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To: [Wood River UMC](#)
Subject: sermon notes
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10.22.23 Sermon notes

Title: Giving as a mark of a transformed heart

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

As we conclude our series on stewardship, we remember that we began by laying the foundation with God's direction to the Israelites through obedience to worship Him with tithes, offerings, sacrifices, and other gifts. Paul reminded us in **2 Cor 9:6-12** to give from a grateful and generous heart; last week, we were challenged by the poor widow who gave all she had as a mark of her devotion to the one who gives us all that we have.

So today, Jesus meets Zacchaeus, a tax collector in Jericho. Note that though a Jew, Zacchaeus chose to work for Rome, which made him a traitor. Jews, like many people today, opposed taxes; hence, all tax collectors were among the most unpopular people in Israel. Therefore, that background makes people grumble about Jesus' act of eating in the house of a sinner.

However, when Zacchaeus encounters Jesus, his life transforms in unexpected ways. In this story, we see a man who was once known for all the wrong things turning 180° when something changed in his heart. He was corrupt to the core, greedy, and dishonest. Still, when he accepted the call to come down from the tree and later allowed Jesus into his home, he experienced the love of Jesus and realized that all that he was after in life was not that important anymore.

The extraordinary transformation of this man became a model of generosity in the community, as evidenced by his unique giving. Brothers and sisters, we, in many ways, are like this Jew from Jericho. We may not be known as tax collectors or greedy traitors. However, we all need to examine our hearts. Two questions to ponder are: Are we willing to encounter Jesus and allow him in our lives so he can transform us? Are we willing to let go of ourselves and embrace a life of generosity and goodwill?

Here are two lessons for our lives from this transformative story:

1. ***A Personal encounter with Jesus leads to a public display of transformation of the heart:*** – Brothers and sisters, before Zacchaeus met with Jesus, he must have met many other Rabis and preachers of the

time. He probably even attended some of the revival meetings by John the Baptist, who around that time preached repentance and making the way of the lord straight but never changed his ways. However, when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was in town, we are told that he ran and climbed a sycamore tree because he needed to see him. Then, when he (Jesus) called him and went into his house, something different happened in his heart because he confessed his sins and offered to return all that was taken falsely multiplied by four. So, friends, when we encounter the savior, our hearts transform, and whatever behaviors and attitudes that held us back from living a generous life are overcome. Indeed, as people who have encountered the Lord, our worship is transformed.

2. *A transformed heart moves one from selfishness to selflessness:* – another lesson we get from Zacchaeus' is that he models for us how a transformed person shifts their focus from self to others. Instead of always centering one's own needs and insatiable desire for things, one begins to feel the urgent needs around them. A transformed heart is seen in an outstretched hand of giving..

Friends, when the savior comes into our hearts, giving is no longer out of an obligation. Like he did with Zacchaeus, Jesus fills our hearts first with repentance, then with gratitude. May we be challenged to repent of any selfish goals in our lives. May we be freed to be generous out of the **overflow of a heart** that has encountered the love and grace of our savior. As the stewards of God's wealth, let us serve Him with gratitude and generous hearts.

AMEN!

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