

Sermon Series: “Hilarious Generosity”—Lord of Life Lutheran Church—10/1/2000

Sermon Title: “A Joyful Plan that Cannot Fail”

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 15:58–16: 2

Introduction: *Illus.:* “*The Upside down world of giving*” (recent study)

Theme: When it comes to first-fruit giving to God having a purpose and a plan that are built around our hopeful joy in Jesus will result in generosity which will be both enjoyed and blessed.

*Purpose-Driven, Planned Giving Is . . .*

C *Resurrection* in its *Theology (therefore-1)*

1. The Key to giving is to “*get a life*” in Jesus and his resurrection
  - a. The reason for the offering on the “*first day of the week*”(2) was a resurrection reminder as was worship
  - b. Jesus gift of hope through his resurrection drives giving—what can we give up or lose that can’t be returned
  - c. **I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ. . .and that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection. Phil 3: 8, 10**
2. Our resurrection theology is the key that unlocks the power and perspective of our faith
  - a. The most important word in this whole text is the small word “*therefore*”—points back to big resurrection truth
  - b. What’s important is not being ready for big challenges God gives but being faithful in the little things He expects
  - c. **"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Luke 16:10**

C *Routine* in its *Pattern (steadfast-58)*

1. Proportionate/planned giving allows for growth and evaluation and teaching of greater principles in our home
  - a. **ILLUS.: ONLY THE BEGINNING**
  - b. The solution to the procrastination of the sinful human nature is setting up “good” spiritual habits
  - c. Setting up the pattern in your children’s lives by the way they see you regularly giving (*each of you-2*)
2. It is intentionally **First-fruit** (*set aside whatever you treasured-2*)
  - a. **ILLUS.: TIE-THER**
3. It is derived **from God-given resources** (*as you have prospered-2*)
  - a. God never expects me to give what he has not first given to me—the avoidance of legalism and guilt
  - b. Often God waits to give to me so that I can give
  - c. **ILLUS.: GIVERS RECEIVE**

C *Rooted* in its *Source (immoveable-58)*

1. Our generosity is not shaken just because waves are rolling all around our life
  - a. When the challenges and crises of life roll in, in fear we tend to pull in and pull back from generosity
  - b. **ILL.: FEAR OF HEIGHTS (ACROPHOBIA)**—How to conquer walking the high beam
2. Our generosity is not out there on its own—Christ is “*with*” it supporting it
  - a. **ILLUS.: THE STRENGTH OF THE REDWOOD TREES**—(*rooted together*)
  - b. **Don't love money. Be happy with what you have because God has said, "I will never abandon you or leave you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can mortals do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6**

C

C **Resilient** in its *Open-handedness* (*abounding*)

1. Because you are about the **Lord's work**
  - a. **ILLUS.: "I SERVE AT THE PLEASURE OF THE PRESIDENT. . ."**
2. Because you are not involved in a worthless endeavor
  - a. **I came to hate everything for which I had worked so hard under the sun, because I will have to leave it to the person who replaces me. Who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? He will still have control over everything under the sun for which I worked so hard and used my wisdom. Even this is pointless. Then I fell into despair over everything for which I had worked so hard. Ecc. 2:18-20**
  - b. Because of the resurrection and the life of Jesus we live with life resources that never run out
  - c. **ILLUS.: PLATING FOR THE FUTURE**
3. Because you are involved in Kingdom work with many, many others
  - a. ***"I want you to do as I directed the churches in Galatia."* (1)**
  - b. **ILLUS.: CONTAGIOUS GIVING**

**Only the Beginning**

I heard about a little girl who experienced a major breakthrough in her life when she learned to tie her own shoes. Instead of excitement, she was overcome by tears.

Her father asked, "Why are you crying?"

"I have to tie my shoes," she said.

"You just learned how. It isn't that hard, is it?"

"I know," she wailed, "but I'm going to have to do it for the rest of my life."

My hunch is that some of us feel the same way when it comes to Christian stewardship. We learn that it's exciting to give. But isn't there just a tiny bit of dread because we know we have to do it over and over again for the rest of our lives?

**Tither**

One Sunday morning, my 6-year-old son, Joshua, was busy getting dressed for Sunday school. When it was time for him to leave, he came out of his room carrying his entire stock of neckties. When I asked him why he was doing this, he eagerly replied, "'Cause, Mom, Reverend Wyser told us to put our ties in the offering!"

## **Givers Receive**

I've been going to professional baseball games and trying to get a souvenir baseball as far back as I can remember. A foul ball, a home run ball, or even a batting practice ball—anything would do.

I was taking in batting practice for the St. Louis Cardinals, and as I watched Mark McGwire and his teammates, I got to know a five-year-old boy who was also trying to get a ball. His name was James. He tried hard to pronounce the players' names as he politely asked for a ball: "Mr. Timwin (Timlin), can I have a ball, please?"

Before I knew it, my mission became getting a ball for James. For about 20 minutes, I told him the names of the players who had a ball near the fence we stood behind, and the players turned and smiled as James tried to say their names. Still, no ball. Finally I told James he could have my ball if I caught one (I had been unsuccessful in catching a ball for almost 28 years, so that felt like a safe promise).

I wouldn't be telling this story if you didn't know what happened five minutes later. I caught a ball, and yes, I gave it to James.

I wonder how often God waits to give us something until we are willing to give it away?

## **Planting for the future**

A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit.

## **Contagious Giving**

The owner of a drive-through coffee business in southwest Portland, Oregon, was surprised one morning to have one of her customers not only pay for her own mocha but also for the mocha of the person in the car behind her. It put a smile on the owner's face to tell the next customer her drink had already been paid for. The second customer was so pleased that someone else had purchased her coffee that she bought coffee for the next customer. This string of kindnesses--one stranger paying for the mocha of the next customer--continued for two hours and 27 customers.

That's how it is with God's love--it starts with his unexpected love for us, and then it is passed on to others, who in turn pass it on.

## **1 Cor. 15:58–16: 2**

<sup>15:58</sup>Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord. <sup>16:1</sup>Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. <sup>2</sup>On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside what you have treasured, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.