

Sermon: Rich Enough to be Poor

Series: Lion & the Lamb (2)

Bible Passage: 2 Corinthians 8:1-12

8 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, **2** for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. **3** For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, **4** begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— **5** and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. **6** Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. **7** But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. **9** 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 by his poverty might become rich. **10** And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. **11** So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. **12** For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

Let's pray together please.

Heavenly Father, some of us are already thinking "Uh oh... it's a passage about money", some of us are thinking "...not again", and for some of us, it's our first day back at church in a long time and we're thinking "this just proves the stereotype about churches always wanting money". Lord, others of us realize that you have blessed us with many resources and as Calvin prayed earlier, if we desire to honor you with everything we have, everything we own, everything we gained, and everything we have stewardship of, we pray that you would teach us what this means.

This passage is not about giving. In fact, this Bible is not about giving. This passage and this Bible is about you. It's about our savior Jesus Christ. It's about the Holy Spirit that fills your people and that moves and works within your people. It's about the heavenly father that adopts us through Christ Jesus as your children.

In the spirit of this, teach us about Jesus this morning. We pray in His name. Amen.

I wonder if you can relate to the idea that someone you know, someone that you are very familiar and comfortable with, other people don't know and they have a very different impression. One of the common things that comes up when I do couples counseling (and don't worry, I'm not going to divulge any secrets) is the idea of personality.

Often times, when we take personality assessments or inventories, the results will tell us, for example, that someone is really approachable and really easy going. However, when that individual tests himself or herself, he or she will state that he or she is very unapproachable, very competitive, and very demanding. Inevitably, people will look at each other and say things like "Oh, you're not like that babe. You're so nice, sweet, and friendly." They'll test really strict, really exactly, really demanding, or they'll test other characteristics. Here's the big difference: most of the time, the spouse only sees the other spouse at home or socially at church. Most of people spend the bulk of their time at work. Some of us are very different people at work. In fact, some of us have such jobs that we have to be extremely demanding, extremely exacting, and extremely strict, so much so that when we come home or are hanging out with people socially, we behave the opposite way.

Some of you are like that. Some of you are loving parents, but at work you freak other people out. Some of your grandparents are the nice, gift-giving grandparents that hug you and give you gifts at the holidays, but at work they are scary. To you, someone may be Uncle So-and-so, but to someone else, that person may be Doctor, Professor, etc. What we have here then, is a very common experience, in which it is so easy to only know one dimension of someone.

I remember going to work with my dad when I was younger. I saw him as being very easygoing at home (my mom was the tough one). At work, I saw that he was not as nice. Part of his job was running companies and venture capitalism. His job was to make sure this company makes money. I told my mom, "Dad is so different at work!" and she told me, "Yeah, when he comes home, he doesn't want to do any of that. Your dad is nice to you." Maybe you're this way.

What happens here is that it is so easy to miss out on other dimensions of a person. In couple's counseling, you realize that there is a difference between someone at work and someone at home. We're not talking about being fake or having two faces, we're talking about seeing two sides of a person that are both genuinely there.

I want you to understand that the premise of the sermon series we're in, Lion & the Lamb, assumes that every single one of us have a tendency of seeing only certain dimensions of Jesus Christ. Certain people have the tendency to see the warm, caring, compassionate side of Jesus,

while others tend to see the holy, just, righteous side of Jesus. The challenge with this is that the Bible gives us the full picture, as full as God wanted to give us through his holy scriptures. We're in a series that I call the Lion & the Lamb; that title comes from the idea that Jesus is both the lion and the lamb.

One of the places it comes from is Revelations chapter 5 where, in that passage, we saw, at the end of human history, that there is a scroll symbolizing the end of human history. John is saying that he wants to see the end and wants the scroll to be opened, but people are crying out about who is worthy to open the scroll and usher God's end to the universe. John the Apostle is crying out "Who is worthy?" and the angels respond, "Do not worry, someone is worthy to open the scroll. It is the lion, the conquering lion." He looks over to see the angels and in between the angels is a lamb, as if it had been slain. We get this strange imagery that Jesus is the conquering lion and a slain lamb. The idea being: if we really want to know, follow, understand, and worship Jesus more or if you're not a Christian and you really want to know who Jesus is according to the Bible, we need to know that Jesus is both the lion and the lamb. Last week we talked about Jesus as the lion and the lamb and our title was about how he was strong enough to become weakness. Next week, God willing, we're going to talk about how Jesus as the lion and the lamb will be able how Jesus was glad enough to suffer. Our message this morning is that Jesus is rich enough to be poor.

We have this passage from 2 Corinthians. Yes, this passage is generally speaking about money and giving. If you're doing stewardship training or you have people who want to know more about tithing, this is the prime passage. In this instance, it really is about giving and because I want to be faithful about what scripture says, I do want to preach about giving because I do think it is about giving. However, I want us to understand that this is not some undercover way for Pastor Enoch to talk about money. This is about Jesus. However, in order to understand Jesus, we need to understand three points about giving for us to finally see that Jesus is rich enough to become poor and what that means.

Three points about giving that we see in this passage:

1. Generosity is not dependent upon wealth.

The ability to give is not limited to those who have more and more resources. Many of us might understand while some of us might find that strange. Let's take a look in God's word as we discuss the churches of Macedonia. These churches were extremely generous and were begging

for opportunities to give. However, the reality was that they really couldn't afford to. Let's take a look at the beginning of the passage starting with 2 Corinthians 8:1:

8 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

Generosity is not dependent upon wealth. We talk about these extremely generous churches from Macedonia, but we know two things about their generosity: 1) they were under severe persecution and 2) they were extremely poor. This passage says that these churches gave above and beyond their means. In fact, they begged Paul to be able to give.

I've told this story before. It's about a woman (I'll call her Shiela) who, one Sunday morning after the pastor talked about the church starting a collection for a family in need, felt the need to contribute. She got her kids and went around their house and gathered canned food and money. She went to the Pastor's house and said, "This food, this money is for the collection." The pastor said, "Oh no no no, it's fine. We have enough. We don't need anything from you." She responded, "Oh no really, my children and I want to give this to you!" Shiela got to the point where she was angry. She said, "Pastor, I want to know why you won't take my food or my money because I want to give to this needy family." The pastor exacerbatedly responds, "Because you are the family we are trying to collect for!"

The idea being: it didn't even occur to her, "well, there is this need in our church, I'm so glad there are rich, financially secure people who can give". We call into this notion, thinking that giving is the domain of the wealthy. We assume someone must have the gift of giving because he or she has a lot of money. Or, have you ever thought this: "There's this need... and those people have nice cars, three houses, and their kids wear nice clothes...they should give." If you've ever thought that (and I admit I've thought that), then maybe you and I believe, in that moment, that giving is for people who have more than we do. If you ask people if they're rich, they'll say no. They'll point to the house up on the hill and say, "Now, they're rich." If you went to knock on the door of the people that owned that house on the hill and asked them if they were rich, they would say no and point to the people who owned all the developing buildings.

Rich in American thinking is often the label we use for people who have more than us. However, the Bible says that these churches in Macedonia who were under incredible persecution and extreme poverty got on their knees and begged Paul for the privilege to give. Generosity is not dependent upon wealthiness. The inverse is true. When you and I are in need, that does not make us exempt from giving. To put it another way, when you and I are in need, we are not denied the opportunity and privilege to give to those in greater need. Giving is not dependent upon our wealth.

I've heard this a million times and I think I've preached on it as well. The idea that the poor are so generous and free in their giving because they don't have much anyway. Statistically, when you get wealthier, you give less and less of your income. I think some people have talent that to what seems like a logical conclusion: really rich people are stingy and really poor people are generous. In my own experience of having the opportunity to be friends with people who, by American standards, I don't think poor people are generous. I don't think poor immigrants are generous. I have not met poor, inner-city kids who are generous. They are scared of not having money. Money has become an idol. Not in the way of the Asian American dream, but as a means of security.

The idea that poor people don't have much money and therefore cannot give doesn't fly with Scripture or Jesus. Jesus saw a widow who gave him practically two little penny things. He didn't say, "Pft, poor people have nothing anyway..." He said, "That poor woman gave everything." Jesus thinks it is hard for poor people to give because Jesus thinks it's hard for everyone to give. Poor people and rich people aren't poor and rich because they give or don't give; they are poor and rich for other things. Jesus says, "This widow, who has nothing left, gave everything." He commends her. He immortalized her radical act of generosity because generosity is not just for the rich.

So you have student loans? Well you're still eating and I'm still eating. We still have clothes. So you're paying a mortgage? You have a nice, warm home to enjoy. So you're a student and aren't working yet? I'm sure you get some sort of income. How do you buy food? The idea of giving then brings up the question whether to give or to tithe and how much to give or tithe and we get caught up in the technicalities of it all. Jesus didn't give many answers to those types of technical questions. However, he did say that we need to understand that giving is not for the wealthy. Giving is not dependent upon our wealth. Giving is an intentional lifestyle and choice.

2. Generosity is both a lifestyle and a discipline in which we can either excel or stink at it.

You can either be excelling in it or you and I could be pathetically inadequate in this area because Jesus describes giving as so many things. You can do well in giving. Let's take a look at 2 Corinthians 8:6:

⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

Generosity is not dependent on wealth. Rather, generosity is both a discipline and a lifestyle in which we need to cultivate in order to excel at. Sometimes we'll say things like "I don't have the gift of prayer" or "I don't have the gift of sharing my faith". In all those responsibilities, having or not having the gift does not remove the basic Christian commitment. All disciples of Christ are told, commanded, and instructed to share their faith. All disciplines of Christ are equipped to pray. All believers in Christ are instructed to excel in the act of giving. Yes, the Bible includes the gift of giving in the list of spiritual gifts, but it doesn't get you and I off the hook. Giving is a lifestyle that must be a lifestyle that must be ingrained from early on.

When I was younger and went to my friend's house to play, my mother, being the executive person she was, said, "You may go to your friend's house. However, I would like, in written form, who, what, when, where, and how you're going to get there and I would like it 72-hours in advance. You're a sixth grader after all." My parents had financial struggles immigrating over here as students. People who really know the value of money, I find, are very generous and know how to leverage it to serve others. One of the other things my parents made me do was to keep a notebook with vertical lines that had the words "date", "amount", "reason", and "source" that I was supposed to use to keep track of my finances. Whenever I got my allowance, I had to write it in. That was a great skill and I appreciate the way my parents taught me that. I've kept a budget my entire life.

When I got to the stage where I had children, Karen and I discussed how we could cultivate the act of giving. Giving is about giving out of what you receive. In order for our children to understand giving, they need to have an income. That's a biblical reason to give our kids an allowance. We went to our kids and told them we were going to give them an allowance so that they could give of their income. Now instead of a ledger, they use Excel or Google spreadsheet,

whichever is their preference. Their routine on Sunday morning is to get the coins and do their bookkeeping. We're trying to teach them.

If we don't believe that giving is for those who have more than me and if giving is a discipline and lifestyle, then I think we need to be intentional with ourselves and with others we love to help them know that everything you get from the Lord is His. Like any other thing in life, the art of conversation, the art of an academic subject, whatever it is, we need to spend time learning this, training each other, encouraging each other, equipping each other. Families, singles, parents, need to do this. Giving is not dependent on wealth. Giving is a discipline and lifestyle that we need to cultivate. Frankly, you are either excelling in it or you're not. It's so easy in an American context, especially Asian American context.

When was the last time someone asked you how much you give to the church? That's pretty offensive in the American context, but in the Asian American context? We don't talk about other people's money, but we think it don't we? We think, "Well they have more money than I do. They live in a nicer town. They should be giving. Our expansion is coming up. They should be giving. Our missions fund is running low. They should be giving. If those ten people just gave ten percent, we'd be done." I remember asking my parents for the first time whether or not they tithed. They explained that they did not because of the amount of money they were earning relative to the needs of the church.

Some of you have done premarital counseling with me and I've told you that if you are blessed with a large amount of resources, you need to be smart about tithing because you need to give other church members the opportunity to give and you need to have a sense of your giving. It's really intentional because you can excel in the discipline and lifestyle of giving. You need to plan and I need to plan. I'm not going to give you a percentage amount. You need a plan. Show me a plan. You have a plan to get healthy. You have a plan to go to the gym. You have a plan to get your kids to college. You have a plan to buy a home. You have a plan to get married. You have a plan for your career. You have a plan for everything, but where is the plan to help this community of God excel in this grace of giving? Where's the plan?

Generosity is not dependent upon your wealth and generosity is a lifestyle and discipline you must cultivate.

3. Generosity is also a demonstration of our love for others.

This may sound like an arm-twisting, guilt-inducing thing, but it's in the Bible. So either it is an arm-twisting, guilt-inducing thing or it's okay to twist arms because Paul did it. Paul was really smart. Let's take a look at verse 8:

⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

He just did this totally sneak, assassin thing where he said: I'm not commanding you and I'm not forcing you, I just want to know if your love is real. He could command them if he wanted to. No pressure. He's an apostle and church planter who wrote half of the New Testament.

Some of our grandmother's have used this strategy when they say, "You don't have to visit me... only if you love me." I think sometimes because we feel like that language is powerful, unfair, or easy to abuse, in good meaning, we shy away from it. It seems forceful. It seems wrong.

I remember Pastor Tom came back from a fundraiser and said, "You know, when I go to these fundraisers for these random secular events, they are not ashamed to ask for money for this incredibly worthy cause." Why do we tell non-Christians to not give money? I understand that there is a good reason why. There's a stereotype that churches want your money and I understand that. However, that being said, you put your money into any church that is preaching the gospel and is doing any kingdom work, you are not wasting your money. I don't care what church it is, where it is, or how small it is. If you commit your resources to God's kingdom, you are not wasting your money. You are instead learning that giving is a tangible demonstration of our actual love. He's actually doing this.

Most of us understand that these actions are tangible demonstrations of love. For parents, the idea of spending time with a kid and giving them food is our idea of food. Something my grandparents always did for me was feed me. When I brought my wife around, they said she was too skinny and needed to eat more. When I brought my children around, they said they were too skinny and needed to eat more. There's this idea that provision is normal. We can translate that to God and to our church.

Years ago, I heard one of the most compelling messages about pastoral ministry. He said, "If you ever see a work, for example, a church that God is blessing, I promise you someone somewhere has shed blood for that church." He's saying that if you ever see a church, big or small, that God

is doing something in, some people somewhere has shed blood, tears, and sweat to give up their lives to spend in the life of that church or community. That challenged me. It's not just for ministry. IF you love a people, a family, a neighborhood, a community, a church, will we not demonstrate that love by stretching and sacrificing so much as an outflow of that love? When have you and I sacrificed for this church? It's not a guilt-inducing thing. We need to give, not out of force, but out of necessity.

Paul says this: you need to complete this earnestness, this act of giving and you need to excel. The way to do this isn't to sit there and wait until generosity wells up in your heart. Rather, he says you need to do this discipline. You don't always like to go running, but if you run enough, at some point you realize you enjoy running. You don't always like to study or read, but you realize as you study hard, you like to study. You don't always like to work, but the more you work on a project or something, at some point you realize you gain from this. This is the key thing: when we give as Christians, we gain. We need to give, not because we're being forced to but because we need it like we need oxygen. We need to give to experience to love, in order to let God show us that He loves us, in order to let God stretch us. We need to give because when we give, we gain.

There's so much more to this passage, but I want to spend time talking about how this relates to Jesus. How does this relate to Jesus as the lion and the lamb? What dimensions of Jesus do we need to bring together to worship, follow, and know Him more beautifully and more joyfully. We see this now in the last few verses of the passage we have. Paul now invokes the work of Christ in this:

⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹ 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 by his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰ And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. ¹¹ So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

Paul is basically saying this: because Jesus was rich and became poor for you, finish it. Finish your commitment. Finish the act of giving. Excel in it. Maybe when you first became a Christian, you started off great. You were giving to people, giving to the poor, giving to missions, giving to great Christian causes. Now as you go through time, you're getting more money and you're serving more, but you're giving less money. Go back to what Jesus says.

How does this fit to Jesus being the lion and the lamb? In each of these three things we've learned about generosity, we need to see Jesus as being the ultimate embodiment of these principles. Starting with the first point we said, generosity is not dependent on wealth. That being said, we do understand that the more you have, the less likely you are to give. Jesus Christ was rich, but for your sake, became poor.

Do all of us have this understanding that Jesus, in his earthly ministry, was poor? In case you haven't heard of this, Jesus had no property except his clothing. He basically went around taking handouts from people as he preached. In the best way, you would call him an itinerant preacher or you could call him a freeloader who was a homeless guy that bummed off of people. By our own standards, Jesus is poor, but the Bible doesn't consider Jesus poor because he was the son of a blue-collared carpenter, chose not to own property, and didn't have a bank account or an income. The Bible calls Jesus poor and it has nothing to do with his earthly vocation or occupation, but it has everything to do with his earthly location. The reason why Jesus is poor is because in heaven, Jesus was poor. Heavenly existence, before the Son of God, Paul says, it's like he was rich. Even if Jesus came down to Earth as the emperor of the universe, the ruler of the world, the richest man in the entire universe with all the physical wealth, he would still be ridiculously poor compared to what he had in heaven. Jesus was the only who in all of history who was rich, but became poor.

One of the brothers that came to speak at the Chinese Missions Convention is a brother that is from the Bay Area, California, works for a pretty established internet brand, and went to a top-notch university. He decided to sell and move out of his home, move into a van, and live on the streets and live with homeless people. Before he made this decision, he would go during the day to work for this established internet company and then go home to his van and sleep with homeless people. He tells us, "You would think that I went from rich to poor. Before I had a nice home, but now I go to work in my nice clothes, to my van and I sleep in my van with homeless people." He would also say this, "The difference between rich and poor is nothing compared to Jesus who was the only person who was truly rich and became poor."

If we gave up everything, we're still going to gain so much more than we could ever lose. If generosity is not dependent on wealth, then there is only one person who was actually the extreme ultimate example of someone who had everything and became poor. That's Jesus. Jesus was rich enough to become poor for our sake. Speaking of which, let's try to apply the second principle.

If generosity is both a discipline and a lifestyle to excel, then how does Jesus do there? If he's the only one who was truly rich and then became poor, I'd say he's doing pretty well. He gave up everything and as a lifestyle, chose to walk as a human being; he had his divine nature, but he took on a human nature. There is no one else. Our sins did not hold Jesus to the cross. It was his love for you and for me that kept Jesus on the cross. Nothing could keep Jesus on the cross but himself because He was God. That leads to the third point.

Talk about proof of love? Jesus was the only who not only died for you, but rose for you. He died on the cross. Jesus is the lion and the lamb. He is the conquering lion and the lamb that was slain. Jesus is strength, so strong and mighty that he would become weakness – unimpressive, unattractive, and undesirable. He was so rich, the only wealthy being in the entire universe. Even in the scope of the trinity, the Father did not come and walk this Earth; the Holy Spirit did not come and walk on this Earth. Jesus Christ, the second member of the holy trinity, is the only one who came down, who was rich who became poor by walking on this Earth. He proved his love for us by dying on the cross and proved his love for us by rising again. That's the lion and the lamb.

That's the Jesus we need to call in love with. That's the Jesus we need to fall in love with again or worship for the first time. That's the Jesus we need to repent for. That's the Jesus we need to embrace. Jesus is the mighty God, the righteous judge. Jesus is also the lamb that was slain and slaughtered for you and me.

If you and I want to grow in our love and following of Jesus Christ, we must understand that everything in our human nature wants to see Jesus in only one dimension. He's strong when we need him to be strong and he's weak when we need him to be weak. He's never one or the other. He's always perfectly both. That's the Jesus we tell others about. That's the Jesus we teach our children about. That's the Jesus we want our friends and family to know. That's the Jesus we want to share with the nations. That's the Jesus we worship.

Practically, how do we think about this? I don't want to lose this emphasis on Christ, but I do think it would be helpful if we had some suggestions on how to excel in this act of giving.

One suggestion is to make a plan. Talk about it to your small group, your spouse, your kids, etc. Make a plan of how you're going to grow in the act of giving. I don't believe you can grow unless you're giving. Some of us, when we get a paycheck, we write a check to tithe right there. Others of us know we have cash in our wallets and that's what we use to give, there's nothing wrong

with that. Only you know whether or not you are being intentional about having cash in your wallet to give to Jesus or the work of the Lord. That's not true. God knows.

I didn't have time to expand on this passage, but I'd like to challenge us. When we say giving isn't dependent on wealth, the point is that giving isn't only in regards to money. Yes, this passage is clearly about money. If you understand this, however, you see that it's not just about money. When we come back to chapter 8, verse 8:

⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

And then if you skip down to verse 13:

¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness. ¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵ As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

The principle is not to make rich people poor and poor people rich. The principle is to share what you have if you have abundance and others have a need. If you have a lot these days, you should give. However, I challenge you to give in three other ways that I think are in this passage. When we talk about Paul and the Corinthians, they had a commitment to God first, and then to giving. Like it says in verse 5:

⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

Let me challenge us with three ways we can be generous:

1. Give your time, not just your money.

When you're young and you don't have a lot of money to give, give your time. It's very normal. As you get older, it's nice to be able to leverage the money and resources we have, but I think there's something lost when we just write a check. Sometimes just write a check. Sometimes God says write a check and somehow invest a day, some time, in this need, ministry, or person.

2. Don't just give widely, give deeply.

What that means is not even about money. It just means instead of impacting a lot of people, sometimes we're called to just impact on a few individuals. This is a very important distinction.

As a church, BCEC is a pretty considerable size. We're big in terms of being over a thousand people, but we're also small because of the number of different services. If you attend regularly and long enough, chances are you can recognize the majority of people in the room. In a small church, around less than fifty people, if you touch everybody, you will go deep with everyone in that room because there are so few people. Over the course of years, fifty people is not that many people. In a church this size, you need to make your target group smaller. If you try to impact everybody, you won't be able to impact anybody. We need to be able to understand that God calls us to give deeply and not widely.

3. Don't just give short-term, give long-term.

Don't just give, even generously, for a one-time thing. One-time things are nice. Missionaries, charities, people all love one-time things. But you know what can really make an impact? Long-term. Long-term, focused on a small number of individuals with your time.

I shared this story in the family fellowship just this past month. In this church, there is this girl (we'll call her Crystal although that is not her real name). She came to church on a Friday night with a student group from a four-year school. I was talking to her and another person was talking to her and someone asked, "Oh, how did you like the student ministry thing tonight?" She responded, "Oh, it's great. I would love..." and the other person said, "Well, you should try coming on Sundays!" She said, "Oh I would love to come on Sundays, but I don't have a ride. This brother in the church said, "Well, I'll give you a ride." However, this girl was in a four-year situation, about a year and a half in.

The one statement of "I'll give you a ride" ended up giving this girl a ride for the next two and a half years. Every Sunday to church and every Sunday after church. This was also a Chinese heritage church, which meant that they ate lunch after church. For two and a half years, when people were done loitering outside church and it's that time for all of our friends to go eat lunch, this person would drive the girl home. By the time that person was done driving the girl home, lunch was always done. This person gave to one person for two and a half years. Not just the time and gas spent, but in other areas.

If we were to give like Jesus, then we don't need to be rich to give, giving is a discipline and a lifestyle that we cultivate, giving is a demonstration of our love, and we can give not only our money but our time, not widely but deeply, and not over a short time but over a long period of time, then there are so many opportunities for us to know and worship Jesus by experiencing

what it means to give long time, deeply, to just a few people. Jesus spent three years with the same twelve guys. Can we give like he did? Can we love like he did?

Jesus is the lion and the lamb. He is strong enough to be weak. Next week we'll see that he is glad enough to suffer and he is the lion and the lamb who is rich enough to become poor.

Let's pray together.

Our great, giving, generous heavenly Father. I don't think anyone else embodies more the idea that giving isn't just this money or material things than your Son. When we, say, give up our time, give it for depth and impact, and give it even for a long-period of time, I don't know of any other true example than our savior who literally gave of Himself. He was strong enough to be weak for our sakes and He was the only human person of human history who was truly rich and became poor for Your sake because He loves and obeys You and for our sake because He desires to save us from our sins.

Father, for those of us this morning, expand our view of Jesus. Help us to understand Him more fully, to enjoy Him more completely. Help us to follow Him more completely because we see that He is both strength and weakness in perfect union and we may never be able to achieve that.

Lord, when we need to be strong, show us. When we need to be weak, show us. When we need strength to be weak, give it to us. When we need to recognize that your calling is to have a serious amount of resources in this world, give us the wisdom and the humility to believe that it is not all about us. When you call us for those times and seasons when we are in need and live in perpetual lack, help us to still love and worship You. Help us to have the kind of walk with Jesus that during those times we can be so rich that we gladly become poor, like our savior.