



September 22, 2025

Acts 20: 32-36

"And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' When he had finished speaking, he knelt down with them all and prayed."

Paul, I believe, is suggesting that even though he has supported himself, worked hard all his life, and has not relied on handouts to survive, is making the case that he still has an obligation to support those in need and reminds his audience that it is more blessed to give than to receive. How true!

While visiting Yellowstone National Park, Lynne and I visited a fish cleaning station on Yellowstone Lake, in hopes of gaining some good fishing tips. There, a fishing guide was in the process of cleaning 20 lake trout. A woman had hired him to help her husband and sons catch fish that day. After her fishing guide had cleaned 15 fish, she asked the bystanders, "Does anyone want these remaining five fish? We can't eat them all." Lake trout at the time were considered to be an invasive species in Yellowstone Lake. As a result, any lake trout caught had to be either kept or killed and dropped into the deepest part of the lake. We'll take them," shouted Lynn e. The fishing guide filleted the remaining fish and gave us 10 large fillets! We were both elated and stunned. What are we going to do with 10 fillets? As we were camping, we had only a cooler and ice that would last a day or two. We could not consume that much fish before the fillets spoiled.

Walking back to our car with our “catch”, we encountered a young couple in a well-worn camper in despair. They had purchased meal tickets for a 3-course dinner at Yellowstone Lake Inn for \$9.95, with the caveat that the diners furnish their own entrée fish fillets for the chef to prepare and serve. “We have paid for a wonderful dinner we booked for tomorrow night but we have no fish for the chef to prepare,” they said. After speaking with them about where they had been camping, it became apparent that they could not afford to stay in the national park campgrounds and instead were finding rustic campsites in the national forest.

I responded, “Well today is your lucky day. Do we have a deal for you!” We gave them four of our 10 fish fillets for their dinner. Based on their radiant smiles, one would have thought they had just won the lottery. They were both elated; and so were Lynne and I! In the span of one hour or so, we experienced the joy of giving and receiving. The generous woman who had paid her fishing guide \$400 for a fishing trip, experienced the joy of watching her family catch fish as well as the joy of giving 10 fillets to total strangers.

This gift may have seemed a bit extravagant as it represented 25% of their catch. Yet if we believe that we are extravagantly loved by God, are we not called to love our neighbor extravagantly? I think so. For me, the takeaways from this “parable of five fish” are that while we are called to be good stewards of what God has given us, we are also called to share our resources with those in need around us to do so in a spirit of joy and abundance.

Acts 2: 42-47 describes the Fellowship of Believers who held everything in common and would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to anyone who had need. While we no longer live communally as did the Early Church, we can donate surplus possessions to a church sale or to a benevolent organization. By doing so, we can both become liberated from our excess of earthly possessions and can also experience the joy of giving, for it is truly better to give than to receive.

~Written by Tom Webster

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