

Finishing the Course - 04 Three Secret Sacrifices (A) Secret Giving

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of secret giving as a vital aspect of spiritual growth and self-examination in the church.

Duration: 40:21

Scripture: Matthew 6:1-4, Luke 16:11, Ephesians 5:27

Topics: "Finishing Well"

Description

In this sermon, Brother Zach addresses the complaint of boring sermons in churches. He emphasizes the importance of being faithful with money and possessions, as Jesus taught in Luke 16:11. Brother Zach shares the parable of the rich man who wanted to become even richer, highlighting the danger of placing our trust in wealth and neglecting our relationship with God. He encourages listeners to prioritize their spiritual lives and not wait until retirement to give their lives fully to God. Additionally, he warns against seeking recognition and honor for acts of charity, emphasizing the importance of doing good deeds in secret.

Transcript

We're going to take three Bible studies and we want to think of our theme which is growing up in all aspects unto Christ and especially filling up that which is lacking. That means we want to think of, we're not preaching now to the rest of Christendom. Maybe some of them don't lack these things.

We're talking to our churches what we are lacking. Think of that circle again. The areas of that circle that are not filled up.

Now if you go to some other churches, those areas may be filled up and some other areas may be lacking where we filled up they may be lacking. So we're thinking now of where we are lacking. The purpose of every conference is not to say how much better we are than other churches.

That is Phariseeism. That is to come here and say God I thank you that we're not like other churches. We don't want a single conference or a single meeting or a single conversation to be like that.

The Bible says judgment must begin in the house of God and the house of God is a place where there are thrones of judgment. Bible says that thrones of judgment. The difference is that in a worldly house they

have thrones of judgment to judge other people but in the house of God we sit on a throne of judgment to judge ourselves.

So you can find out whether you are in the house of God or in the house of Adam. That depends on what throne you're sitting on. Throne of judgment to judge others or a throne of judgment to judge yourself and to be poor in spirit is the result of sitting on a throne of judgment to judge yourself and nobody else.

So we don't want to see where other people are lacking. I mean if you take your child to a doctor you don't ask doctor what do you think the children in India generally are lacking in their constitution. I'm not interested.

You'd say what's my son lacking? Which vitamin does he need to take? What is his problem? That's what I want to know. That's what any sensible parent wants to know. So when we come before the Lord what are we going to ask him? Are we going to ask him Lord what are all these other children of yours lacking? Well I'm not here to judge them.

God will tell them what they are lacking. When the Lord spoke to the church in Sardis, he didn't tell the church in Sardis, do you fellas know what is lacking in the church in Laodicea? No. He told them what was lacking with them.

When he spoke to the church in Ephesus, he didn't tell them what was lacking in the church in Thyatira. No. He told the church in Ephesus what's lacking with you and I believe that's one way we know whether God is speaking or man is speaking.

Whether God is speaking or a Pharisee is speaking. When God is speaking he tells us what is lacking with us. When a Pharisee speaks he tells you all the good things he has and what's lacking with other people.

And when you listen to a preacher preaching and you find he's only telling us what's lacking in other churches which we don't have, that's a Pharisee. If the Lord is speaking he will tell each church like in Revelation 2 and 3 what is lacking with us. So filling up what is lacking and I believe this is what the Lord has laid on my heart.

Matthew chapter 6. Matthew chapter 6 and my subject is three secret sacrifices. Three secret sacrifices which we look at in these three evenings. Three areas where we need to have secret sacrifices which I feel we may be lacking in.

The first is in Matthew 6 verses 1 to 4, secret giving. The second is in verses 5 to 15, secret praying. And the third is verses 16 to 18, secret fasting.

Secret giving, secret praying, secret fasting. I feel are three areas where we are lacking in our churches. Areas that need to be filled up in that circle.

Because you find this word secret coming there in verse 4. That your alms may be in secret and your father who sees in secret. And again when it comes to prayer it says in verse 6 shut your door and pray to your father who is in secret and your father who sees in secret will repay you. And it comes to fasting it says in verse 18 by your father your fasting should be seen by your father who is in secret and the father who sees in secret will repay you.

You see in the sixth passage six times you'll find the word secret, secret, secret. Three secret sacrifices. First of all secret giving.

Verse 1 I want to read from the Living Bible. Take care don't do your good deeds publicly to be admired for then you will lose the reward from your father in heaven. When you gift a gift to a beggar don't shout about it as the hypocrites do.

That means when you help a poor person also. Blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity. To call attention to their acts of charity.

To get a reputation obviously. I tell you in all earnestness they have received all the reward they will get because they did it to get honor. And there are many subtle ways in which we can do that and get honor.

But when you do a kindness to someone do it secretly. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. And I think of that in terms of the body of Christ that it's right to do good to somebody without your wife knowing about it.

Without your husband knowing about it. See why husband and wife are like left hand and right hand. And one can do without letting the other hand know the good that you did.

And your father who knows all secrets will reward you. So that's what we need to bear in mind. That we are doing it before our heavenly father.

I believe in this area of giving because we have taught so much that tithing is an old testament command. And it is. There is no mention after the Pentecost of tithing.

Jesus mentioned tithing in Matthew 23 at a time when the law was still prevailing. And when the law was prevailing in Matthew 23 he told the Pharisees you must do that. That's right.

He told the lepers when they were cleansed to go and report to the priest which is the law. So when Jesus spoke about tithing he told the Pharisees yeah you should have done that. But when he spoke to his disciples he never spoke about tithing.

He spoke about something more difficult than tithing. Giving. He said give.

Luke chapter 6. That's what he told his disciples. He never told his disciples to tithe. Luke 6 38 give and it will be given to you.

Good measure pressed down shaken together running over. They'll pour into your lap because by your standard of measure it will be measured to you. That means whatever measure you use to give large or small it's the same measure that will be used to that is given back to you.

Supposing you're giving to God is you give a teaspoon to God. In your time of need God will give you a teaspoon back to you. And you wonder God I'm praying that you must give me this and give me that.

Pour out and you get a teaspoon. And you wonder why you get a teaspoon when somebody else is getting bucket loads. Is God partial? No he isn't.

But there are laws. There are laws in the kingdom of God and one of the laws is in the measure in which you give it will be given back to you. God doesn't determine that.

Each of us determine ourselves how much God is going to give us. My dear brothers and sisters don't ever forget this. You have determined how much God should give you.

God did not determine that. I have determined how much God is going to give me and you have determined how much God is going to give you. But if you want to know you just got to see what measure you use when you give to God or to his people who are in need or to his work.

It will be exact. God is very exact in his accounts. You know when you make a balance sheet how all balance sheets the left side income must tally with the right side expenditure.

You can't have ten rupees you can't even have ten paisa more that side or this side. It has to be exact. And I want to say God is very exact.

You get one of these droppers you know these droppers where you can put one drop and you give to God with that and you pray to God for a mighty blessing and you take the same dropper and give you one drop. And that is the reason why many many people are poor spiritually. They have rejoiced that they can come to a church where there is no tithing, no dowry, no offerings taken on any Sundays.

Isn't it wonderful to be in a church like that? No tithing, no offerings, no dowry. So that's the church I want to join. And to ease their conscience they take a dropper and give one drop to God.

Or some who are a little more generous give a teaspoon. And then in their time of need they cry out to God to open the windows of heaven. He opens the windows of heaven and takes the same dropper and gives one drop to that person and to the teaspoon to the other person.

And here another brother is getting drenched with the rain of heaven. What is this? One fellow getting drenched, another fellow getting a drop, another fellow getting a teaspoon. God the balance sheet has to be exact.

Both sides in the same measure in which you give. It will be measured back to you. Now do you see why some of your prayers were answered in a very miserly way by God? Let me show you a verse in Psalm 18.

In Psalm 18 it says, verse 25, with the kind, that means if a person is kind, God shows himself kind. With the blameless, you show yourself blameless. With the pure, you show yourself pure.

And with the crooked, you show yourself also to be astute. Astute means shrewd. If you are shrewd and calculating in your giving, God will be shrewd and calculating in his giving to you.

Because God is exactly like, treats you exactly like you treat him and other people. If you are miserly, God will be miserly towards you. God is not miser.

God is the most generous person in the whole universe. But he has to teach us not to be misers. There's a song we used to sing which says, every miserly soul is in Satan's control.

One of the characteristics of the race of Adam is miserliness, stinginess, when it comes to giving to God and giving to other people. And one mark of conversion, of genuine conversion, is that we're no longer misers. I remember hearing a story of a man who was getting down into a baptism tank to get baptized.

And suddenly he stopped before he got in and he took out his wallet and said, let me keep that outside. And the preacher said, no, put that in. That also has got to die and be buried.

I heard some message there. Now I'm not telling you to keep your wallets when you go into the baptism tank, but I hope you got the message. That that's got, your wallet has got to be baptized too.

And I feel, that's only my observation, I sincerely hope I'm wrong. I sincerely hope I'm wrong. But I have a fear that I may be right.

That we have not learned in our churches to give as we should. I believe many people, I believe there are some who have learned, but many who have not learned. Now this is not a message on giving, you know, I can preach freely on it because I have never taken assent from any of you brothers or sisters sitting here in 27 years, in any of the churches I've visited.

So I can speak freely about it. I believe Paul could speak freely about it because that was his attitude too. But I feel that because our brothers who've traveled have not taken, one of the tragedies of that has been that from the other side, people have not learned to give.

They have taken it for granted. We don't have to give, everything is freely given to us. And the person who gives, he becomes rich.

But the person who receives, he remains poor. Spiritually I mean. You can never lose by giving to God.

I'm not saying that I believe, I'm not saying that if you don't have, now you must start giving. It's not my business to say that. But I'll tell you one thing, if you honor God, He will honor you.

One of the things that the Lord told the people in the Old Testament was in the book of Haggai in chapter 1. Haggai is the third book from the end of the Old Testament, chapter 1. He was a prophet and the prophetic message that the Lord gave was verse 3, reading from the Living Bible. Is it the right time for you people to live in luxurious homes when my house lies in ruins? You see these are people who had come back from Babylon and obviously in 70 years in Babylon they had made a lot of money. And when they came back from Babylon, many of them, most of them, almost all of them had no burden to build the temple.

The temple was a big thing in the Old Testament. It's not today. Today we don't have any building.

But the temple was a big thing in the Old Testament and they came back and built their huge luxurious homes and probably got into debt building them. They were poor towards God. Who suffered? Did God suffer? No, they suffered.

And Haggai the prophet got up and said, is it time for you fellas to build and to live in luxurious homes and my home, my house lies waste? What is the result? Listen to this. Look at the result. You plant much but you harvest little.

Spiritually, what a lot of messages you have heard. That means you have planted so much seed into your mind. You should have been the most spiritual people in India, perhaps in the world.

But what is the result? You're not the most spiritual people, even in your hometown perhaps. You have sowed so much. Sowed so much means you have received such a lot of teaching.

You've got umpteen books and tapes and conferences and all that. But what is the result? Where are the godly men and the godly women? Where are the godly young people who got a passionate love for Jesus? You have reaped. You harvest very little.

You plant but you harvest little. Spiritually speaking, you have scarcely enough to eat and drink. You read the Bible but you say it's all boring.

You know, you've got hardly enough to eat or drink. And you've got nothing to share with other people because you hardly got anything yourself. Isn't that true? Do you know the number of brothers who have told me, Brother Zach, our elder brother is boring.

He just bores us every Sunday. Can you do something about it? What can I do about it? Jesus said, Luke 16 11, if you are not faithful with unrighteous mammon, who will commit to you the true riches of the word of God, revelation from the word, the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Who will commit to you the true riches if you are not faithful with money? What can I do about it? They've heard these things. I'll tell you one of my greatest griefs in my heart through all these years has been that complaint of the boring sermons that are preached in our churches.

There are much more interesting sermons preached in what we call the harlot. What is the reason? I believe many of those harlot churches have learned to give better than many in our churches. You don't have enough clothes to keep you warm.

You're shivering. Your income disappears as though you were putting it into pockets filled with holes. Why is it brothers in our churches who earn so much? Some of them are always hard up for money.

They never seem to have enough. I have found that the people who earn the most are the ones who are in debt. Other people who get very little, they are not in debt.

Something is wrong somewhere. Something is wrong somewhere and it's no use my brother sisters sitting in the meeting and clapping your hands and saying, praise the Lord, God is on the throne, we worship the Lord. We have such a wonderful time on Sunday when your condition is like this.

Something is wrong. You know when you listen to a prophetic message in the meeting and you nod your head and you get excited, you look very spiritual. But when you have to get up and share a word with somebody there's nothing there.

That's when you discover whether you're spiritual or not. When somebody comes to your home and I'm not talking about standing in the group, that's a gift. But when somebody comes to your home and you don't have anything to share spiritually with that person, you're so poor.

What are you supposed to do when somebody comes to your home? Don't you give them a cup of tea at least? Fine. Sometimes you invite them for a meal. What about spiritually? Are you able to give them something that enriches them? What is the reason? You live in your luxurious homes and you have not thought about God's house.

Jesus said in Luke chapter 12, you know there was a man who said to him, Luke 12 13, please tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me. Why do, why did this man want to get his family inheritance? I don't think it is because he was starving. I don't think that he came to the Lord and said, Lord my children are all starving.

We don't have a house to live in. Can you please tell my brother at least to share the dad's property with me. Dad is dead.

We're only two brothers. The fellow has swiped the whole thing and he's not given me enough. No.

I don't think that was the reason. He had his house. His children were all okay.

Nobody was starving. Nobody was naked. But he wanted more and that's what he was asking the Lord for.

He was not satisfied with what he had. He said dad's dead. I've got a right to get the lakhs of rupees that meant for me and righteously speaking, I suppose humanly speaking that's right.

I mean if he had gone to Moses, Moses would have said bring your brother here. Let's settle it. The trouble is he went to Jesus.

You can't go to Jesus with such questions. He said sorry. He said I didn't come.

Who appointed me, verse 14, to be a judge over you in such matters? You come to me because you want to be free from sin and be a more godly person. Sure I'll help you. You come to me and tell me to help you to win some court case that you can get some money from somebody.

Don't come to me the Lord says. And then he said to all of them, beware and be on your guard against every form of greed. And the Living Bible says beware.

Don't always be wishing for what you don't have. Don't always be wishing for what you don't have because you see somebody else has got it. For real life and real living are not related to how rich we are or how many possessions we have.

Real life. The one man who walked on this earth with real life had no possessions and proved to us that life does not consist of possessions. Then he told the story of the man who was very rich and he wanted to become still more rich and when he had some, when his farm became very productive, verse 16, the land of a certain rich man was very productive.

Now you may not have lands. Maybe you suddenly got an increment. It's the same story.

Or you suddenly got a bonus or you suddenly got some windfall. You got a large inheritance. Suddenly a lot of money.

He began to think, what shall I do with all this extra money now? Yeah, I think I'll invest it and make some more money. I'm applying this parable to today and make more and more and you know have so many bank accounts in different places. One bank account would not be enough, would not be safe.

And I will say to my soul, I'm okay now. I've got enough for many many years. God said, you fool, you're gonna die tonight.

And then what's the application of it? Verse 21. That's what I want you to see. And so is the man who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.

That expression, being rich towards God. I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, are you rich towards God? Are you going to give your life to God after you retire? After you've made enough money for yourself, lived for the world for 60 years, retirement has come. I get letters like that sometimes.

Brother Zach, I've retired from government service. Is there any job in your organization for me? They want to earn some more money now in the name of Jesus Christ after they retire. They won't serve free.

No, no, no. You see all these Christian fellows who have retired and are now heading up Christian organizations. You think they're doing voluntary service? Forget it.

They're just trying to make some more money after they retire in the name of Jesus Christ. You see them all over. Laying up treasure for themselves.

When are you going to give your life to God after you retire? I often use the picture, I say that is like you're inviting some very distinguished guest to your house for tea. And your wife brings one cup of tea for both of you. Okay? Get this picture right.

And you drink that cup while the fellow is watching. And when you're finished it, have some tea. Because there's still a little bit left, you know, when you're 60 years old, you still got another 10 years left.

Say, God, I'd like to give you the retirement years of my life. You know, I love you. You died for me.

Please take this. Malachi said that, by the way. Malachi said, chapter 1, I believe Malachi was like the last prophet in the last days of the Jewish era was very similar to the last days of the Christian era in which we are living.

And the Lord said to, through Malachi, verse 8, when you present the blind for sacrifice, and you present the lame and the sick, will you offer that to your governor? Will he be pleased with you? But you offer it to me. See, they knew they have to offer a lamb or an ox. So they would go through their flock and look for the blind one.

Seems a bit of a nuisance. Let's offer it to God. Because tomorrow I have to give a sacrifice, pick out the blind one.

And if they had a lame ox, it's a bit of a nuisance in any case. Let's offer it to God. I heard a story once of a man who was a farmer.

And he said to his wife one day, you know, our cow gave birth to two calves, one brown and one white. And I've decided to give one of them to the Lord, 50%. So his wife said, which one are you giving to the Lord, the brown or the white one? He said, no, that we'll decide later.

We don't have to decide right now. But one of them is for the Lord. And few weeks later, the brown one died.

And he came back and said, well, the Lord's calf died, you know. It's always the Lord's calf that dies. Apply that to yourself.

Do you wonder why there's not a richer anointing upon your life, upon your words, why you are not a greater blessing to others? Do you know what is the greatest tragedy I have seen in my life? The greatest tragedy. It is not some earthquake in Gujarat or some train crash or plane crash. The greatest tragedy I have seen in my life is people who were mightily anointed once upon a time and they went after money and they lost it.

I have seen people like that. I have actually seen mighty anointed servants of God and they went after money and they are not the same. Boy, what a word was on their lips 20 years earlier.

It should have been richer now, should have been a greater anointing now. When you get closer to God, does the anointing get greater or lesser? What do you think? It should be greater. At least that's the standard I keep for myself.

I say, Lord, if I'm really getting closer to you and I'm not fooling myself, there should be a richer anointing on my life. That means there's greater peace in my life, that there's greater patience in my life, that at home I can always bring peace into a difficult situation and be patient with all the turmoil that there is in all of our homes and that when people come I can bless them with my words. I say, I want to be richer and richer.

God in heaven is like that. All of us can be like that. Yeah? Why is it that that anointing goes? Because they're not rich towards God.

I'm not talking only about money. I'm talking about time. How rich are you towards God with your time? Do you give the dregs of your time to God like the dregs of the cup of tea to the governor? That's what the Lord says here.

Try and give that to your governor, verse 8, and see whether he'll accept it. You give the dregs of your life to God, all you want to do is go to heaven when you die, live for the world, live for the honor of your unconverted relatives, want to please them and say, Lord, please remember me when you come to your kingdom. That's okay for a thief to say that on the cross who never knew anything about Jesus till that moment.

What about you? You've known Jesus for so many years. It's different if you say that. Lord, please remember me when you come to your kingdom.

I never had time for you on earth, but please remember me when you come to your kingdom. You'll be terribly disappointed. Don't insult God like that by giving him the dregs of your life, the bottom part of the cup of tea.

Give him the best. How many here are determined to say, Lord, you deserve the best from my life? I believed that when I was 19 years old. I would not have the authority to speak here today when I'm 63 if I did not say that when I was 19.

And I kept on saying it to God. I said, Lord, you're going to get the first in my life anytime, always. To the best of my knowledge, I tried to put him first.

I slipped and fallen, made stupid blunders and did a lot of foolish things, but that was all in my youth. We are not always wise, but as far as the place God had, I was going to be first. There was no question of anything else.

I believe we need people in our churches who are radically converted. We need people and one way we discover whether we are radically converted is when our attitude to money has changed. We, unfortunately, in evangelical Christianity, evaluate whether a person is born again by, has he repeated the magic formula? What is the magic formula? Lord Jesus, I'm a sinner.

Come into my heart. Thank you for coming into my heart. Amen.

Is that how you get saved? If the fellow really means it, if he surrendered everything, okay. But very often it's just words. See, I believe we are, in every church we have seen the first generation moved with God.

When it comes to the second generation, they know God second hand. They don't know him directly. We are moving into the second generation in some of our churches.

I tell you that is the greatest fear I have, that we have a second generation growing up who knows the right words, who knows the right doctrine, but who don't know God. There was only one time, as far as I know, that Jesus said these words, today salvation has come to this house, only once. Jesus said that, those words.

Today salvation has come. That means he told a man, salvation has come for you and to your home. You know when he said that? That's in Luke chapter 19 and verse 9 to Zacchaeus.

And do you know when Jesus said it? Jesus said it when the man decided to be rich towards God. That's when Jesus said it. The man came down from the tree and he came to the house and it says, there's a wonderful verse here in Luke 19 verse 8 where it says, Zacchaeus stopped.

Have you ever read that verse? Zacchaeus stopped. What do you mean he stopped? He's walking with Jesus right up to the door of his house and in front of his house he stops. That's a terrible thing to do when you're inviting somebody to your house and in front of your house you don't let him go in.

You stop and you say, Lord wait a minute, I've got some confessions to make before you enter my house. I'll tell you honestly, I cheated a lot of fellas to build this house. I told lies, bribed, cheated, did all types of wrong things and I built this house.

And a holy person like you can't come into this house until I have set all that right. And to make sure that a person is not even cheated of interest, you know he was quick in his calculation. He said, I'm going to give back four times.

I'm going to go to each house and return four times what I took from them. And there are a lot of people whose address I don't even know whom I've cheated. I cannot keep their money also.

I'm going to give half of my goods to poor people because I don't know the address of these other people whom I've cheated. And Jesus had never heard words like this from anybody in his life. As soon as he heard it, he said, today salvation has come.

When a man's attitude to money changed, that's when Jesus said, salvation has come. We tell people salvation has come years before their attitude to money has changed. We don't even wait for that.

We say that's not even important. One rich young ruler.

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