

        5% of Christians tithe

        37% don’t give at all

        Those who tithe

o   Give 10-25%

o   70% give more than 10%

        Average giving among American Christians is $17/wk.

o   250 people/week

o   X17 = $4250

I’m not serving a porterhouse steak on a garbage can lid. This is prime truth based on the faithfulness of the source of all blessings.

Your attitude about giving will be radically changed if you truly recognize that God is the source of your money. If you believe that your money comes from your hard work you’ll see giving as intrusive. It’s your money and you don’t have to give it away.

If you believe that God is the source of money, you’ll see the value of tapping into the source. You’ll care more about your relationship with the source than you will about the money itself. If you get this right, as Philippians 4:19 says,

God will…*meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus*.

That’s a wonderful promise and I wouldn’t teach it if I were not 100% confident that God is faithful.

There is a Biblical axiom called the Law of the Harvest written succinctly by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:7, *A man reaps what he sows*.

The Law of the Harvest applies to every part of our lives.

        My daughter Bethany has an extensive vegetable garden. In fact most of the landscaping at their house is edible. The more vegetables she plants, the more vegetables she will harvest.

        The more grace you show to other people the more grace you will receive from other people.

        If you work for a wage, the more hours you work the more dollars you will receive.

There may be no more practical application to this axiom than what and how we give money. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to apply the Law of the Harvest to our giving. Writing about weekly church offerings he wrote,

*Remember this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously*. 2 Corinthians 9:6

There is a cause and effect relationship between giving and receiving. The more generous you are with your money the more God will bless you.

Giving is not a gamble. It’s a guaranteed investment. Jesus said:

*When you give…your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.* Matthew 6:3f When you give God sees and rewards you.

At another time He said that no gift goes unseen by God.

*If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”* Matthew 10:42

Jesus said,

*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.*

*And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you?*

*So do not worry, But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* Matthew 6:25f, 28-30, 31, 33

Do you want to be blessed? Then, according to Jesus, don’t worry about money. Rather trust the source of money.

Many Christians who trust this axiom in most areas of life, for some reason do not as it applies to money. They’re afraid to give generously because they don’t believe that God will provide the rent payment or the NIPSCO bill. That’s especially true when funds are tight.

Don’t raise your hands – How many here have at some time reduced your giving when money got tight? Did that decision result in blessings?

It’s one thing to believe in God, it’s quite another to believe God. God said, *He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food*

*will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion.* 2 Corinthians 9:10f

God wants us to trust Him and He promised to reward us when we do. He doesn’t tell us exactly how He will reward but He promised that we will be able to be generous.

I am not advocating a health and wealth gospel. This isn’t about investing in God anticipating receiving 120% return on investment. That would be a selfish abuse of scripture. This is about following God’s purposes to which He promises blessings.

There are three specific rewards that God promises if we obey Him in giving.

**Number 1**: He promises to make us rich in every way.

Notice how “rich” is defined: *You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous.* 2 Corinthians 9:11 *Rich in every way* means to be able to give generously in every way.

God will make you rich in your spiritual and emotional life. He’ll make you able to be generous in grace toward people, in forgiving, in caring, in wisdom.

He’ll also make you rich in money, but I warn, if your plan is to use God to make you rich for your own sake, it’s not going to work.

The Bible says, *People who want to get rich fall into temptation*

*and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.* 1 Timothy 6:9f

The health and wealth gospel is about giving to get. I’m talking about giving to get to give again.

I think many Christians don’t really believe that God rewards with money. Many credit their wealth to their own effort and hard work. Effort and hard work certainly help, but God promises to make us rich in every way if our purpose is not for our pleasure but is so that we can serve His will.

The Bible says that wealth and riches come from God (1 Chronicles 29:12).

In Proverbs 3:9f we read, *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 new wine.*

**Number 2**: He promises that we will receive more than we give.

Jesus used an easily understood analogy: *Give, and it will be*

*given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.* Luke 6:38

You know when you open a box of cereal it says on the box, “*Sold by weight not by volume. Contents may have settled during shipping*.” No Kidding! The boxes were tossed around in production, then put in larger boxes for shipping. They were moved by a forklift, placed on a semi and driven a thousand miles, shaking all the way. You look inside and they weren’t kidding. It’s only about 2/3 full.

Jesus said that God gives according to volume, He fills the box, presses it down and shakes it and fills again until the box can’t contain any more.

*With the measure you use, it will be measured to you.* That’s not just the about amount we give. It’s also about how. If you give selfishly, don’t expect generosity in return. God sees your heart and responds accordingly.

His promise is that if you’re generous with your blessings, including money, you’ll receive from Him more than you give.

**Number 3**: You’ll receive greater blessing. “Greater” doesn’t just mean more. It includes “better” or maybe “gooder”.

In a speech to the Elders of the church in Ephesus Paul quoted Jesus, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*. Acts 20:35

That’s a familiar quote and one we probably all agree with except when we’re talking about money. If we really believe that God will give us more than we give we’ll never balk at tithing, that is giving 10%. I suppose people don’t give a tithe because “*they can’t afford it*.” That means, of course, that they don’t trust God to do what he promised.

Even when money is tight we’d have no problem giving knowing that we’ll receive a greater blessing than we give. If you’re undecided about tithing because you’re not sure God will bless you consider this. He already has. The fact that you have anything at all from which to tithe is evidence that God has already blessed you.

So what you give is much less than you received already. You’ve been blessed to be able to give. God still promises greater blessing if we obey Him.

You’ll receive a greater blessing knowing that your giving participates in God’s ministry. Your gift is an investment in the Kingdom and mission of God.

Sometimes your giving is not to your church but you give directly to someone in need. You’ll receive a greater blessing because you get to see the excitement and gratitude of the one who receives from you, and that’s a great feeling.

When you give you truly receive more than you give.

What matters more to you, the source of your blessings or the blessings themselves? Be honest. Do you trust your job and your bank account, or God who provides? Really. Which do you trust?

Tommy Oaks is a great friend of our church. Some of you haven’t met him yet but you will one day. Tommy and his son John Thomas go to different churches like traveling evangelists but they’re more encouragers as they lead worship and Tommy preaches. We’ve had them here 21 or 22 times. Each time we are uplifted and encouraged as a church.

One time, preaching about trusting God he told the story from 2 Kings about a woman whose husband had died holding some debt. She begged the prophet of God Elisha to save her because the creditors were coming to take her sons away as payment. Law allowed that in such cases the sons would work until the debt was paid or until the year of Jubilee.

Elisha asked what she owned that she could sell. She said all she owned was a small flask of oil.

He told her to go to all her neighbors and borrow containers, pots, pans, jars, anything that can hold oil, then go into her house and after closing the door, pour the oil she had into the containers.

When she poured the oil her original jar never emptied. She continued pouring until she had filled every container she had gathered. Then the flow of oil stopped. Elisha said she could pay her debts by selling the oil and then she and her sons could live off the rest.

Tommy’s message was that the amount of God’s provision for her was in direct proportion to her trust. She received as much oil as she was prepared to receive. It seems God would have filled as many containers as she had. His blessing would have continued until she had all she could handle. It all depended on her trust.

God does that. He responds to how much we trust Him. Whether it’s family problems, health problems, or financial problems, the source of our blessings gives the means of our blessings according to the level of our trust.

Ask yourself, “*How much do I trust God?*

        *Do I trust Him enough to give generously, like He gives?*

        *Do I believe that He will provide all my needs?*

        *Am I willing trust God more than I trust my bank account and my job?*

Tap into the source of blessings, not the means of blessings. God is faithful and will bless according to your trust.