

Graceful Generosity

Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.

Where is Your Heart?

Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:21). Your treasure is the thing that is most important to you. Maybe it's your job, investments, a new house, or a new car, your spouse or children. Regardless of your particular passion, your treasure is what you think about, what you go after, what you want to attain. It's where your heart is.

As Christian stewards, God wants us to treasure him and hold our time, talents, and treasure with open hands. If you are unwilling to part with earthly goods your treasure isn't God. When God is your treasure, he will receive from you a generous amount of all that you possess.



"Some [seed] fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown" (Verses 6-8).

Two other types of hardened hearts are represented in this parable. There is the shallow heart that doesn't allow God's Word to take root and the other heart that is choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures. However, there is also good soil which represents a good heart, which hears the Word, retains it, remains faithful, and bears fruit.

Testing your Knowledge of Scripture

Can you identify the parable in which birds have a part?

If you said the Parable of the Sower, you were right. In the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:5-15), Jesus describes four different conditions of the soil, which represent conditions of the heart.

"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up" (Verse 5).

The birds represent Satan who comes and takes away the Word from our hearts. Continuing the parable, Jesus said,

Jesus Accepts and Perfects Our Gifts

As sinful people, we are incapable of giving God what he deserves from us. However, we can be confident that our gifts are acceptable to God through Jesus. To illustrate this point, there is a story about a wood-carver who early in his life was a renowned carver. He passed on his craft to his son. Later in his life, the old man's eyes began to dim, and his hands began to tremble. He could no longer carve the perfect figures of his youth. He would mar the figure, and imperfections

blighted his work. His fading eyes could no longer see the flaws.

During the night, as the father was sleeping, the son would sneak down and correct his father's flaws in the newly carved wood. When the figures passed through the hands of the son, they were made perfect again.

In the same way, we may bring our imperfect gifts with the confidence that, as they pass through the hands of Jesus, they will all be placed before the Father in absolute perfection.

Developing an Unselfish Character

Scripture says, *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world"* (Romans 12:2). The pattern of this world is to acquire and to hold on to material acquisitions. Romans 12:2 continues, *"but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* This transformation is brought about in you, the believer, through your relationship with the Holy Spirit, who, through Word and Sacrament, renews your mind so that, instead of following the pattern of the world, you seek to follow your Savior. Like Jesus who emptied himself of equality with God (Phil. 2:6), let us empty ourselves of the desire to acquire and hoard. This way of life leads only to misery, not self fulfillment. Like Jesus, let us give freely, even sacrificially.

1 Timothy 6:18-19 exhorts, *"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."*

Life that is truly life belongs to those who are unselfish givers. Giving is an indicator of your unselfishness and an outward litmus test of the inner condition of your heart.



The astonishing thing is that, in God's economy, the more you give, the more you have left to give. Because God replenishes you, your giving can be a daily and a lifetime activity. *"You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God"* (2 Corinthians 9:11).

A little girl exclaimed, "Poor Jesus!" when her mother told her that she had to give only one dime of her ten-dime allowance. May you acquire the same unselfish attitude as the little girl when you come to the Lord with your offering.

Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!