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 Bridgeway Community Church
 Series: “The Better Gift”
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THE BETTER GIFT:
 “Giving Beyond Your Fears”

I. INTRODUCTION

Drawing on the big board:

GOD

POVERTY-----**PLENTY**-----**PROSPERITY**

Question:

Do we agree on these facts?

1. There are *people everywhere on the spectrum* from poverty to prosperity
2. God *stands above* everyone on the spectrum
3. God *cares & loves everyone* on the spectrum
4. God’s *word goes out* to everyone on the spectrum
5. *Righteousness & wickedness* spans the spectrum

Having agreed on these facts, here are some personal questions I would like for you to consider.

Personal Reflection Questions:

Where are you on this spectrum? Where does GOD want you to be?

- Prosperity?
- Poverty?
- Plenty?

You might be wondering, “*Doesn’t it depend on how you define Prosperity or Poverty?*” Yes, you are right. So go ahead and define it however you would like as long as we are agreeing that we are talking about money, finances, and economics.

None of this, “I am rich in love, relationships, and good health” stuff! :-)

How many of you think I am asking the wrong question? Maybe the better question is...

Does GOD even care where I am on the spectrum as long as I am *faithful & content* wherever I am?

In my opinion, *what you believe really matters here.*

I am not going to answer this question for you! Each person must answer this question for themselves... BUT what you *believe* will definitely influence what you *expect*!

Repeat:

What you believe will definitely have an effect on what you expect!

- It affects what you *expect of God*
- It affects what you expect *God has in store for you* (in this life and in the life to come)
- It affects what you expect of *yourself*

Some of you are so afraid of the “PROSPERITY GOSPEL” that you *will not* embrace prosperity, even if you are prosperous.

- This is the Gospel of “*Name it & claim it*”, “*blab it & grab it*”
- Whatever you say, God must do like a “*genie in a bottle*”
- If you’re not rich and showy then you’re not believing God enough
- The word of God becomes about what you possess on the earth
- Christianity becomes more about *you* than others.

Others of you hold onto a “POVERTY GOSPEL” without actually saying it or identifying it as such. It is a gospel of *lack*, not *abundance*.

- This gospel is okay with people being poor if that is the state they are in.

- The Poverty Gospel basically focuses on loving & serving the poor but not utilizing or leveraging any energy to do more than alleviating their pain.
- Lifting people out of poverty is not even a thing for many churches.
- Moving people from poverty toward prosperity seems, for some Christians, inherently different, and maybe even antithetical to actually ministering to them.
- “True Ministry” is serving them food, not *helping them own the land upon which their food is grown*
- I mean, Jesus did say, “*The poor you will always have with you,*” right? (Matthew 26:11 NIV84)

Question:

So why not just keep them poor?

Were the words of Jesus about the poor a description and fact, or a prescription and desire?

Jesus never said...”And leave them that way”, did he?

Lastly, do you think the **healing of the 10 lepers** changed more than their physical lives?

They were no longer beggars relegated to the margins of society receiving the charity of men, but now Jesus made their entire lives better!

- They could work
- They could enter society and relate normally
- They could earn money and contribute their talents & skills

I would love to see a “*What are they doing now*” episode on the **10 lepers!** :-)

Or what about an episode about what the “Man born blind” is doing now that he has been seeing for 10 years...

Or, *Where's the Paralytic now?* Whenever Jesus did miracles, HE MADE PEOPLE BETTER, all the way around. Did he not?

Transition:

For the rest of our time, I want to take you to a bible text that will explain the difference between those who live righteous and those who live wicked.

I want you to see this passage righteousness not simply through a MORAL lens, but through the lens of MONEY, finances, and giving.

In fact, just a side note, you know that story in scripture about the master giving 3 of his people money to invest (you know the parable of the talents in Matthew 25)?

The master said to the servant who invested the most talents and made a return on the master's money a "*good & faithful servant*".

Question:

Does anyone remember what the master called the servant who buried his talent/money in the ground because of fear that he would lose it?

The master called this servant "Wicked & lazy." (Matthew 25:26 NIV84)

And then Jesus says in this parable: "*And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" (Matthew 25:30 NIV84)

Wow! Woe!

As we go to the key passage I want you to turn to, remember that phrase "*gnashing of teeth*".

Turn with me to Psalm 112. In this passage we will see that:

The Righteous Have No Fear as they Live & Give to the Lord.

II. PSALM 112

Beloved, when you live for God & give to God, you have no need to fear anyone or anything!

"Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands." (Psalm 112:1 NIV84)

When you FEAR the Lord, you don't have to fear anything else...

When you DON'T FEAR the Lord, you fear everything else.

- *"The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)*

You can give beyond your fears when you understand how God takes care of you.

- Fear also means "Reverence"
- When you fear the Lord you live & give out of "Reverence"

Notice the benefits of those who live & give to the Lord righteously...

13 BENEFITS OF FEARING THE LORD:

1. *Finds great delight (v.1b)*
2. *Children are mighty (v.2)*
3. *Generations are blessed (v.2b)*
4. *Wealth & riches (v.3)*
5. *Lives in the light with graciousness, compassion and righteousness even amid the darkness (v.4)*
6. *Good comes his way, when he is generous & just (v.5)*
7. *Not shaken (v.6)*
8. *Legacy of remembrance (v.6b)*
9. *No fear of disaster (v.7-8)*
10. *Heart is strong, steadfast & secure as he trusts God (v.7b-8a)*
11. *No fear of others & will triumph over his foes (v.8)*
12. *He shares with the poor (v.9)*

13. *He is honored with dignity (v.9b)*

FOUR RESULTS FOR THE WICKED:

1. *Will see it, but not have it (v.10a)*
2. *Will be vexed* [“worried/unsettled/anxious”] **(v.10a)**
3. *Will have regret* [“gnash his teeth” - *remember this phrase from Matthew 25:30?*] **(v.10b)**
4. *Will waste away & his dreams will come to nothing!* **(v.10c)**

Question:

Do you live & give wicked?

III. CONCLUSION

So Pastor, this is all the Old Testament, right?

Question:

Do these principles and promises work in the New Testament age?

Answer:

YES!

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 9...

Remember we were in 2 Corinthians 9 in last week's message?

Guess what? In 2 Corinthians 9:9, the Apostle Paul actually quotes Psalm 112:9.

He says: *"He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."*
(2 Corinthians 9:9 / Psalm 112:9 NIV84)

10 *"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your **righteousness!**"* 11 [God's PROMISE] *You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."* **(2 Corinthians 9:10-11 NIV84)**

So, back to the illustration on the board...

Question:
Where does God want *you* to be?

Only you can answer that question! But the one thing we do know...

The Righteous Have No Fear as they Live & Give to the Lord.

This is why I am encouraging you to bring your “**first**” **offering of the year** to the house of the Lord right here on January 1st in Columbia, MD and Owings Mills, MD, and online.

You make your own decision, but for me and my family, if I have to choose to be righteous & prosperous or righteous & poor...

I choose PROSPEROUS!