

Giving Because Of Grace (Deuteronomy 14:22-29)

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INTRODUCTION:

Good morning! My name is Quin Cools; I am a pastor in training. here at KingsWay, and it is a joy to preach the Word of God this morning.

One of our shared values as a church is *Gospel-Centered Doctrine & Preaching*. Given that we are in the middle of a sermon series about a series of sermons, that's what the Book of Deuteronomy is, by the way. I want to take a moment and consider with you what we are doing in the "Preaching moment."

Think about the preacher: Is my goal to prepare an motivational speech that ends in applause, or to present a personal testimony or a spiritual hot take? No, God calls pastors to, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." 2 Timothy 4:2

Think about the hearer: Are we listening because it's just the next part of the meeting? Or because the preacher is a good communicator? Are we hoping for a spark of inspiration or relief? 1 Corinthians 1:18: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." We want and need the word of the cross, the word of Christ to dwell in us richly.

So, here's what you'll find at KingsWay: book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, we preach the Word so that by God's Spirit, we will be transformed more and more into the image of Christ. We gather as a local church, a people redeemed by Christ Jesus, centered on and submitted to the Word of Christ. Where else can we go? This book contains the words of eternal life!

This morning, lean in as you eagerly desire to hear from the Lord, and let's pray to ask for God to illuminate our hearts and minds. We need him to do that.

Lord, you are the fountain and giver of life.

Grip our hearts with your grace toward us.

Show us our need.

Show us your provision.

Show us our abundance.

Show us your glorious vision for our lives.

*Show us more of you that we may be gripped by grace
and empowered by grace*

*to live lives that are marked by grace
because we are wholly devoted to the God of all grace
and your kingdom of grace.
We pray in the name of Jesus who died
that by grace we may be saved. Amen.*

Culture is always shaping our view of the world, of God, and of ourselves. If we fail to think critically about this fact, we will find that we are more shaped by the world than by the Word of God. Think about this with me: If you are on social media, watch television, listen to the radio or podcasting, companies inundate you with what? Ads! Think about the messaging:

- For the Burger King, someone sings, “BK, have it your way! You rule!”
- See if you can finish this one for me: 'There are some things money can't buy. For everything else, there's MasterCard.'
- And a local auto store ad in our area ends in the jingle: “You can have it all!”

Every marketing ad shapes the way you think of yourself. You need this. You want this. You deserve this. This careful messaging reinforces the heart's bent (my heart, your heart's bent toward 1) centering your life on yourself, 2) consuming instead of giving, and 3) the vision that spending money will cause you to be happy.

God's vision for our wealth is vastly different from what our culture teaches us. His vision gloriously exchanges a life of self-service for the service of others, a life of faithful giving instead of lifeless consumption, and a deep, abiding joy in God that advances the cause of Christ. So, today, we are going to examine a text in God's Word that reveals this vision and God's provision to enable us to join his kingdom work.

ROADMAP OF SERMON:

The title of today's sermon is “Giving Because Of Grace” from Deuteronomy 14:22-29. And our text is broken up into two distinct parts, so yes, I'm going to preach a two point sermon.

One time I preached a four point sermon from the end of Micah because there were four key movements in the text. Apparently, people are more excited about a two point sermon than a four point sermon, but I'll take it. It's certainly not the 9 point sermon that Matthew tried to teach a few years ago.

As I see it, there are two key movements in this text, and that's what I will seek to explain the meaning and significance of. Our points are coming at us in the form of two questions today.

TWO QUESTIONS:

1. Why do we give of our wealth? (vv.22-26) [we will spend most of our time here]

2. Who do we give to support? (vv.27-29)

And before we get into text, please realize my presupposition: we are wealthy. I'm not just talking to the home owners or business owners or net worth millionaires in the room. I'm talking to each and every one of us.

According to the World Bank, more than 700 million people today live on less than \$2.15 a day. Across the world and across human history, we are a wealthy society. You may not think of yourself as wealthy, certainly not in comparison to Elon Musk's billions. In fact, you may be saddled with student loan debt, medical debt, or a large mortgage payment. But, just think about what those things represent: access to higher education, health care, and a house worth perhaps hundreds of thousands of dollars. Millions of people, the world over, do have that kind of wealth. Do you have an iPhone? Does your family have a personal vehicle or two or three? Don't compare yourself to Elon Musk; recognize that God has blessed you. To the degree he has blessed you with wealth, you are responsible to steward that wealth.

1. WHY DO WE GIVE OUR WEALTH (verses 22-26)

22 "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year.

We locate ourselves following the people of Israel as they leave behind the 40 years of desert wandering and finally arrive in the promised land of Canaan, across the Jordan River. In this section of his sermon, Moses six times uses the phrase, "You shall," imperatives that demand a response. Think about who Moses was. Moses was a prophet who represented God to the people. The people hear the voice of Moses preaching, but who elicits the response? God. The people of Israel were under the law. The law of the covenant made at Sinai, after God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt. By this time in Deuteronomy 14, they have already been given the specific statutes which would have introduced the tithe.

We read in Leviticus 27:30: 30 Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord.

Moses is reminding them of something they have already been taught, so to catch us up to speed: what is a tithe? The Hebrew word simply means a tenth. To give a tenth or to exact a tenth. If you've never heard of the concept, the idea is pretty clear: whenever you experience an increase in your wealth (your herd grows, your trees bear fruit, the soil produces grain), you shall set aside 10% and give it back to the Lord. Leviticus teaches that this was a way the people are set apart for God, holy to the Lord.

And I so appreciate the testimony our brother Bob Shanks shared on our church blog last week about spending time in the Word. Let's follow his example and apply the principle of meditating on God's Word, going word-by-word, idea-by-idea here in verse 22. Listen for my emphasis.

22 "You shall tithe...

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22 "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed...

22 "You shall tithe... year by year.

What do we learn from such an exercise?

- Who shall tithe? The Israelites, God's people.
- Is this optional? This is a requirement under the Mosaic law.
- How much should one give? Under the law, 10% of the yield.
- Is this for some of the yield? You shall take a tenth of ALL the yield.
- Is this a one-time gift? This is a repeated giving, an ongoing commitment, what covenant faithfulness to God looks like.

If you're a red blooded American like me, you might be a little suspicious of governing authorities who increase taxes to seemingly fund the bureaucracy. Anybody else? Why do we feel this way toward hikes in taxes? Because it's not the government's money!

If we're not careful, we might assume that is what God is doing here. He's just another politician or a dictator who is exacting a tax, and the people better pay. Why might we feel this way toward God? Because it's not his _____!... okay, pause right there. It's not his money? It's not his time, energy, resources? It's not his breath that he breathed into our lungs?

This is the one, true, living God, the creator of the heavens and the earth. This is the God whose rule is marked by sovereign grace, redeeming his people from Egypt out of no merit of their own. The tithe was not a mark of a taxing dictator, but an act of grace. For out of what Israel was given, she gave. Think of your own wealth:

"What do you have that you did not receive?" Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4. "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" 1 Corinthians 4:7b

And Moses taught, "You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day." Deuteronomy 8:18

In a very real sense, you don't own anything. God owns everything. So, whatever God gives you, you steward. You are responsible to tend, to care for, to manage God's stuff. A tithe is giving back a portion of your wealth, a portion of *all* that God already owns. It's giving because of grace that has already been given.

Some of you will remember *The Test of Prosperity*. In May, Matthew preached a sermon through part of Deuteronomy 6 where Moses warned God's people of spiritual danger that awaited them in the promised land: the spiritual danger of prosperity. Listen to how true this is for Israel—and how true it is for you and me:

10 And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities *that you did not build*, 11 and houses full of all good things *that you did not fill*, and cisterns *that you did not dig*, and vineyards and olive trees *that you did not plant*—and when you eat and are full, 12 then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 13 It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. Deuteronomy 6:10-13

What's the point? We must remember God's identity and our identity. Remember who our gracious God is and who we are in light of who God is. God is the creator and sustainer of all things. He made you. You didn't give yourself life. You didn't give yourself wealth. God did that. And if you're a Christian, he redeemed you from slavery to sin and death. You are wholly devoted to the Lord because he created you and all that you have. He redeemed you and intends to redeem all that you have.

Therefore, God instituted the tithe for Israel. Look at verse 23:

23 And before the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.

You shall tithe... and you shall *eat* the tithe. What?! Some Bible commentators think this tithe in Deuteronomy 14 is an additional tithe on top of the one from Leviticus 27. Others recognize it as the same tithe with a corresponding festal gathering. This seems to be what is in view here. And when one would bring the annual tithe, they would produce the means for the feast. So, this wasn't intended to be put set up on autopay. There was a personal participation in the act of giving. You had to show up. In other words, giving is worship. It's personal and corporate worship.

Consider how this text is wonderfully unified with the rest of Deuteronomy 14. We should always be looking for proper context in our personal study and in the preaching of God's Word. Grammatical context (grammar!), historical context (history!), covenantal context (which covenant are we under?).

Two weeks ago, Josh Kruger Sr. preached about the restrictions on the kinds of foods that the people of God should not eat. Israel would be set apart even in what they ate and did not eat. And what do we see following the prohibitions in the food laws?

- You *shall* eat (verse 23)
- You *shall* eat (verse 26)
- You *shall* come and eat and be filled (verse 29)

This is what God has in mind: Envision a feast, a banquet table, and a host.

- Who is the host of the feast? v. 23 *The Lord your God*
- Where will the feast be held? *In the place that God will choose* – in the place of corporate worship, the sanctuary.
- Why in that place? *To make his name dwell there* – Israel would give to supply the meal out of what God had already given, So who gets the glory for the gracious provision? God gets the glory! His name will remain.

Even the original language of this instruction to tithe in Deuteronomy 14 is not to *take* a tithe or *exact* a tithe but to give. God's rule is an invitation to join in the meal of grace. Why give? Why join in the celebration meal? "That you may learn to fear your God always" (Deuteronomy 14:23)

What does it mean to fear God? Consider Moses' words in Deuteronomy 10:12-13: 12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, (what does that mean?) to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today *for your good?*

- If you are to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord for our good with all your heart and all your soul
- If you are to serve the Lord
- If you are to walk in all his ways,
- If you are to learn to fear God always

Then: You will give.

That may come across as offensive. You might think, "Are you saying, *Quin*, that if I'm not giving to the church or giving a full 10% of each paycheck that I'm not a Christian?" No, I'm not saying that.

Hear what I am saying: The fruit of giving generously *to* God out of what has been generously given to us *by* God exposes the root of our spiritual tree. If the root of your tree is a wholehearted devotion to God, walking in the fear of the Lord, walking in all his ways, serving the Lord and keeping his Word: you *will* give to the Lord. Your life *will* be marked by giving. And not just of your money and your increase but of your time, possessions, emotional capacity and your intellect. You will give, because God in Christ has richly given you everything you need and more.

This is where preaching gets personal, and I may step on some toes. If you have not been actively giving, humbly ask yourself why. It may be that you gave at one time but out of financial hardship stopped. Maybe you always intend to give but always forget. Maybe your confidence in a church leader was shaken at some point. Maybe your affections for the Lord himself have grown dim. Or it may be that you have never considered what God calls you to give.

Let 's linger here.

This is where preaching gets interesting: We are not under the Mosaic law. If you have faith in Christ's finished work through his life, death, and resurrection on your behalf, then guess what. You are no longer under the law, but under grace. The hopes of the old covenant have been realized in Christ. *And that means we don't have to give any more!* No, let's think carefully about this together. Is the requirement to give 10% of your income under the old covenant law something believers are bound to do today? No. There does not appear to be any place in the New Testament that carries over this specific requirement under the New Covenant.

What a relief! That's what I was waiting for all sermon. Thanks, Quin!

Friendly reminder: that moment of relief is not what we're after in the sermon.

As we see the law fulfilled in Jesus, we also see Jesus raising the bar and deepening our understanding of what God has been after this whole time. Consider Matthew 5:

21 You have heard that it said, 'You shall not murder' ...But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

27-28 You have heard that it said, 'You shall not commit adultery' ...But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Where the law of Moses required 10%, the law of Christ doubles down on loving your neighbor with *all* you have. Not 10%, *all*. As Romans 13:10b says, "love is the fulfilling of the

law.” Is there wisdom giving 10% as a starting point for giving, sure, but the emphasis here is on a wholehearted response to grace. And we see that grace as we continue in Deuteronomy 14.

Now imagine how difficult this tithing law could be if you lived far away from the sanctuary or you experienced a year of plenty. Imagine that you’re, let’s say, a beekeeper, and God blesses you with hundreds or thousands of pounds of honey this year. A tenth is still too much to fit in your sedan or even your minivan. Well, guess what, God is gracious even toward the beekeeper:

Look at verses 24-26:

24 And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the Lord your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the Lord your God chooses, to set his name there, 25 then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the Lord your God chooses 26a and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves.

You can see that this law was not meant as a burden but a participation in grace. So, you would take the tenth of your produce that year, exchange it for money, and head to the place of worship with the Levites. What was the money for? Good food and strong drink, not in excess, but to be shared:

Look at verses 26:

26b And you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household.

Giving is not a spiritual gift in the sense that one Christian has it and another doesn’t. Giving is a spiritual discipline of participating in an act of grace. Ask yourself: Do you have a present practice of giving to the work of the Lord? Fathers, mothers, do you lead your family in this joyful discipline of giving to the work of the Lord? Young adults, did your parents talk with you about money when you still lived at home? Did they model biblical giving? Maybe they didn’t! Take time today to ask the Lord, how am I to give of what I have been given?

This morning we’ve been asking this first big question, why do we give of our wealth?

- We give as an act of grace, because we have already received grace.
- We give as worship to the Lord.
- We give that we may learn to fear the Lord our God always.
- We give because we’ve been invited to the banquet.

- And yes, we give because our gracious redeemer has instructed us to do so.

Transition: There are many reasons why we ought to give, at the heart of it all is grace. Okay, here's our shorter of two points, the question of...

2. WHO DO WE GIVE SUPPORT (verses 27-29)

Verse 26 describes the joyful satisfaction and trust in God that we declare when we give to support the Lord's work. Verse 27 and what follows describes who should participate in this celebration and who should be supported by the tithes.

27 And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you.

Notice that this provision is not just for you. It's not just for your family. It's for the Levites among you. In Israel, those of the tribe of Levi, the son of Jacob, were consecrated to the Lord as the spiritual leaders of their day. They were given no land in Canaan like the other tribes. Rather, they were supported by the other tribes. In this case, out of the annual tithe, the Levites participated in the feast and likely maintained a supply of leftover food for seasons of the year with little to no harvest.

Look at verse 28:

28 "At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns.

So, outside of the usual rhythm of giving from what you are given year by year, there is a special location for the tithe that the Lord required of Israel in the third year. Every three years, instead of taking a tenth of the produce or livestock to the sanctuary, you took it to a storehouse in your local town. What's up with that?

Verse 29 tells us why.

29 And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled,

Who? Not just the Levite, but the sojourner, the fatherless, the widow. Think, not just supporting pastors and prospective church planting missionaries but refugees from Syria and Venezuela. Supporting children in the Henrico County foster care system, those who don't own a home. People who are devoid of networking relationships and don't have the money to support themselves. That's who is in mind here.

Dr. Daniel Block writes, “The Torah does not envision a welfare system administered by a political bureaucracy and based on a centralized system of taxation. The well-being of the potentially marginalized depends on the charity of all citizens.”

Federal, state, and local governments raise taxes for welfare programs all the time to provide assistance for all kinds of things: food, housing, unemployment. Why? There’s a vacuum, a void. We must not wait for the government to send a check; we care for our neighbor. It’s the vision that is realized in the new covenant community in the Book of Acts. Here’s how Acts 4 describes First Jerusalem Community Church:

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Acts 4:32-35

That is radical generosity. Sometimes it is proportional. Sometimes it is sacrificial. It is always an act of grace.

This is true religion, love of God and love of neighbor, particularly the needy, the orphan and the widow. Again Dr. Daniel Block says: “Moses anticipates some stratification of Israelite society, but he envisions communities whose landed citizenry are compassionate and whose economically marginalized are cared for. With the last clause of verse 29 he suggests that demonstrated compassion to the poor is a precondition for continued blessing.”

Sheesh! Fast forward through Israel’s timeline. Through the ages of the judges and kings and the exile. You find it is for this reason the Lord rebukes Israel through the prophet Malachi after their return from Babylonian exile:

6 “For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. 7 From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ 8 Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. Malachi 3:6-10

What is God's posture toward his people? He is eager to bless. Eager to show us his favor. Eager to invite us to the table of grace.

Look at the end of verse 29:

that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

And when you hear that God wants to bless you, seek not his hands (what he gives) but his face, for in his face of Christ, we see the glory of God. Regardless of what your bank statement says, without Christ, you are but a beggar on the doorstep of God's mercy, in desperate need of grace. And if you have repented of your sins at the foot of the cross, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 8:9. "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." What is the basis of our giving? God so loved the world that he *gave*. "He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

That's the God we serve, that's to whom we give.

Who do we give support to? God is eager to bless the work of your hands as you faithfully support the work of the gospel and the relief of the needy (verses 27-29). That's who we are called to support with our giving.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPLICATION:

And before I conclude this sermon, a few remarks.

1. On the whole, KingsWay, you have been doing well. You can't sit in a budget meeting with Matthew Williams, our Lead Pastor, without him gleefully praising the Lord for how gracious God has been through your generosity. This has been in ways that are proportional and sacrificial to advance the gospel. Even through key efforts like our three designated funds (missions, mercy, building), we see God at work in you. Keep loving God and loving your neighbor as you excel in this act of grace!
2. If talking about money is difficult for you, consider how to have healthy conversations with someone about giving. You don't need to know someone's salary or 401k standing to help them love and follow Jesus with their money nor for you with yours. Don't leave these conversations up to pastors, but help one another as fellow members of your church. Husbands and wives, parents and children along with young adults in your conversations. Ask the Lord to grant you a biblical vision for your wealth and giving.

3. Take time to reflect on your giving to see if faithful giving marks your life. If you need to adjust, adjust. Give in proportion to what you have been given as an act of worship, because of grace. Take the next step in trusting King Jesus in this area of your life. Seek his face with an open heart and an open hand.
4. Don't just "Check the box" of tithing or giving. Remember, Jesus is after the heart. He rebuked the Pharisees for they would tithe their mint and dill and cumin, but they neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. Jesus isn't impressed with your money. He doesn't need your money. Jesus is after you. And as you love the Lord your God with all of you, that love will show itself through giving.
5. Finally, as God blesses you with more (whatever that means for you) or shows you a new opportunity to support gospel work in this church or through other gospel advancing ministries: pray with your spouse or family or godly friend about how you might support the work of ministry. God works through Spirit-empowered discipline and Spirit-enabled spontaneity. May the Lord bless you in your giving.

CONCLUSION:

Culture is always shaping our view of the world, of God and of ourselves. Carefully crafted marketing ads speak to our hearts' bent toward ourselves, toward consumption, and the notion that we can make ourselves truly happy. God's Word confronts us with God's *vision which gloriously exchanges a life of self-service for the service of others, a life of faithful giving instead of lifeless consumption, and a deep, abiding joy in God that advances the cause of Christ.*

1. We learn to fear the Lord as we joyfully give out of what we have been graciously given (verses 22-26).
2. God is eager to bless the work of your hands as you faithfully support the work of the gospel and the relief of the needy (verses 27-29).