



SEA CHANGE
CHURCH

THE CURRENT

The Spirituality of Giving · S1E2

Rhythms of Generosity

A 7-Day Study

"You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the LORD your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the LORD your God chooses, to set his name there, then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household. And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you. At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do."

Deuteronomy 14:22–29 ESV

Pastor Adam Stadtmiller · September 27, 2026

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

"You shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always."

Deuteronomy 14:23

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each week, The Current walks through a piece of Sunday's passage: a short verse study, encouragement, journal questions, and a daily prayer.

Take one day at a time. There's no need to rush.

DAY 1

Year by Year

DEUTERONOMY 14:22 ESV

"You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year."

VERSE STUDY

The first thing Deuteronomy 14 does with generosity is hand it a date. A tenth of the yield of the field, set apart year by year, not whenever a harvest happened to feel abundant or a conscience happened to feel heavy. The phrase is easy to read straight past, but it carries much of the week's weight: under the Mosaic covenant, giving was scheduled before it was ever felt.

A schedule is what separates a practice from an impulse. Sunday's message drew a hard line against what it called pressure valve giving, the pattern where guilt builds until a gift releases it and the whole thing then goes quiet until the pressure returns. That kind of giving relieves the giver without ever forming the giver. Israel's tithe could not work that way, because it was already on the calendar before any feeling arrived.

There is a reason rhythm forms us more deeply than a surge does. Anything done year by year eventually stops being a decision and starts being a description of who we are. Adam was direct about the aim: this series exists for spiritual formation, not for fundraising. A tenth given on a schedule keeps teaching long after the emotion that might have prompted it has passed.

Worth noticing too is how ordinary the thing being given was. Not a surplus, not a windfall, but the yield of the seed that comes from the field, which is to say the household's actual food and actual security. Generosity here is not assembled out of what was left over at the end. It is taken off the top of the harvest itself, counted and divided before anything else gets decided.

TAKE HEART

A rhythm is gentler than a crisis. There is real mercy in a God who asks for something settled in advance rather than something wrung out of us at a hard moment, because a decision made calmly can still be kept when life stops being calm. Whatever our giving has looked like until now, a rhythm can begin this week, at whatever percentage is honest, and it starts doing its quiet work immediately.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Where has our giving been shaped more by relief from guilt than by a rhythm we chose on purpose?
2. What would it look like to settle on a portion now, calmly, before the next appeal or the next hard month arrives?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day. Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Book of Common Prayer, A Collect for Grace (Morning Prayer, Rite Two)

ACTION CHALLENGE

Settle on one percentage this week and write it down rather than holding it vaguely in mind, then set the date it will be given. One number and one date is enough to move giving from reaction to rhythm.

NOTES

DAY 2

That We May Learn

DEUTERONOMY 14:23 ESV

"And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always."

VERSE STUDY

Verse 23 is the only place in the passage that states a purpose, and it is not the purpose most of us would have guessed. The tithe existed so that Israel might learn to fear the LORD always. The point of setting a tenth aside was formation. Funding was a consequence, not the reason.

That reframes the whole transaction. God is not short of resources, and Sunday's message put it bluntly: he does not need anyone's goats or grain. Psalm 50 says as much in God's own voice, refusing a bull from the house and goats from the folds, because every beast of the forest already belongs to him and so do the cattle on a thousand hills. What the practice produced was not divine income. It was a household that had rehearsed, every year, the conviction that the harvest came from somewhere other than its own competence.

Reverence is learned the way most things are learned, by repetition. Setting a tenth aside once proves very little. Setting it aside year after year, in the lean seasons as well as the full ones, slowly rearranges what we actually believe about where security comes from. The formation lives in the repetition rather than in the size of the gift.

Underneath all of it, what God is after is the person and not the portion. The message tied every act of giving back to a sacrifice that was tied to a person, a Son given as the first and best rather than as anything spare, and argued that all giving is meant to model that. A tenth that trains a heart toward reverence has done something a tenth that merely balanced a ledger never did.

TAKE HEART

The tithe was never eaten alone. It was eaten before the LORD, in the place he chose to dwell, which means the giving drew a household nearer to God rather than only teaching it a lesson from a distance. To fear the LORD always is the language of an ongoing relationship, not a fact learned once and set aside. What we give, we give toward nearness, and every year the practice is repeated, the relationship it was building all along gets a little more room to grow.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. What does our giving, as it currently stands, teach us about where our security actually rests?

2. If God is after reverence rather than resources, what changes about how we approach the next gift?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to thee, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly thine, utterly dedicated unto thee; and then use us, we pray thee, as thou wilt, and always to thy glory and the welfare of thy people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen."

Book of Common Prayer, A Prayer of Self-Dedication (61)

ACTION CHALLENGE

Before giving anything this week, take two quiet minutes to name what the coming year's provision is actually resting on. Then give, deliberately, as a way of answering that question honestly.

NOTES

DAY 3

When the Way Is Too Long

DEUTERONOMY 14:24-25 ESV

"And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the LORD your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the LORD your God chooses, to set his name there, then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses."

VERSE STUDY

Verses 24 and 25 are a piece of practical mercy. A household too far from the sanctuary to carry a season's grain was permitted to convert the tithe into money, bind it up, and travel with that instead. The provision is genuinely generous, and it is easy to miss what it does not do. It does not cancel the journey.

That detail carried a good deal of Sunday's weight. Money made the load portable, but the family still walked. The message asked what a long walk with children and a season's harvest in tow does to a person's experience of giving that writing a check on a Sunday morning simply cannot do. This was not an attack on the check. It was an honest observation that the trip formed the people who made it.

Convenience is not the enemy, but it does quietly remove something. When giving costs nothing beyond a moment's attention, it can happen without ever reaching us. The pilgrimage built in time to anticipate, to think, and to arrive somewhere on purpose. Whatever mechanism we use now, the question this passage raises is whether any part of our giving still asks anything of us at all.

There is a shape to the journey worth noticing as well. It moved toward a place God had chosen, to set his name there. The travelling was not endurance for its own sake. It pointed a household toward God before it handed anything over, which is the order this passage keeps insisting on.

TAKE HEART

God wrote the exemption into the law himself. The same passage that asks for a tenth also makes room for the household that genuinely cannot carry it, and offers a workable alternative instead of a rebuke. Generosity in Scripture has never been indifferent to real limits, and it still is not.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Has convenience made our giving easier without making it more deliberate, and what got lost in that trade?
2. What small step could return some intention to how we give, even if the mechanism stays exactly the same?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Book of Common Prayer, A Collect for Guidance (Morning Prayer, Rite Two)

ACTION CHALLENGE

Give something slowly on purpose this week. Pause before sending it, name out loud where it is going and why, and let the gift take a few minutes instead of a few seconds.

NOTES

DAY 4

Eat There and Rejoice

DEUTERONOMY 14:26 ESV

"And spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household."

VERSE STUDY

Verse 26 is the surprise of the passage, and it rewards sitting with rather than smoothing over. The tithe, once converted to money and carried to the place God chose, was to be spent on whatever the giver desired, with the text naming oxen, sheep, wine, and strong drink, and then adding whatever the appetite craves. Part of Israel's tithe paid for a feast.

Sunday's message was candid about how unwelcome that reading was. The hope had been that the passage would say every tithe belongs to the temple and its upkeep, and it plainly does not say that. What followed was a decision to preach the text rather than the preference, which is worth considerably more than a tidy conclusion would have been.

But this provision was never the whole of what a tithe was for, and reading it that way would miss the passage rather than illuminate it. The same tithe system that funded this household's feast also sustained the Levites, who held no land or harvest of their own (verse 27, its own day later this week), and, every third year, laid up provision for the poor, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow (verses 28–29, also ahead). Three distinct uses inside one command: joy for the giver, provision for those who served at the altar, and relief for those with no other safety net. The instruction here explains only the household's own portion: it was to eat there before the LORD its God and rejoice. The feast was not a loophole in the command. It was one strand of a tithe woven for more than a single purpose.

Sea Change has not been shy about where that lands. A shared meal paid for out of what the congregation gave, eaten together in gratitude, sits squarely inside this passage, alongside that same congregation's support of its pastors and its care for the vulnerable, not off to one side of either. Joy is not a distraction from generosity in Deuteronomy 14, and it is not the whole of it either. It is one of several things generosity was for.

TAKE HEART

Giving here builds a whole community, not only a meal. The same tenth that let this household feast also fed a priest and clothed a widow, which means no gift stood alone and no giver stood apart from everyone else's. We are not only the ones providing for that community. We are also, in our turn, fed by it, cared for by it, and carried by it. A generosity built like this asks something of us and gives something back, at the very same time.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Does our picture of faithful giving leave any room for celebration, and if it does not, where did that picture come from?
2. What would it look like for gratitude rather than duty to set the tone of our next act of generosity?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Most gracious God, by whose knowledge the depths are broken up and the clouds drop down the dew. We yield thee hearty thanks and praise for the return of seed time and harvest, for the increase of the ground and the gathering in of its fruits, and for all other blessings of thy merciful providence bestowed upon this nation and people. And, we beseech thee, give us a just sense of these great mercies, such as may appear in our lives by a humble, holy, and obedient walking before thee all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost be all glory and honor, world without end. Amen."

Book of Common Prayer, Thanksgivings, For the Harvest (9)

ACTION CHALLENGE

Share a meal this week with the gratitude said out loud at the table. Name plainly what has been provided before anyone eats, so the thanks is spoken rather than assumed.

DAY 5

Do Not Neglect the Levite

DEUTERONOMY 14:27 ESV

"And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you."

VERSE STUDY

The single instruction in verse 27 concerns a group with no safety net at all. The Levite is not to be neglected, for he has no portion or inheritance. When the land was divided among the tribes, the Levites received no allotment, which meant no field to plant and no ground on which to raise a herd.

The reason for that arrangement is the striking part: their inheritance was the Lord himself. Sunday's message made the practical consequence plain, that the Levites lived because the congregation gave, and that this was by design rather than by oversight. A people who forgot the Levite would not merely have been ungenerous. They would have quietly defunded the worship of God among them.

The first tithe recorded anywhere in Scripture points in the same direction. In Genesis 14, Abram returns from battle, meets Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, and gives him a tenth of everything. Long before Deuteronomy organised any of this, a tenth was already being placed in the hands of someone who served God on behalf of others.

That remains a fair description of what supporting a local church does. The people who teach, pastor, visit, and carry the unglamorous weight of a congregation are sustained by others who decided to sustain them, and that decision has to be renewed on a schedule rather than felt once. Deuteronomy's word for the alternative is neglect, and neglect is worth respecting as a danger precisely because it never requires a decision.

TAKE HEART

There is a quiet dignity in the way God tied the provision of his servants to the ordinary faithfulness of ordinary households. Nothing spectacular was asked for, only a tenth, brought on time, by people who remembered. That is still within reach for nearly all of us, and it still holds the work up.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Who carries the spiritual work we benefit from every week, and does our giving actually reflect that?
2. Where might neglect have crept in simply because no decision was ever made either way?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Almighty and everlasting God, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. Send down upon our bishops, and other clergy, and upon the congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace: and, that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honor of our Advocate and Mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen."

Book of Common Prayer, Prayers and Thanksgivings, Clergy and People (9)

ACTION CHALLENGE

Give something specific to the ongoing work of the local church this week, and tell one person who serves there, in plain words, that their work has been noticed.

NOTES

DAY 6

At the End of Every Three Years

DEUTERONOMY 14:28-29 ESV

"At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do."

VERSE STUDY

Every third year the tithe did not travel anywhere. It stayed home, laid up within the towns, and the list of who then came to eat is precise: the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. Four groups, each of them lacking land, or family provision, or legal standing, and sometimes all three.

This is not charity appended to worship after the fact. It sits inside the same command, on the same schedule, drawn from the same tenth. The structure assumes that need will exist locally and arranges in advance for it to be met, which is a very different thing from responding once a crisis has become impossible to ignore.

Sunday's message pressed on this without softening it. For most of history, care for the poor, the aged, and the sick has run through the church, and when the church hands that responsibility entirely to other institutions it loses more than a line item. It loses the contact. Reports about good work done somewhere else can satisfy a congregation while leaving it untouched by anyone it might actually have met.

Sea Change has named caring for the poor, the aged, and the infirm as a priority it intends to carry with its own hands rather than only fund from a distance, and a growing team of volunteers now visits people in skilled nursing and assisted living week by week. The third-year tithe suggests that sort of thing is not an addition to generosity. It was part of the original design.

TAKE HEART

The provision was stored before anyone knocked. That is a reassuring picture of God: not scrambling to react to need, but building the remedy into the calendar years ahead of time. A community that plans for the vulnerable instead of reacting to them is working with the grain of this passage rather than against it.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Have we outsourced care for the vulnerable so completely that we no longer meet anyone we help?
2. What would it take for our generosity to include presence, and not only provision?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Book of Common Prayer, Prayers and Thanksgivings, For the Poor and the Neglected (35)

ACTION CHALLENGE

Visit someone this week rather than sending something to them. A nursing home, a hospital room, or a neighbour who is on their own. Presence counts as generosity in this passage.

NOTES

DAY 7

A People of the Gleanings

LEVITICUS 19:9-10 ESV

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner. I am the LORD your God."

VERSE STUDY

The week closes just outside Deuteronomy 14, with the law that made generosity almost accidental on purpose. Harvesters were told not to reap to the very edge of the field, not to go back for what had fallen, and not to strip the vineyard bare. Whatever remained stayed there for the poor and for the sojourner.

Gleaning is a strange sort of giving, because it is built out of restraint rather than effort. Nobody delivered anything to anybody. The harvest was simply not squeezed for every last measure, and the margin left behind became someone else's provision. Generosity in this law is largely what happens when we stop optimising.

Ruth found her way into exactly that margin, gleaning in a field that happened to belong to Boaz, and Boaz then went well past what the law required. He told his young men to pull grain out of the bundles and leave it where she would find it. The law set a floor for generosity; Boaz treated the floor as a starting point, and that gap is roughly the distance between compliance and character.

Sunday's closing line is the one to carry forward: let giving be a habit, and let compassion interrupt the schedule. The week opened with rhythm and it ends with readiness, because a generous life needs both. The rhythm is what we settle in advance. The readiness is the margin we keep available for the need nobody could have put on a calendar.

TAKE HEART

Most of us will not be asked for anything heroic this week. We will be asked for something small, at an inconvenient moment, by someone we were not expecting. A life with a little margin built into it can say yes to that without any drama at all, and those small yeses are how a generous character actually gets built.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Where is there no margin left in our lives for an interruption, and what is that costing the people around us?
2. What is one thing we could stop optimising in order to leave something behind for someone else?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen."

Book of Common Prayer, A Prayer attributed to St. Francis (62)

ACTION CHALLENGE

Leave some margin on purpose this week, in money, in time, or in attention, and give it away when the interruption arrives instead of defending the schedule.

NOTES

MEMORY VERSE

"You shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always."

Deuteronomy 14:23

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