

SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 21.09.25

PREACHER: REV ADAM DODDS

The First Belongs to God

BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

*BEING [HEART], THINKING [MIND] & **DOING [BODY]***
[A PERSONAL REFLECTION]

Conviction of a Disciple:

A disciple acknowledges Jesus as Lord in every part of life—surrendering time, finances, and decisions as an act of honour and worship.

OVERVIEW

What we do with the “first” parts of our life—our time, money, and obedience—reveals what (or who) we truly worship. From Genesis to Jesus, Scripture shows us that honouring God first is not legalism, but a radical act of trust. The call to give our first and best isn't about earning favour; it's about breaking the power of money and aligning ourselves under God's lordship and blessing.

ACTION

Step 1: Where in your life do you tend to “check with money” before checking with God?

Step 2: Have you pre-decided what you will give, or are you still negotiating?

Step 3: What needs to be rearranged in my life so that I can give God the first and best with my money?

THOUGHT

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 2–4; Exodus 13; Luke 16; Proverbs 3:9–10

Money is never just money. It's always saying something – about what we value, what we fear, and who we trust. Jesus knew this, which is why He spoke about money so often. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What we do with our money doesn't just reflect our hearts; it shapes them.

That's why Scripture introduces this radical idea: **the first belongs to God**. Not the leftovers. Not the scraps after we've made sure everything else is covered. The first. The best. From Genesis to Revelation, we see this pattern: What we do first reveals who we believe is in charge.

When Abel brought his offering, it wasn't the amount that pleased God – it was the posture. He gave the first and best, and God looked with favour. Cain gave "in the course of time." No urgency. No honour. Just leftovers. And God saw that too.

The point isn't percentages. *It's priority*. What we do with the 'firsts' in our lives – money, time, energy – reveals who really has our allegiance. When we decide ahead of time to honour God with our giving, we're not just doing a 'good deed'. We're engaging in spiritual formation. We're submitting to a different story; one that says we are not owners, but stewards. One that believes provision comes from the hand of God, not our striving alone.

This is completely counter-cultural. The world says: Secure your future. Save yourself first. Store up. Build bigger barns. But the way of Jesus is upstream. It teaches us to let go of control, to fight greed with generosity, and to dethrone the idol of money one decision at a time.

The truth is, if we don't pre-decide to put God first, culture will decide for us. And culture always tells us to consume, protect, and prioritise ourselves. But God invites us to trust – to believe that when we give the first and best, He sees, He honours, and He provides. Not as a formula. Not as a transaction. But as a Father who loves cheerful, courageous, worship-filled givers.

The question isn't just, "How much do I give?" The deeper question is, "Who am I becoming through the way I handle what I've been given?"

When we give first, our hearts follow. When we prioritise God's Kingdom, our lives take shape around His values. And when we learn to swim upstream, we discover the kind of freedom only found on the other side of surrender.

DISCUSSION

[A GROUP REFLECTION]

- 1) What keeps us from giving God our first and best?
- 2) Is there a time I can remember giving beyond my comfort level? How did that experience shape me?
- 3) How can our group practically and prayerfully support each other in this journey toward generosity?

PRAYER

Lord,
We don't want to live clenched and cautious. We want to live free under Your lordship. Give us the courage to put You first—not just in word, but in action. Help us honour You with the first of our finances, our time, and our obedience. Teach us to trust, and lead us into joy.
Amen.