

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

Scripture

Malachi 3:6-12
2 Corinthians 9:6-9

Core Idea and purpose

Core ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- None. This is a one sermon series.

Core Idea: Generosity is one of the best ways to return to God.

Challenge/purpose: To encourage generosity among the congregants.

The Sermon

I love movies about second chances. They remind us that sometimes we fail but, when given a second chance, we grit our teeth and go for it with everything we have! One such movie is “Cinderella Man”. It’s an inspiring movie based on a true story. The main character is James J. Braddock, a boxer who was a light heavyweight contender before he broke his hand in the ring. This injury forced him to give up his boxing career.

Soon after he left boxing, the Great Depression hit. Despite his broken hand, Braddock found a job as a longshoreman to support his wife and children. This job, however, was not regular work. He went days and weeks at a time without work. As you can imagine, Braddock had a hard time paying rent and putting food on the table for his family.

Thanks to a last-minute cancellation by another boxer, Braddock's longtime manager and friend, Joe Gould, offered him a chance to fill in for just one night and earn cash. This was the beginning of his second chance. The fight was against the number two contender in the world, Corn Griffin. Braddock stunned the boxing world with a third-round knockout of his opponent. Braddock believed that while his right hand was broken, he became more proficient with his left hand, improving his in-ring ability.

Despite his wife’s objections, Braddock took up Gould's offer to return to the ring and began a winning streak that eventually led to a fight with the reigning heavyweight world champion, Max Baer. When his rags to riches story got out, a sportswriter called him "The Cinderella Man", and Braddock came to represent the hopes and aspirations of the American public struggling with the Depression.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

On June 13, 1935, in one of the greatest upsets in boxing history, Braddock defeated the seemingly invincible Max Baer to become the heavyweight champion of the world. Later, Braddock would lose his title to Joe Lewis who called him, "...the most courageous man I ever fought". After his boxing career, Braddock worked his own heavy machinery on the docks where he used to be a hired hand. He and his wife bought a house and lived happily ever after. ¹

Like Braddock, we all, sometimes, need a second chance. We fail miserably because we mess up, and things happen beyond our control. It's almost always a combination of the two. No one goes through life without needing a second chance.

Well, here's the good news: The Lord Almighty is a God of second chances! Turn to your neighbor and say, "God is a God of second chances!"

In the Bible, the prophet Malachi delivers a message from God to a people who have been given a second chance. For years, the Jewish kings and people committed idolatry and oppressed the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers. The Lord sent many prophets to exhort them to repent, but they did not listen. So, the Lord allowed the Babylonians to conquer Judea, destroy the Jerusalem walls, level the temple, and exile the bulk of the population to the various regions of the Babylonian Empire. But God is a God of second chances! The Babylonian Empire fell, and the Persian Empire rose to take its place. After 70 years of exile, God put it on the heart of the Persian King, Cyrus, to allow the Jews to return to Judea. God had given the Jews a second chance. The prophet Malachi tells them to take advantage of their second chance by living in accordance with God's loving will.

Whenever God gives us a second chance, the first thing we need to do is repent of any sin we may have committed. Most of the time, when we need a second chance, it is because we did something wrong. There may be other factors beyond our control that contributed to our failure, but we still played a part. So, we look at our attitudes and actions and discern what sin we may have committed. Then we repent.

The prophet Malachi told the Jews they needed to repent when he wrote, "Return to me and I will return to you, says the Lord of heavenly forces." This is the shortest and most complete description of repentance. When we sin, we go away from God. When we decide we no longer want to sin, we return to God. Remember, sin is any unloving thought, word, or action. We know this because Jesus summarized the law with the two greatest commandments: 1) To love God and 2) To love our neighbors as ourselves. (Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:28-34 &

¹ [Cinderella Man - Wikipedia](#)

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

Luke 10:25-28) Also remember, God is love. (1 John 4:8 & 16) So, whenever we have an unloving thought, utter an unloving word, or commit an unloving action, we go away from God. When we regret the unloving thought, word, or action and decide we no longer want to be unloving, we return to God.

Malachi then explains that Generosity is one of the best ways to show our return to God. He does so by writing out a conversation between God and the people. Let's go over this conversation.

God begins with: Return to me, and I will return to you.

The people ask God: How are we to return?

God responds: Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.

The people ask God: How are we robbing you?

God responds: In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

When we tithe, we promise God to give a part of our income to the church every week, month, or year. How much you give is between you and God. Don't give so much that you can't support your family but give enough so that it is a sacrifice. Then you are honoring God. As your pastor, I choose to not know who tithes because it's between you and God.

When we read this passage, we must remember that Jesus warns us against wanting wealth and depending on wealth for our security and happiness. So, God promising to bless us if we tithe does not necessarily mean God will make us super rich. Wealth is just one of the many ways God can bless us and if God does bless us with wealth, God expects us to use the wealth to help people. God may bless us with blessings that are worth way more than money, such as friends, health, healing, peace, and much more.

I hope most, if not all, of you tithe. Otherwise, this church would close. We need tithing income to pay salaries, fix air conditioners, and maintain the property. Without this church, there would be no food pantry, God's kitchen, or Child Development Center. So, please tithe something.

We must also remember, however, that tithing is only one way to be generous. In 2 Corinthians 9, the Apostle Paul exhorts the members of the Corinthian church to help their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem who are poor and struggling. He appeals to their good hearts and says, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: ‘They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.’ ” (2 Corinthians 9:6-9)

Here at Burton Memorial UMC you can be generous with the Operation Christmas Child showbox or in the donation you give to the UM Children’s home. If you run across a member of the homeless community, you can buy that person a meal. When my wife, Donna, sees a member of the homeless community outside a grocery store, she buys a nice sandwich and drink from the deli and then offers it to the homeless person. Another good practice is to ask the homeless person to meet you at a nearby fast-food restaurant and share a meal with him/her.

Of course, if you don’t have a lot of money, you can be generous with some of your time – whether it’s in our food pantry, bell choir, some other service organization, or participating in a protest march. As far as possible, we ought to be generous with both our money and time.

Generosity not only shows people that we are returning to God, it also keeps us from being corrupted by money. Listen to these two warnings from Jesus, our Savior & Lord, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You **cannot** serve both God and money.” (Matthew 6:24) and “Truly I tell you; it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” (Matthew 19:23-24) Based on what Jesus said, 1 Timothy 6:10 warns us, “...the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” So, I say this again, Generosity not only shows people that we are returning to God, it also helps to keep us from being corrupted by money.

Our God is a God of second chances. When the Lord gives us a second chance, we are to turn back to God and Generosity is one of the best ways to return to God.

Let’s pray.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

Sermon Outline

I. Introduction: I love movies about second chances.

A. They remind us that sometimes we fail but, when given a second chance, we grit our teeth and go for it with everything we have!

B. One such movie is “Cinderella Man”.

- It’s an inspiring movie based on a true story.
- The main character is James J. Braddock, a boxer who was a light heavyweight contender before he broke his hand in the ring.
 - This injury forced him to give up his boxing career.
- Soon after he left boxing, the Great Depression hit.
 - Despite his broken hand, Braddock found a job as a longshoreman to support his wife and children.
 - This job, however, was not regular work.
 - He went days and weeks at a time without work.
 - As you can imagine, Braddock had a hard time paying rent and putting food on the table for his family.
- Thanks to a last-minute cancellation by another boxer, Braddock's longtime manager and friend, Joe Gould, offered him a chance to fill in for just one night and earn cash.
 - This was the beginning of his second chance.
 - The fight was against the number-two contender in the world, Corn Griffin.
 - Braddock stunned the boxing world with a third-round knockout of his opponent.
 - Braddock believed that while his right hand was broken, he became more proficient with his left hand, improving his in-ring ability.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

- Despite his wife’s objections, Braddock took up Gould's offer to return to the ring and began a winning streak that eventually led to a fight with the reigning heavyweight world champion, Max Baer.
 - When his rags to riches story got out, a sportswriter called him "The Cinderella Man", and Braddock came to represent the hopes and aspirations of the American public struggling with the Depression.
- On June 13, 1935, in one of the greatest upsets in boxing history, Braddock defeated the seemingly invincible Max Baer to become the heavyweight champion of the world.
 - Later, Braddock would lose his title to Joe Lewis who called Braddock "the most courageous man I ever fought".
 - After his boxing career, Braddock worked his own heavy machinery on the docks where he used to be a hired hand.
 - He and his wife bought a house & lived happily ever after. ²

C. Like Braddock, we all, sometimes, need a second chance.

- We fail miserably because we mess up, and things happen beyond our control.
 - It’s almost always a combination of the two.
 - No one goes through life without needing a second chance.

D. Well, here’s the good news: The Lord Almighty is a God of second chances!

- Turn to your neighbor and say, “God is a God of second chances!”

II. In the Bible, the prophet Malachi delivers a message from God to a people who have been given a second chance.

A. For years, the Jewish kings and people committed idolatry and oppressed the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers.

² [Cinderella Man - Wikipedia](#)

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

- The Lord sent many prophets to exhort them to repent, but they did not listen.
- So, the Lord allowed the Babylonians to conquer Judea, destroy the Jerusalem walls, destroy the temple, and exile the bulk of the population to the various regions of the Babylonian Empire.
- But God is a God of second chances!
 - The Babylonian Empire fell, and the Persian Empire rose to take its place.
 - After 70 years of exile, God put it on the heart of the Persian King, Cyrus, to allow the Jews to return to Judea.
 - God had given the Jews a second chance.
 - The prophet Malachi tells them to take advantage of their second chance by living in accordance with God’s loving will.

B. Whenever God gives us a second chance, the first thing we need to do is repent of any sin we may have committed.

- Most of the time, when we need a second chance, it is because we did something wrong.
- There may be other factors beyond our control that contributed to our failure, but we still played a part.
- So, we look at our attitudes and actions and discern what sin we may have committed.
- Then we repent.

C. The prophet Malachi told the Jews they needed to repent when he wrote, “Return to me and I will return to you, says the Lord of heavenly forces.”

- This is the shortest and most complete description of repentance.
 - When we sin, we go away from God.
 - When we decide we no longer want to sin, we return to God.
 - Remember, sin is any unloving thought, word, or action.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

- We know this because Jesus summarized the law with the two greatest commandments:
 - 1) To love God and
 - 2) To love our neighbors as ourselves. (Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:28-34 & Luke 10:25-28)
 - Also remember, God is love. (1 John 4:8 & 16)
 - So, whenever we have an unloving thought, utter an unloving word, or commit an unloving action, we go away from God.
 - When we regret the unloving thought, word, or action and decide we no longer want to be unloving, we return to God.
- D. Malachi then explains that Generosity is one of the best ways to demonstrate our return to God.
- He does so by writing out a conversation between God and the people.
 - Let's go over this conversation.
 - God says: Return to me, and I will return to you.
 - The people ask God: How are we to return?
 - God responds: Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.
 - The people ask God: How are we robbing you?
 - God responds: In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.
- E. When we tithe, we promise God to give a part of our income to the church every week, month, or year.
- How much you give is between you and God.

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

- Don't give so much that you can't support your family but give enough so that it is a sacrifice.
- Then you are honoring God.
- As your pastor, I choose to not know who tithes because, as I've said, it's between you and God.

F. When we read this passage, we must remember that Jesus warns us against wanting wealth and depending on wealth for our security and happiness.

- So, God promising to bless us if we tithe does not necessarily mean God will make us super rich.
- Wealth is just one of the many ways God can bless us and if God does bless us with wealth, God expects us to use the wealth to help people.
- God may bless us with blessings that are worth way more than money, such as friends, health, healing, peace, and much more.

G. I hope most, if not all, of you tithe.

- Otherwise, this church would close.
- We need tithing income to pay salaries, fix air conditioners, and maintain the property.
- Without this church, there would be no food pantry, God's kitchen, or Child Development Center.
- So, please tithe something.

III. Tithing, however, is only one way to be generous.

A. In 2 Corinthians 9, the Apostle Paul exhorts the members of the Corinthians church to help their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem who are poor and struggling.

B. He appeals to their good hearts and says, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: ‘They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.’ ” (2 Corinthians 9:6-9)

- C. Here at Burton Memorial UMC you can be generous with the Operation Christmas Child showbox or in the donation you give to the UM Children's home.
- D. If you run across a member of the homeless community, you can buy that person a meal.
 - When my wife, Donna, sees a member of the homeless community outside a grocery store, she buys a nice sandwich and drink from the deli and then offers it to the homeless person.
 - Another good practice is to ask the homeless person to meet you at a nearby fast-food restaurant and share a meal with him/her.
- E. Of course, if you don't have a lot of money, you can be generous with some of your time – whether it's in our food pantry, bell choir, some other service organization, or participating in a protest march.
 - As far as possible, we ought to be generous with both our money and time.

IV. Generosity not only shows people that we are returning to God, it also keeps us from being corrupted by money.

- A. Listen to these two warnings from Jesus, our Savior & Lord,
 - “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You **cannot** serve both God and money.” (Matthew 6:24)
and
 - “Truly I tell you; it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Return to God with Generosity”
October 12, 2025

through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” (Matthew 19:23-24)

- B. Based on what Jesus said, 1 Timothy 6:10 warns us, “...the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”
- C. So, I say this again, Generosity not only shows people that we are returning to God, it also keeps us from being corrupted by money.

Let's pray.