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SPEAKER

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The Good Life

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7

TITLE

Giving Freely

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 3:9-10; 11:24-26; 14:21; Luke 12:15-21



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Well, good morning to you Providence. I hope you are well. If you're a guest today, we are grateful that you're with us as well. If you're checking us out on livestream, we say good morning to you as well. If you have your Bibles, Proverbs will be where we'll be looking at. If you don't have a Bible, if you're new to Christianity, maybe you're exploring Christianity, there's a Bible under the chair in front of you that you can take and you can have that. That's a gift from us to you. We'll be on page 528 as we continue with our series on the good life, looking at Proverbs and having Proverbs look at us, in a sense, and walk through it.

We're talking about the good life, and what we mean by that is really a life that's dependent upon God through trusting God, and then daily walking with Him, and daily making decisions that would reflect wisdom and not folly, in a way that then I believe you could experience life that's truly good. We're excited to be able to continue that. We've looked at multiple topics from friendships to community to even vocation last week, and this week, I have the joy of walking us through wisdom when it comes to resources and finances. I know you're extremely excited and encouraged this morning, but I think God has a lot to say, not so much about money, but about our heart, and we'll walk through that this morning. We're encouraged to do that.

This past couple of weeks, I've been on a mission trip and traveled to the Czech Republic. We took a team of 27 that went over and ran a basketball camp from 9:00 to 4:00 each day, and that camp was tents camp. It was hot. There's no air condition in this particular gym we were in, but we had a great time, had opportunities to share the gospel with multiple students. It's an atheistic culture coming on the heels of communism for many years, and so about 11 million people there, but less than 1% of those would have a relationship with Christ. We partnered with a church planter, and it was a tremendous trip.

At the end of the trip, we go to church on Sunday, we invite all the campers to come as well, and then we head about an hour back into the city of Prague. As we're in the city of Prague, we get back, we try to catch our breath. We'll run out for dinner, and we'll go to the Old Town Square there. It's a beautiful city that was not destroyed during the Second World War, and so many of the buildings ... It's a neat city. As we're walking into the Old Town to the center, on this particular day, it was a beautiful day, a sunny day, and so there's literally thousands of people in this center. As I began to observe the people that were in the center of the Old Town, I noticed quickly, there was a large gathering of people circled around, people doing yoga in the middle of the town. I thought that's interesting, and then there's a huge panda bear costume suit, someone's dress up in, just walking through the park, and people were lined up to take pictures with this panda bear.

Then I noticed this particular statue, I'm going to show you a picture of it. And this particular statue it's beautiful, it's large. You can see it to the right there as a night shot of another time, not the time we were there, of people out there. This particular statue, it took 15 years to actually make, and it's a statue of Jan Hus that was an incredible reformer of the faith, taking a stand against heresy, and he was actually martyred in 1415 on July 6. On July 6, 1915, 500 years later, after 15 years of working on this, they established this there in the Old town.

What was so fascinating about watching people was no one was looking at that statute. Everyone was either eating, or looking at the panda bear, or yoga, and just walking around. Matter of fact, there were people that were seated on benches around the statue with their back toward the statue, not knowing that this man had taken a tremendous stand for the faith and taught the Bible. He was brought before council to recant his beliefs in the Bible and what it teaches about the Lord's Supper and the doctrine of the Church, and he would not, and then for that, he was martyred for his faith. He was killed.

I'm watching, observing people walk through this incredible Old Town center and hardly anyone is looking at it, acknowledging it. I tell you that because I think many that come to that center missed the point of that entire statue. They missed the point of it being there and who he is. They don't even know who he is. I think when it comes to finances and wealth and resources in the Bible, many of us miss the point of what God wants to communicate. God, does he need my money? Does he want my money? It's really not an issue of money. They miss the point. It's an issue of the heart.

You can sign up for some Dave Ramsey stuff, which is good stuff and learn how to do a budget, but the Bible is going to deal specifically more with your heart than anything. Luke chapter 12, verse 34, Jesus himself says this, He says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What is He saying when he says that where your treasure is there, your heart will be also? What He's saying is the wallet is a great window to the soul. Jesus is concerned with these things.

If you want to do an MRI, and I've had some of those done on my knee over the years, and you get in this big like spaceship-looking machine, and this thing comes on, right and it's in the gene, right, inside through my body to the ligaments, and the knees, and if you want to do an MRI on your heart, right, you don't go to Rex radiology, you go down to the bank where you bank, and you pull up the last 12 months of your bank statement, and you just review where you spent all your money. What Jesus is saying is he said that's where your heart is because it's significant to you. You cared deeply about it, and so if you want to do an MRI on your heart, just look at your bank account.

What I want to be able to do this morning is walk us through three truths about wisdom for the heart regarding how we handle these resources, and so Proverbs chapter 3, let's pray and then read this word, and we'll be in a couple other passages as well but pray with me if you would. Father, thank You for today. Thank You for the opportunity to open this book, to read it, to look at it, to let it read us, and I pray that You would teach us and even transform our thinking around an issue that for a lot of us maybe have never had biblical instruction on, maybe for some of us, we struggle in this area, maybe for some of us, God, you want to do more with, and so help us, we pray in Christ's name, Amen.

Proverbs chapter 3, we'll go again, if you're new to the Bible, we'll skim down to the smaller numbers to verse 5, and we unpack verses 5 through 8 a few weeks ago, but I want to read them again in context. It says, "Trust the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Be not wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones." Then verse 9, "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce."

Three truths here. Let's unpack this. The first one is this is biblical wisdom prepares you to steward resources humbly. Biblical wisdom from God's word that will prepare you to steward resources in a humble way. Now, I think, ultimately, this humility comes from understanding the grand narrative of the Bible. I think this humility begins, ultimately, not in doing a seminar on wise counsel for finance. I think it starts with understanding that God has made you. He created you in His image, and yet you and I rebelled against Him. We turned away from Him and we chose our own path. We weren't content being with God. We wanted to be like God.

Then we ended up, God, because He's just and holy, he has to put a punishment on that, in a sense, and so the wages, or the cost, the payment for our sin, Romans teaches, is death. It comes in different forms and means, but this is the ultimate reason all of us will taste it one day is because of sin, and it's downloaded, right? It's downloaded to every generation. It's a virus that's been downloaded since the garden with our great great-great-great-great-great-grandparents, and it shows up in the heart at a young age, right? When you are born, right? You don't train your children to disobey you. That comes natural. You're already training them to try to obey you, right?

Well, where does that come from? That's the sin nature of the heart of the human heart, right? We don't we don't lie, and then become a liar. We lie because we are liars at heart. This is the way that we're born. This is the problem with humanity, and yet the good news of the gospel is that Christ didn't leave us in that place. He rescued, He sent a rescuer, one who would come in our place and would be a sacrifice, would be a substitute, and take on God's punishment on a cross, was buried, and then He came back from the third day from the dead to validate that He was the son of God and everything that He said was true.

The essence of the gospel is really that you and I, we don't ever believe we're that bad, and yet, at the same time, we are loved by God, at the same exact time, in that very moment. When you acknowledge Him, and turn, and trust in Him, He gives you a new heart. He changes your heart. There's a spiritual condition that changes, and that's the starting point, I believe, of wisdom starting to come in such a way of how you handle your finances, your resources. It moves you. It humbles you, right? That doesn't puff you up. That humbles you that God would love you so much that he would have crushed His son instead of crushing you.

Then it begins to start working in your heart, and then the details of your heart, it gives you perspective. It gives you the perspective of the reality that you have a date that you were born called your birthday, and you entered into the world, right, with not a stitch of clothing on you, lived in water for nine months, and then you come out of that, they smack you in the back and you start breathing, right? It's like a miracle, and then you live your life, and then, at the end of it, right, they clean you up and put a suite or a dress on you in a casket, and it's over, and yet it's actually just started, so be encouraged this morning. These are the bookends.

When you step out of the fast pace of life and contemplate that, just contemplate. Yeah, that is true. It humbles you. It begins to move in your heart from you being an owner of everything to a steward of everything. You may say, "Well, the wait a minute, my sign, it's my name that's on the title of that car or that mortgage." Yeah, but there's a there's something written on you. It's called imago Dei. It's called the image of God. You're made in His image. He owns you. Therefore, everything that you own, he owns. Unfortunately, right, you're not able to take anything with you.

1 Timothy chapter 6 says, "We brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it." I've done a lot of funerals, was at one last week, as a matter of fact, and there's never ever a hearse funeral car with a trailer hitch on the end of it, with a U-Haul behind it, right? That doesn't happen, right, at all. You don't bring your toys and all the things you have and put them around the graveside for comfort. You don't do that. Nobody does that, right? This reality then begins to move in your heart, and I love what Solomon does in the texts, right? Solomon, you think about verses 5 through 8, which we unpacked weeks ago, you think about these pretty massive theological statements. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He'll make your paths straight. Don't be wise in your own eyes, right? Trust Him. Fear Him.

Then the next, you're thinking, "Man, he's setting this up to then bring the most important thing that we probably practically have to deal with. If we can get this part right, trusting Him leaning, not on our own understanding, acknowledging Him, right, then it's going to come relationships, marriage, right, heaven, hell, end times," and he says, "Honor the Lord with your wealth." Why would he do that? Why would he, in a sense, hit you in the gut with something so practical, right after telling us something so theologically amazing to trust Him because He knew it's of massive significance to you and to me. We're making decisions every single day around how we utilize our finances our resources, our wealth.

He says to honor the Lord with the first fruits of all your crops. This is farming language where it was a practice of the farmers as they went to harvest and they brought the goods in, they would give to God first and the best portion of the harvest. They weren't giving leftovers they were giving from the top, and it was a loud statement of the heart that is an act of worship to God. It was acknowledging to God that He owns it all, and we're stewarding it, and by giving back to Him, it was a priority of His mission of what is important, and yet Proverbs chapter 11 verse 28 says this. It says if you trust in your money you will go down, right? "Trust in it and down you go, but the godly flourish like leaves in spring."

Let me ask you something this morning, Providence. Do you feel it's always winter when it comes to your finances? Do you feel like it's always winter? Man, are we ever going to get through this? Are we ever going to get through this? Listen, trust in your money and down you go, but the godly flourish like leaves in spring. Listen, if you're managing your resources from a biblical perspective, right, certain things line up, but if you don't manage them, right, from a biblical perspective, you're managing them from a worldly perspective from what the world says right? It's going to take you in a certain way. Listen there's no neutral ground when it comes to wisdom. It's either a biblical perspective or the world's perspective. There's no idle here. There's no, just like, I can just coast.

It's like a rip current that will take you, a rip current. What's interesting about a rip current ... I'll show you one real quick. What's interesting about it is it looks chaotic where all the waves of breaking and where it's really smooth, right? It looks smooth on top, and this is where some people try to live. They just want to live where it's kind of easy and smooth, and what happens is underneath, it's moving fast outward. This is what will happen if you try to manage your finances from a worldly perspective. If you're not intentional with thinking through what God has to say, you're not intentional seeing and viewing yourself as a steward rather than an owner, right, it'll take you so far out, you might drown in debt.

I want to build for you really quick ... Think with me for a moment. We're going to run in the backyard and we're going to build a shed real quick. We're going to put the foundation and the walls. I'm going to try to do that in about three minutes with you with multiple passages from the Bible, okay? Here's what I'm going to encourage you to do. Don't try to write out the whole text. Write out ... I'll give you the reference, okay? That's sort of the blueprint, okay? I'm going to give you the reference. I'm going to encourage you to write the reference down, and then go back and study it, and read it, and process it, okay? There's a fire hydrant. We're getting ready to open right here, okay, but we're going to try to build we're going to try to build a framework on how to think about these things, right? Here we go.

Deuteronomy chapter 8, Deuteronomy chapter 8 verses 10 and following, notice what the Word says, "When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land He has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God ... Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God ... You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth ..."

1 Chronicles 29:11, not on the board, but just write that down, "Everything comes from you, God, and we have given you only what comes from our hand." 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 26, "For the earth is the Lord's and everything in it." Then Psalm chapter 15 verses 9 through 12, let me walk through this real quick. This is God speaking as the Psalms records. He says, God says, "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.

I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine.”

Now, watch what God does. He’s going to lean in, right? He’s going to lean in. He’s going to taunt us in a sense, right? Imagine what God is saying. I can imagine Him leaning in for real, for real. “If I were hungry …” Think about that for a moment, all-sufficient, all-sustaining God saying, “Listen, if I even had hunger, which I don’t because I’m God, but even if I did hunger, right, I wouldn’t tell you, humanity, for the world is mine and everything in it. Every Five Guys in the world, I own it anyway, right? The beef you eat at Five Guys, I grew that, right? Every salad bar that you eat from, I caused it to grow. Every fish that you saute and eat, I made it.”

What’s happening here? Well, what’s happening is you begin to move from a place of where you think you actually own everything to realize that you don’t own anything. Oh, you may pay for it. You may work hard. I’m not discounting that. No, it postures you, right? It prepares you to start living in a way that you’re a steward, where you’re managing these things that God’s entrusted to you. It adds a little weight to it as well, and so in way of application, two things really quick.

Let’s be wise and spend strategically, right? Let’s be wise and spend strategically. Proverbs 21 says this verse 5, “Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.” Let’s plan. Let’s work hard, yes, but as unto God as well, as one who has the imago Dei, for you if you’re a believer, for those that have followed Him and trusted Him. Let’s be wise to save diligently. Let’s be wise and save diligently. Proverbs 20:21 says, “An inheritance obtained too early in life is not a blessing in the end. Proverbs 21:5 says, “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.”

All right, so got this wisdom that comes from understanding the grand narrative of the Bible actually moves you, prepares you to live in such a way that you’re a steward rather than an owner, but notice the second truth, it says that biblical wisdom positions you to hold resources lightly, to hold resources lightly. Now, in your Bibles, flip over, if you would, to Proverbs chapter 11 verse 24. Verse 24 says this. It starts off, “One gives freely yet grows all the richer. Another withholds what he should give and only suffers want.” Now, let’s think about that. Let’s read that again because sometimes with Proverbs, you’re like, “What did he say?” Another withholds what he should give and only suffers want.

What’s going on here? What’s happening? See, Christianity is unique. The way up is down. You want to find your life, you lose your life. It’s unique, and so let’s unpack this a little bit. See, when you hold things, when you white-knuckle things and just grip it so tight, and the things that you have, you began to trust those things. It actually creates a desire in you to want more. The more you have, the more you want. The more you want, the more you have, the more you hold onto it.

It's like a disease that grows, but if you're being changed by the gospel by being transformed in the heart, right, what's going to happen with a heart you slowly begin to trust God more rather than the stuff that you have, and it begins to loosen its grip on you, right? This materialistic mindset, it begins to loosen the grip on you, and you begin, watch this, you begin to live as a son and daughter of the King and not a slave to status and stuff and resources.

This is what happens. It's a slow process. This is why we're marinating some this summer on the Proverbs to try to gain wisdom into what does the good life really look like? Does it look like to get more? No, it actually means to release some things properly, and your identity begins to be found in God and in Christ as a son or daughter of His, and then the greed that knocks at our door every single day, that will begin to be transformed into generosity. The gospel, right, of Christ begins to work so much so that this greed that is everywhere in our culture begins to ... There's a there's a shifting in your heart. There's a releasing in your heart, right?

Listen, so greed, greed is so dangerous, right? Jesus warns about it more than probably any other sin because it can't be seen. It's not detected. If someone is struggling and we're walking with someone in our church and it's adultery. That's obvious. Stealing, stealing something, that's obvious. Anger, you punch somebody in the mouth, that's obvious, right? Greed, oh, greed, greed isn't the knife that pierces the heart. It's the leech that's on your back that you don't know that it's back there that's draining the life out of you. It's so subtle.

I've been a pastor 20-some years. I've never had anybody ever come in my office say, "I want to meet with them. I'm struggling with something," and they sit down and go, "I'm struggling with greed." That didn't happen. It's almost unrecognized, and yet Jesus addresses it over and over. Listen, watch this now, you don't counter greed by just trying to give stuff away. That'll last about seven days, right? Right? You counter greed with the gospel, with the transformative power of the Spirit of God in your heart, releasing you, freeing you from finding your self-worth and identity in things rather than God, and you begin to have your heart transformed, right?

See, see the gospel is the only answer to the rip current of our culture that is shouting and screaming at you through commercials and ads, and every time you turn around, to get more, consume more. It will make you happy. The gospel is the only ... The American culture that we swim in, right, the current is constantly taking us, it can be summed up like this, it can be summed up in this worldview, right? You get all you can. You can all you get, and then you sit on your can, right? That's the summation of our culture. Get all you can as fast as you can. Can all you get, and then just sit on it, right? It's going to leave you empty even though your can may be full.

In Luke 12, right, Jesus addresses this. Luke 12 verse 15, Jesus comes head-on with this idea of greed. He says, "Watch out. Watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed and covetousness. A man's life, watch this, a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Jesus is talking. They're asking questions to Him, and He said, "Watch out. Be on your guard. You can't feel that leech on your back called greed. Watch out. You got to be on guard. Watch, be watchful. Your life, your life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions." He is addressing something that He knew would actually be a truth about us if He had to say that in that way. We find our identity in our possessions. We find our self-worth in things we have.

J.C. Ryle, incredible writer and theologian, says, "It is greed, it is a sin which, ever since the fall, has been the fertile calls a misery and unhappiness upon the earth." In 1961, C.S. Lewis wrote this, "Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is finding his place in it while really, it is finding its place in him," and so if you don't guard your heart against this, this is what's going to happen. Here's what's going to show up, right? Jesus tells a parable. He tells a story in Luke chapter 12. After he says this in verse 15, he goes on to say, let me tell you the story. There's a man who had a successful business, and it was growing so fast that he began to build a larger barn to hold all the harvest and the things that are coming. Then he had to build another one because it was just, it was growing.

Through this process, 11 different times in the story as Jesus tells it, this guy is referencing, he's constantly talking about himself. He's constantly talking about what must I do, what must I do to continue this increase, never a mention of God, never a mention of the things of God because I think you can enjoy the gifts of God while having a mindset of giving to God, and so I'm not saying, I'm not swinging the pendulum all the way over to the end. I'm just helping you navigate through a culture where, as you do have things, make sure they don't have you, and it's a heart issue.

Jesus would go on and he would say in that story is it ends, he would actually say that God appears to him and says to him, he actually addresses him as a fool. He says, "You fool. Don't you know, tonight, your life's going to be required of you?" What is he saying in that statement? Right? Because we're talking through folly and wisdom and not being a fool, being a wise person. What's God saying when he addresses this businessman, this entrepreneur that's building, building, building as a fool, right? Well, he's using the same word that the psalmist used in Psalm 14:1 that says specifically, the fool has said in his heart, there is no God. I think what he's saying is, listen, you may not be saying there's not a God with your mouth or in your heart, but you're saying it with your wallet and how you live. You're living as if there's no consideration for God, things of God, the mission of God.

Jesus would even say in Luke 16, Luke 16:13, He would say, you cannot serve God and money. Now, think about that statement, right? This is the resources, finances, wealth, money is the only thing, listen to this, is the only thing that Jesus compares Himself to that could have equal playing ground that could rival for our affection. It's money.

Proverbs 11 verse 4 says, “Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.” It’s the righteousness of Jesus. It’s his righteousness that has given to us freely, that delivers us not only from wrath at the last day but then it, for daily decisions, right, it gives you a perspective to live as a steward to not hold everything so tightly.

It allows you to flip your hands open, and open them, and live walking by the Spirit asking God, how and where do You want me to give, not wanting. The more you close them, and the more you want, the more you’re going to suffer want. It doesn’t sound like it makes sense, but this is the Scripture’s teaching. This is the human heart’s condition, more you grip it, and the more you accumulate and grip it, and hold it tightly selfishly, the more one want. You’re just going to go down a path. It’s like a disease. It’s just feeding, but you want to be free. You trust Jesus and allow Him to come in and change your heart, transform your heart, and then you’ll see yourself going from holding everything to opening your hands, and freedom comes. Oh, there’s great freedom.

In a way of application, very simple on this point, hold resources lightly, and hold Jesus tightly, hold resources lightly, and hold Jesus tightly. Let them go. If you’re not a believer this morning, we want to encourage you to trust Christ. If you’re a believer this morning, we want you to treasure Christ more than anything. Ecclesiastes 5 says, “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money,” and so biblical wisdom, it prepares us to steward resources humbly. It positions us to hold resources lightly, but last is this, biblical wisdom propels you to give resources freely. Biblical wisdom propels you to give resources freely. Then notice verse 24, “One gives freely,” Proverbs 11, “yet grows all the richer.”

Wait a minute, does that make sense? Yes, it’s when you give your life away, you find it. One gives freely yet grows all the more richer, and when you’re anchored in the gospel, and you see the free gift of grace that Christ has given, it begins to change, right? It’s moving. This is a heart issue. It’s not a money issue. It’s a heart issue that moves you to a place where you don’t, spending your life trying to get things, but you’re trying to give, and you’re moving to a place where you don’t say in your mind, because if you’re saying this to your mind that you have to give to God, He’s reminding us He doesn’t need you. He doesn’t need your money. He doesn’t need your resources. He wants you to get to a place where you say, “I get to give. It’s a joy to be able to give to the mission of God, to the furtherance of Kingdom work around the world, to church planting around the world.”

Listen 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 9 says this, Paul writing to the church at Corinth, he says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” This isn’t a bank account transaction. It’s a spiritual transaction that transforms your heart and how to live in such a way that you wouldn’t try to accumulate, but that you would want to give to God, to be rich toward God, as Luke 12 says.

Think about Paul in his ... This guy named Paul, in the Book of Acts, you see some amazing things happen to this guy. He's radically changed by Jesus, right, and through that transformation, he goes from persecuting Christians to actually preaching and planting churches. Through this process, he gets to chapter 20, where he has spent three years with the elders at Ephesus, at the church in Ephesus, which is a modern-day Turkey. He's there, and he knows the Spirit of God has moved in his heart to get him to Jerusalem, but he also knows imprisonments coming, persecution is coming because he's taken a stand for Jesus, and as he's doing this, he calls the Ephesian elders together.

Now, get the scene, right, possibly on the beaches of the Mediterranean there in modern day Turkey. He's calling the Ephesian elders together, and he's encouraging them with one last word, he knows he's not going to see them again, he knows this, and so he says to him, you read it in chapter 20. It's phenomenal, this last encounter with Paul and his boys, and he's encouraging. He says, "Now, I commend to you God and the word of his grace to be built up, to be built up by the word of grace, and to be sustained," and he's pouring his heart out to them.

Then the very last thing that he says to them on that day is that he quotes Jesus saying from the gospels. He says, "... And remember the Lord Jesus ..." You could fill that in multiple ways, and he says this. He says, "... remember the Lord Jesus that he said, 'It's more blessed to give than to receive,'" and he heads out. Why is it so close to his heart, this whole idea of giving freely, because he knows it's an idol and a place where we find our identity daily. He's exhorting them. He even writes a letter to his young pastor that he's a mentor toward named Timothy, where Timothy is actually the pastor of the church in Ephesus years later, right, and his last two letters that Paul writes is 1 and 2 Timothy, and he's arrested. He's in prison and he's writing back to young Timothy, and in the last chapter of 1 Timothy, right, as he's just pleading with him through this whole book.

Notice the words he said to Timothy. He says to Timothy, "Now, make sure you tell those parishioners at your church, those that are part of the congregation at the church, the family of faith. Exhort them. Don't set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy," play on words there, who richly provides. "Don't set your hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of that which is truly life," that which is truly life.

Do you want to taste that which is truly life? Give your life away to the cause of Christ. Live for his glory. Don't withhold things. Have the gospel transform your heart in such a way that it moves you to a place of not hoping in the uncertainty of riches, but in God who richly provides. There was one man, a missionary, he's a hero of the faith for me, who had this mindset as a college student at Wheaton College in the 1950s, where he had such a desire to reach people who had never heard of Jesus, and so God led him to the Indians in Ecuador. Jim Elliot, as he would, I think, as a young man, understand this concept, this wisdom that it propelled him to such a point that he would write this in his journal, he would say, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose."

Providence, let's be a people who are walking in wisdom, giving resources freely. Let's let's give, in way of application, resources freely to get the gospel to all people. Let's give our time to reach the next generation. In your snapshot, there are multiple needs and our children's ministry, the next generation. Listen, Raleigh, again, just recently came out in the studies is one of the great places to raise a family, and families are moving, 69 people, 67 to 69 people moving to the Wake County area per day, and many are trying to figure out how to raise kids and navigate parenting and yes, we have the opportunity, as listed out in your snapshot, to invest even starting next week in the younger generation, plant seeds of the gospel.

Then let's give a testimony with our lives through baptism. You've heard about it. Next Sunday night, we're going to hear many people, we're going to see them, in a sense, celebrate what Christ has done in their heart, and so I encourage you to consider giving a testimony, if you have it, through baptism, which is simply identifying with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection. The water has no power in it. You go under and out. We celebrate your declaring publicly what Christ has done and who He is, and it's a tremendous celebration, so if you haven't moved to that place in your journey, consider that as well.

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for today. Thank You for the joy to be able to sing, and to worship, and hear about what's coming, and what has happened in the past even this summer with mission trips. God, it's been an incredible summer to navigate through these proverbs, and to glean wisdom, and how You've design life to be lived, how to experience good, not in getting things but how to experience good in giving things. God I pray that You would continue to work that deeply in our heart, that You would capture our affections, and then our allegiance, God, that as we try to find our place in this world, God, we know the temptation is the world will find its place in us, and so would You guard our hearts against these things and help us to be a people that would live freely giving. It's a matter of the heart, not the wallet, so God, accomplish these things in us and through us, we pray in Jesus name, Amen.



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