

How to... preach on generosity and stewardship

A practical guide for building confidence, clarity, and joy in preaching about giving.

Introduction

Preaching about generosity and stewardship is something that many church leaders and preachers find difficult. The moment the topic of “money” arises, enthusiasm can quickly turn to dread. And yet generosity is central to Christian discipleship and vital for resourcing the mission and ministry of the church.

This guide aims to equip you with principles, ideas, and encouragement so that preaching about generosity no longer feels daunting but becomes something natural – even possibly life-giving.

1. Starting with the four W’s – Why, when, who and what

Before you even start your preparation, step back and ask these four key questions:

i. Why

Why are you preaching on generosity now?

- Is it part of a wider strategy to embed generosity as a normal part of church life?
- Is this a one-off sermon or part of a series?
- Will it lead into a practical invitation (e.g., a gift day, a stewardship campaign, or an invitation to review regular giving)?
- What do you hope will happen as a result?

Being clear on the “why” gives coherence and purpose to your message.

ii. When

Timing matters.

- Is this for a regular Sunday or a special occasion such as harvest, baptism, or an annual meeting?
- Will the theme complement the season—e.g., harvest, Lent, Advent, or generosity-focused events like Generosity Week?

Choose a moment when people can hear the message well.

iii. Who

Think about the people in the room.

- A typical Sunday congregation may already be committed givers.
- A harvest or baptism service may have a much wider mix.
- How can you make the message relevant and accessible to all?
- Are there local sensitivities or financial pressures that need acknowledging?
- How long is appropriate for this setting?

Also ask - who is the right person to preach this message?

The incumbent? Treasurer? Churchwarden? Another leader? Someone with a compelling story? There is no single correct answer—choose someone with authenticity and passion.

iv. What

What response are you inviting?

If you want people to act, do you have the mechanisms ready?

- Regular giving forms
- Parish Giving Scheme materials
- Gift Day envelopes
- QR codes or online giving links
- Follow-up communication

A clear and easy next step helps people respond joyfully.

2. A parody on preaching about money (Please don't do this!)

“Good morning. Unfortunately, this week I have been given the task of talking to you about the church’s finances. It feels a little bit like I have drawn the short straw. But at least you have come this morning so now we are going to lock the doors so you can’t escape.

“So, what can I tell you. Well as you can imagine we don’t have very much money left in our bank account. The parish share to ‘them up there’ has gone up again and we will probably need to have some of the roof done this year.

“But it’s not all bad news because we believe that God will provide everything that we need. So, if you can just pray that this will happen then we will hopefully be ok, well for this year at least. Amen.”

This humorous example highlights two common pitfalls:

- Being apologetic
- Starting with the problem

A sermon that begins with embarrassment or crisis can instantly create resistance.

3. Setting a good foundation

Approach preaching on money as you would any other sermon:

- Root it in scripture
- Speak about God first
- Frame generosity as discipleship, not fundraising

There is rich biblical material—creation, covenant, the prophets, Jesus’ teaching, the early church, and countless passages about God’s abundant generosity.

4. Preaching about Generosity

God is generous

Creation, salvation, restoration—again and again scripture shows God giving lavishly (1 Timothy 6:17). Our generosity begins with God’s.

Generosity is relational

It expresses the relationship between giver and receiver—God to us, and us to others.

Generosity is part of Christian living

Romans 12 describes generosity as a spiritual gift, extending beyond finances to time, hospitality, skills, mercy, and practical kindness.

Generosity is both response and witness

- Response: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).
- Witness: Living generously reflects God’s character to others.

Share stories

Personal testimonies make the message real and memorable—but always ask permission before sharing someone else’s example.

5. Preaching about Stewardship

i. See above

Generosity and stewardship belong together. Stewardship flows naturally from recognising that all we have comes from God.

ii. All things come from you, and of your own do we give you

1 Chronicles 29:14 reminds us that that everything we have comes from God, and so when we give we are just giving back to God what is already God’s. This is not just about our finances, but the whole of the way in which we use our lives for God’s kingdom and glory. What might it mean to consider our gifts and skills as gifts from God that we can offer back?

iii. Connect giving to vision

Stewardship preaching should not guilt people; it should inspire them.

- What is God doing in your community?
- How is the church already stewarding its resources to bring transformation?
- What is the vision God has placed before you?

Be honest about finances, but frame them within mission, not maintenance.

iv. Invite rather than instruct

Avoid heavy-handed directives like “you must give 10%”. Instead:

- Invite people to explore discipleship.
- Offer practical ways to respond.
- Encourage reflection rather than impose obligation.

Help people ask:

- Who is God? What is God doing here?
- How can my gifts—financial and otherwise—join in?
- What might it look like for us, together, to be generous for the sake of the Kingdom?

v. Be honest, be encouraging, and be passionate!

If the preacher sounds uneasy or reluctant, the congregation will feel the same.

6. Some helpful resources

There are a lot of helpful resources out there including:

Books	The Art of Giving by Matthew Porter Contagious Generosity by Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard
Online	Preaching Generosity - weekly bitesize preaching resource from that week's Common Worship lectionary readings produced by Rochester Diocese rochester.anglican.org/for-leaders/preaching-generosity Giving in Grace - sermon resource to release Christians to excel in the grace of giving givinginrace.org Living Generously - eight session course from the National Giving Team exploring the moment in which Mary anoints Jesus' feet Living Generously The Church of England Generosity Week - resources available online. Often based around harvest but doesn't have to be!) Generosity Week The Church of England
How to guides from Bath and Wells Giving and Funding Team	How to approach and encourage legacy giving How to embed generosity in the life of your church How to plan a gift day How to prepare for and run a stewardship campaign How to write a finance strategy and action plan I can't do technology, so what about me? How to preach on generosity and stewardship How to communicate with the wider parish about giving (coming soon) How to launch the Parish Giving Scheme in your church

7. Final Thought

We would like to finish this guide by sharing a quote from Rev Dr Sam Wells who is the Vicar of St Martin in the Fields in London. It is not an entire sermon, but it could be! What it does really well is to honestly invite everyone present to consider their part in the life of the church.

"If you don't give because no one's ever asked you, I'm asking you now. If you don't give regularly because you've never got round to it, I'm saying today's the day. If you don't give much because you think St Martin's doesn't need it, I'm telling you that it does. If you don't give a lot because you don't have a lot, I'm saying your giving something is an example to everyone else. If you don't give more because no one's ever said thank you, I'm thanking you right now. If you already give until the pips squeak, I'm saying that's wonderful, and nudge the person next to you to do the same."

Rev Dr Sam Wells