

“Liking to Give”
By Chris Ulrich
Sunday, March 18th, 2018

You may be seated. I'm going to read a verse from James, chapter one, verse seventeen, to start off the service this morning. You don't have to turn there, if you don't have it. It says:

James 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

And, for us who trust in God with every fiber of our being, and believe in Him, and have thanked God for many years, we look at a Scripture like this, and we think that maybe it's a no-brainer. It's almost automatic to just think that this is the case, that we know that these things come from God. But still it's worth repeating and revisiting, especially because we're all still human, and, a lot of times, we have a tendency to forget where we come from. This is the air we breathe, this is the food we eat, this is the clothes that we have on our back, this is the life that we live. And, we live in a physical world, and it's easy to recognize the physical things that we receive, but, there are spiritual blessings as well. When we think about the spiritual things, we can't stop but to think about the prayer that we have to God, it's absolutely 100% spiritual. Yes, it causes us to move; it causes us to do something, to act upon our faith in some way, shape or form, but prayer itself is absolute seeking of God and an invisible God at that. I'd like to ask if you could bow your heads in a word of prayer this morning.

Lord God, we just thank You, God, for the music this morning, and the sharing time. We thank you, God, for the things that we don't even see right now, the children in their classroom, God, and we thank you, God, for everybody that was able to make it here this morning, God. We thank you for those that we're not able to make it but their heart is here, Lord God. We thank You, God, for the trail of victories that You give us, God, that we can reflect, and look back, and know that it was You and give You credit, and give You all the glory, God. We ask right now, for guidance in the service, God, for the time that's the sermon. We pray for a greater understanding of Your Word, and know what You'd have for us, and to be able to have that walk with You each and every day. I just thank You, God for giving us this Truth, Lord, God, as Andy had shared about knowing You, and being born again, being baptized in Your Name, Lord God. I thank You, God, for that, I thank You, God, for knowing You, and I just ask these things in Your name, Jesus. Amen.

So, God supplying our needs is part one of the message today. If we think about it, our physical needs are met by something it's there, but it wasn't always there, at least, not in the state that we see it. We think about the seed of a plant, and we look at the fruits and the vegetables, and we think about an animal, a chicken, or a cow, or a fish, and we know that they came about as a result of reproduction. And, we look at these things, and we look at the houses that we dwell in, and we look at the cars that we drive, and the clothes on our backs, and, everything that we consume, or inhabit, it comes from something that is known in industry as raw materials. Everything has its origin. But, sometimes there are things out there that we don't see, but some things are below the surface. There's an aquifer—for those of you who don't know what it is, it's just a, it's an underground body of water, fresh clean water, that there's pumps that are set down in there, and it's pumped up to the surface to irrigate fields, or for drinking water, for whatever purpose that it is—and there's one in the Midwestern part of this country, and I'm getting to another point, it's a little traveling that I did recently, myself and Howard Larson, but it's called the Ogallala Aquifer and it stretches from, I think, the Dakotas all the way down to Texas, all the way East to Arkansas, and all the way to Colorado, I believe. And, it's one of those things that we

don't really think about, because we don't really see it, but it's there. And, it's something that God provides. We think about all the mining that goes on, and the copper that's laid, and some of you that are plumbers, all the pipe that is extracted from the ground, and, formed into copper pipe, or galvanized pipe, but whatever way shape or form, it comes from an origin. It didn't just appear that way at Home Depot, or—and I know that we know that. But, sometimes I think it's worth revisiting that because we know that God is a provider and God supplies all our needs. And, God is the one that's the Creator. And, we go back to that, we reflect on that. So, Howard Larson and myself were on a trip recently, we were traveling out—he was going to see his daughter out in Utah, I was going out to spend some time with my brother—and, as we were traveling through western Nebraska—is anybody from Nebraska? Has anybody ever traveled through Nebraska? Okay. It just goes on, and on, and on, and on, and on. So, we were traveling through there a couple of Saturdays ago, and we started to see, it was late afternoon, we started to see wave after wave of geese. Our assumption was that they were Canadian geese. We could see the different formations in the sky, we could see them in the fields, and Howard argued that they were flying in the wrong direction. I tried to contact them and let them know, but we both failed in our efforts. But, really, the reality is, it's something that, if we look at, that God provides for all His creatures. God provides something that, it seems to be infinite, it just seems like it just went on forever. And, yet, you think, if we just go over the horizon, and there's still more of the world, there still more of it, and it's not something that we can see immediately from this room. We can't just think “Okay, well—” and, we've talked about this before, our walk with God goes way beyond just this room. It's a meeting place, and thank God for it, when we have different things and functions... I appreciate what you shared, Linda, about having the ladies' fellowship, and having the different accommodations, and some of the personalizing that Abby did, the prayer meeting that we had this past Friday night. It's a time of gathering and meeting together. But what is this—when we were looking at that, when we were looking at these geese, I mean, we probably saw thousands, if not tens of thousands; it really got us to thinking about how God does provide for all of creation, but I'm going to ask Arman Jorge, he's going to come up and read a passage here, but this is something that I read a couple of months ago. I'm reading through the Bible in a year, this year I'll probably make it eighteen months, you know, as far as the pace of reading, but Armand is going to read from the Book of Genesis, chapter one, verses twenty through twenty-two. Go ahead, please:

Genesis 1:20-22 *And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.*

Thank you, Arman. So what stood out to me—and I've read through the Bible, before, and I've read through the Book of Genesis before, on a number of occasions, over the course of my Christian life, but, what stood out more than any other time, was verse twenty-two. It says, “and God blessed them,” just that part. Because, I had never really considered the fact that God blesses all of creation, not just human beings, quite like this. And, it was an eye-opener. Because, if somebody would have said, a couple of years ago, or prior to just this, I would say it was a personal revelation to me. But, some of you may have been, “Oh, yeah, I know that already,” that's not what I'm talking about. I think there's times where we get something from God that, it's personal, and then a bunch of other people already know it, but we're not always in communication with everybody non-stop, and, I think you get what I'm talking about. But, if I would have been asked, a couple of years ago, “Hey, do you think God blesses the creatures?” I would have said, “Yes,” and if they would have said, “Okay, prove it.” I probably would have just been like, “Well, give me a while, I'll look it up, and I'll look in the concordance,” and it just

wouldn't have popped right into my mind. And, this is the kind of thing where I'm talking about, where we're able to understand that God's not just blessing us; He's blessing all of His creation and, there's a part, I don't think we've read it, but it is in the Book of Genesis, and it just says, "And God saw it was good, and God saw it was very good." (Genesis 1:31) Just a simple thing right there that's a proof that God does love us, God is there for us, God is providing for us. And, it's not like all of our needs or just relegated to meat, drink, and clothing, although, true, we can't survive without those. God gives us peace, love, joy, friendship, strength, health, the air we breathe, the promise of eternal life, and umpteen million other things. I just want to use that word umpteen, because it actually is a real word. I did look it up; umpteen is in the dictionary. I always thought it was just street jargon. Somebody would say, "That's the umpteenth time that you've said that or done that," and I would have thought, "Oh, that's just street lingo." It is an actual word. Maybe just added to the dictionary in the last twenty years, but, really, who knows?

So, who here remembers the first job that you ever had that you earned a paycheck? Okay, go ahead and shout out a couple of them; I'd like to hear what some of them are.

Kirk: Construction.

Jubal: Custodian.

Sonia: Waitress.

Ed: Gas station.

Bob: Picking tobacco.

My brother did that.

Beverly: I was a bus girl at a pizza place.

I worked at a Howard Johnson's in high school. Hardest job I ever worked in my life.

Todd Bostwick: Corn Beef Castle.

That's a good one; Iowa.

Mark Lanier: a department store worse than Walmart.

Don't knock Walmart.

Greg Grashen: Westworld.

Okay, that's enough. We'll have another interactive segment here. But, I remember actually working a newspaper route and, when I was ten years old, and probably making like ten dollars a week. So, a couple of years later, I ended up getting a different newspaper, and I was making big money, twenty dollars a week, if you can believe it. But, still, it felt good to actually get that cold hard cash in my pocket, even though I probably spent a lot more money on arcade games. Remember the big arcade? Yes, yes. But, I did manage to sock some of it away. I'm going to ask if everybody could turn with me to the Book of Luke, chapter six, verse thirty-eight, and in Luke, six, thirty-eight, it says:

Luke 6:38 *give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

So, the holidays would roll around, or somebody's birthday, and, you know, having some money, it meant being able to get gifts for family or friends, that could have been just taking them out to a restaurant, or out for a round of mini-golf, or whatever it was, something like that. But, you know, I still remember how good it felt to see the expressions on their face of appreciation. And, to know that I felt like, you know, having a hand in that, you know, especially early on. I remember when I was first able to give my parents gifts for Christmas, and, I mean, I think they were times that they would get a little teary-eyed. And, it was the type of thing where I felt like, "Wow!" I mean, you see how you can affect people positively, and it was something like that, that I always cherish. I look back, and, you know, I can't say, "Oh, it was in this particular year, this was the exact gift." But, it is the kind of thing where it's like, again, it was a result of being able to give something. It was a result of being able to give something that I had earned. I'm going to ask Donna Ferguson if she could come up, she's going to read from the book of second Corinthians, nine, six through seven. But, as she does, I'm just going to make this statement that this isn't a Christmas message, it's not a tithes and offerings message, but it is about giving.

Part 2 of the sermon today is give and it shall be given unto you.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

Thank you very much. So, I want to ask three questions, right now, and I want it to be personal, so I'm going to ask it that way. Do I like to give? Do I want to give? Do I feel like I need to give? If we don't feel like we have anything to give, and I suppose we've all been there at some point or another, in our life, then we need to ask God to provide, and He'll do it. And, it, it may not necessarily be a tangible gift, or an object either, but it might be a cheerful outlook, a word of encouragement, a visit to somebody that shut in. Those things matter a lot, too, and I would venture to say that just as much as anything else because we're talking about being a cheerful giver. And, I want to dwell on that a little bit, because, I know that there's a lot of things that people do here, that, I'm not the one who calling the shots, I'm not the one initiating that but, it could be somebody doing a visitation, it could be somebody sending out a text of a Scripture verse, I'm not going to name names. But, it could be somebody that shares something about these people in this Hospital in this room and they're here for this amount of time. It could be somebody that gives a guitar to somebody. It could be somebody that takes somebody out for their birthday, for lunch, or dinner, or whatever the case might be. And, those are the kind of things that keep the ministry going. Those are the kind of things that are done from the heart—from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (Luke 6:45)—but, I also believe that our life is lived. From the abundance of heart of the heart our life is lived. And, that establishes what our position is. Do we like living this life? We have to look back and think, "Well, there's times, maybe not so much." but, then, it's a matter of looking at it like, I have to reevaluate it. I have to look at it like, what are all the options? But if we leave believe that God has put it on our hearts to like giving to see the need to give, and the title of the sermon today is, "Liking to Give." That's it, plain and simple, liking to give. Because it has to start with liking it first. Then, they'll want to do it, and seeing the need to do it will follow after that. If we don't like doing it, we're not going to want to do it, and we're not going to see the need to do it. We'll just dismiss it, and we'll think, "I just don't like doing it, therefore I don't want to do it," and then it becomes grudgingly. Then it becomes something where we're just looking at it like, "This is my last

option. I just absolutely don't want to do this. And, so, therefore, I'm only going to receive. I just want to take." And, God has given something to every one of us, and sets the example through the life of Christ, and how we should give generously and cheerfully. So transition a little bit there, we have to go back to our Perfect Example. We have to look at that, and say, "Well, what kind of life did Christ live?" I mean, Isaiah 53 talks about it, Old Testament, Psalms 22, I'm not going to those chapters, but I want to just make reference to those. And, we talk about how Christ gave generously. Nonstop. He gave of Himself. He gave his life so that others might live. But, then we look at it like, we're talking about while He was alive, not just the ultimate crucifixion, and the sacrifice, and all that, we're talking about, well, what did He do on just an average day? Get up, look for ways to minister. Got up, look for ways to encourage people, looked for ways to strengthen people. You know, some of the final words you look at, where He talks about feed my lambs, feed my sheep. And, so, it is about giving. It is about—and we've probably all heard the expression in our life about being a river of God's blessings and not a reservoir, and allowing the Spirit of God to move freely in our life. And, truthfully, there's a lot to be said for liking what we do, and it could be anything, from our employment, to hobbies, right down to living this life. Because, again, it has to go back to, "Do you like it? Do you like to be able to do this? Do you like to give?" "No, I don't want to give." Okay, I get it, I get it there's times when we're maxed out. We're just—I'll just share something real quick: yesterday, this is—we're renovating one of the kitchen cabinets—I live in an apartment building, as many of you know. So, doing the cabinets, and it's just, a very lengthy process, and you know, you got to coordinate all this, and different people are coming in, and, so during the course of yesterday, which was sort of the culmination of there's still a few more things to do, and I appreciate the help of those of you in here that are doing that, so, it's a matter of getting the guy, and he's doing the counter tops come and then another guy comes in, and he's doing some of the cabinets, and then it's a matter of hanging a vent, and getting the oven reconnected, and, so, you know, back and forth to Home Depot and Ace Hardware. So, we're out there running around and so forth so on and so forth. So, finally I get there, yesterday, after I eat dinner, like maybe seven o'clock, and it's like, "Lay down just for a few minutes," and, then, all of the sudden, I hear this, "Beep. Beep. Beep." And, I'm like, so, being in an apartment building with smoke detectors and fire alarms and all this other stuff on the top floor, on the middle floor, in the basement, different apartments. And, I'm like, "Oh my God, you've got to be kidding." I go out in the hallway, and try to detect it, and, of course, you hear it upstairs, and then, you go upstairs, and then it sounds like it's downstairs. You go downstairs and then it sounds like it's upstairs in one of the apartments. I'm like, I finally go into one of the apartments, I take it out, I realize this is the right one. It takes a nine-volt battery. I go looking in my drawer, go ask Phil Russell, "Do you have a nine-volt battery?" "No, no." So, then, fortunately, there's the neighborhood grocery store. I go to the guy, "You got any nine-volt batteries?" "Yeah, Yeah, right here." and, I'm like, "Thank God!" They're Duracell's. But, at that point, I was just like, "I'm maxed out," you know, and then, it's like, here's another little thing that comes along. So, my point is, sometimes we get in, and we do stuff, and we max ourselves out; we get to the point of what is called a breaking point. And, we feel like, "I can't take anymore," and God gives us a little strength, like the Bible talks about, in Revelation (Revelation 3:8). That was it for that night, though; after that point, just kind of relaxed. I'm going to read a passage from Acts, twenty, verses thirty-two to thirty-five:

Acts 20:32-35 *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, [this is Paul speaking, talking about Jesus] and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

And, there's nothing wrong with being on the receiving end of a gift. I've received a lot of expressions of love and charity in my life, and, I would say, more often than not, from people right here in this room. And, I will also say that there's a lot of people in this room that I believe have gotten something, as well. But, we can't ever forget that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

So, I want to transition one more time, here, this is our last part, part 3. I have to admit there's been times in my life where I felt like that my giving didn't match my receiving, or what I felt like I should be able to show for it. And, I will explain that in a moment, here, but the cupboard looked a little bare, my possession seems a little bit thin, it just seemed like it didn't add up quite right. Sort of do the math in your mind, but, what difference does it make when you don't think you have anything to show for your effort? And, you don't think you're getting anything in return? How's that for feeling like you've been ripped off? And, our human nature is like that. Sometimes we have to think that we should have something to show for our life of giving. After all, we just had an entire section about, if we give it shall be given to us, right? I mean, we just went over that, that was give and it shall be given unto you, so, we think, if I give, I get something, right? I mean, it's just automatic. And, then, if you think, "Well, I'm not getting what I thought. I'm not getting what I think I should, I'm not getting what I feel like I deserve," so it takes things out of balance. The scales are out of balance. And, we think we should expect something for our time, our money, our sacrifices, our efforts, our sweat-equity, our hardships, our long suffering, and the list goes on. And, then, God reminds us, there is such a thing called Treasures in Heaven. Which is our third and last part of the message. I'm going to ask Jubal Card, if he could come up, and he's going to read for us from The Book of Matthew, six, nineteen to twenty-one. Actually I'd just like to introduce, before we read, Mentos and Neil, both here from the military base. We'd like to welcome you guys, your first time. Is there anybody else, it's your first time today? Yes, what's your name? Specialist Deez. Welcome. Good to have you.

Matthew 6:19-21 *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Thank you. Oh, yeah, the old Treasures in Heaven routine. The one where we don't get back in this life, what's equal to what we gave up. The one where we don't see it right now, or it's not tangible, it's not something that we can say, "Oh, yeah, right here in the closet." or "I've got it out in my car." Those are Treasures in Heaven. It's not something you're going to see. And, it's something where, if we feel like we've given it up, and we don't have it, right now, to hold on to, to latch onto, to do whatever it is that we would do, look at it, or stand there, and it's a hard pill to swallow. It's not something we're just looking at it like, "Yeah, I love being able to give up stuff, I love being able to sacrifice. I love being able to just give up this or give up that." And, sometimes, we wonder about those Treasures in Heaven because we can't see them, well, are they really there? But, deep down inside, we know that they're there. We know that they're there. It's not a mystery, it's not something where we're just are guessing, or, we're living a life that's a cleverly devised fable, or—there's a guy that just recently passed away, pretty well-known physicist, I believe he was, his name was Stephen Hawking. Probably late 70s, and was, what many would regard, is quite the genius, but, he really had quite a lot of criticism about Christianity, especially in his final days. So, I don't know what somebody like that thinks if, when he says, "Well, ultimately, there is no God. When we die, the matter just dissipates and turns into dust, and vanishes away." I take exception to that, and I know we do, too. I look at somebody like that, and I think, "I dismiss what you have to say, what you believe," I don't fail to respect your genius, or your abilities, or so on and so forth, but, I look at it like, what he thinks doesn't mean anything to me at all. I mean, absolutely nothing at all. Because, it's a matter of we see this kind of stuff more and more often, this

criticism of Christianity. They try to catch people in a loophole. I'm going to share one more, this is something that I thought, "I don't know if I want to share this," but, there's a lady, name of Joy Behar, that is some talk show, on The View, whatever it is, it doesn't matter. So, she had made a statement recently about vice president Mike Pence, and said, "I don't know how Mike Pence can think that he's hearing the voice of Jesus." and, I'm thinking, "How do you know whether he does or he doesn't?" I mean, I believe that her position, in that matter, is, "Well, here's a person who's in that position, the vice president of the United States, that is going to dictate policy and establish lawful policies. So, that's the real reason that she's looking at it like, "I don't want somebody that's going to sit there and establish these different laws and regulations that says they're believing in Jesus Christ, or God," so, basically you want to have lawlessness? You want to have, absolutely, "Well, we don't want to go by the Ten Commandments." That's where it's coming to. It's getting more and more like that, to where they're trying to get Christians on their heels, to try to get them to do either compromise, or, two, to be ashamed of the Gospel. But, even like what she says, it doesn't matter to me. In fact, I hear stuff like that it actually reinforces my belief that God is real. Because the Bible talks about in the last days there shall be naysayers, and people saying things like, "Where is the promise of His coming?" these kind of things, these people are like self-fulfilling prophecies. This is what I'm talking about. But, you know what? Getting back to the treasures of Heaven, you might out-give people. You might out-give people right here in this room. You might out give them by a long shot, as well. And, we're talking about in events hosted, we're talking about in visitations, in rides, compliments given, offerings, Bible studies, songs sung, chairs stacked, dishes washed, you want to compile a long list of all the stuff I've done, or you've done, or we've done, or anybody's done. It's not a matter of looking at it like, okay, you go to the end of the day, and you say, "Thank God for the ability to do it," whether you liked it or not, we're still standing on the grace of God. And, on top of that, these things are for the glory of God. If that's something where you feel like you fit in that boat, God will bless you richly. We're not trying to give as little as possible. This isn't a matter of, "Oh, I just want to cheapskate it, or, I just want to give the bare minimum to be saved." It doesn't work like that. We're talking about all in, that was a message that our pastor, Pastor Paine, I think about a year ago, he talked about being all in; he talked about being all in, that's a big deal. But, never forget that we're not in competition with each other. It's not a matter of, "Oh, he did this? I'm going to do that. He gave this much? Well, I'm going to give that much, they showed up at this class, so I'm going to show up just a little bit later," or, whatever the case, because that kind of stuff, that kind of behavior, does start to happen. and, you know, what were in competition with, and this might sound a little odd, we're in competition with a force far more powerful. Now, you might think Satan, right? No. I'm going to ask you, this is our last passage, it's John, chapter nine, verses one to four:

John 9:1-3 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

Pay attention to verse four, please:

John 9:4 *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*

God's giving us all a certain allotted time on this Earth, and, when our time is up, our time is up. And, there's a mystery to it, because none of us has ever been to the other side. But, the Book of Thessalonians talks about comforting one another with the words of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:8). The

Bible tells us that the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, shall lead us and guide us into all things and all truth (John 16:7-13). And, Jesus told us in The Sermon on the Mount, blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4). And, the night cometh when no man shall work (John 9:4). Do you believe that you have treasures in Heaven today? For your labors? Do you believe that what you have, what you hold in your hand, and what you have in your living room, or what you have in your garage, it doesn't hold a candle to what God has prepared for those that love him? Isn't that what it's all about anyway?

When Howard and I were on the trip, he talked about the trail of victories that God gives us, and we have to look back on each day, and realize that, yeah, there's setbacks, we all have setbacks. I think it pays, sometimes, to look back, in time, like 5 years, maybe 10 years, 20 years, look back maybe in increments, and think, "Okay, yeah, there's been some setbacks." I told you about the smoke alarm. Hopefully that, I feel like, in a way, I set back, but, hey, they had batteries right down the street, so, God took care of it. But, it doesn't compare to all those victories throughout the course of the day. And, we're talking about just physical things. We're talking about just the physical manifestations of physical things. I'm not even talking about times of fellowship, or talking about times of God giving us understanding. God provides all our needs, and He does it out of thin air. How does he do it? I don't know. It doesn't matter. If we try to figure out every single solitary detail—Rob Severance and I were talking about this. You can't figure it out. You try to intellectualize the Bible to the point of absolute unbelief. Without faith it's impossible to please him. He that comes to God must first believe that He is, and He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). So, nobody knows how He does it, but He does it, and that's enough for me. Is that enough for you? God bless you.