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A Generosity Manifesto for 21st-Century Christians

— Manifesto Edition —

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with Rachel Miller

in collaboration with Kay Hiramine, a/k/a The Netweaver,

who first put the idea of a Generosity Manifesto in my head back in September 2025

and with gratitude to Brett Eastman for the focusing talk and time in November 2024 in Rome, Italy.

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"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

— John 8:32

"For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another."

— Galatians 5:13

Why a Manifesto?

The manifesto is one of the most distinctive and powerful genres in modern intellectual history. Derived from the Latin manifestus, a manifesto is a public declaration of intentions, motives, or vision — combining critique of the present with an inaugural vision of the future. Manifestos have launched reformations, redefined moral imagination, and catalyzed movements that changed the world.

We offer this one in the tradition of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses — not as academic propositions for debate, but as prophetic declarations addressed to the church in a moment of crisis. The crisis is spiritual and material at once: the Church of Jesus Christ in the affluent West has been discipled more effectively by the market than by the gospel, and the result is a community that confesses Jesus as Lord while demonstrating with its portfolios that Mammon is.

We do not write as detached observers. We write as practitioners — a wealth strategist, attorney, and theologian who works daily at the intersection of affluence, fiduciary stewardship, and Christian ethics. We have seen the captivities we name. We have lived in them. And we believe the time has come to answer the question that has haunted American Evangelicalism for a generation: *Whither the affluent child formed for twenty years in the liturgies of the market?*

The answer we offer is not another academic investigation. It is a call — concrete, public, embodied, and dated: by the two thousandth anniversary of Pentecost, on June 5, 2033, let the Church of Jesus Christ become what it was in those first days when the Spirit fell and everything changed.

PART I

The Diagnosis: Three Captivities

The Captivity of Accumulation

"You cannot serve God and wealth." — Matthew 6:24

The modern Western economy is built on a single, unquestioned axiom: more is better. More production, more consumption, more accumulation, more growth — without end, without limit, without sabbath. This axiom has been so thoroughly absorbed into the cultural atmosphere that most Christians breathe it without thinking. We have been discipled by the market more effectively than we have been discipled by the Church.

The result is a community of believers who confess with their lips that Jesus is Lord but demonstrate with their portfolios that Mammon is. The average American Christian gives between two and three percent of income to charitable purposes — a figure unchanged for decades, through boom and bust alike, untouched by preaching, unmoved by need. The tithe — itself merely a floor, not a ceiling, in the biblical imagination — is practiced by fewer than one in twenty churchgoers.

Consider the donor-advised fund — one of the fastest-growing vehicles in American philanthropy. Billions of dollars sit in these accounts, having already generated a tax deduction for the donor, yet never reaching a single charitable purpose. The money has left the donor's taxable estate but has not arrived at the widow's table. It exists in a financial limbo that benefits the donor and the fund administrator while the poor wait. This is not generosity. It is accumulation with a tax receipt.

This is precisely the situation illuminated by Matthew's story of the rich young man (Matthew 19:16–22). He comes to Jesus having kept the commandments from his youth. He is sincere. He is devout. And yet he knows something is missing. Jesus names the lack: *Go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor.* The young man goes away grieving, because he had many possessions. He is possessed by his possessions. He cannot sell because he is not free. He cannot give

because he is not free. He cannot follow because he is not free. And this is the deepest captivity of accumulation: not that it makes generosity inconvenient, but that it makes discipleship impossible.

The Captivity of Indifference

> *"This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy." — Ezekiel 16:49*

The second captivity is subtler. It is possible to avoid the grosser forms of greed — to live modestly, to tithe faithfully — and yet to remain indifferent to the structural conditions that produce poverty. This is the sin of Sodom as Ezekiel defines it: not sexual debauchery, but prosperous ease coupled with failure to aid the poor.

A Christianity that addresses only individual generosity while ignoring the systems that produce inequality is a Christianity that has accepted a truncated gospel. It treats symptoms while the disease metastasizes. The preferential option for the poor calls the Church to see the world from the underside of history — to ask not merely *How much should I give?* but *Why, in a world of such abundance, are so many still poor?*

The Captivity of False Theology

> *"Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation." — Luke 6:24*

The third captivity is the most dangerous because it wraps itself in Scripture. The so-called 'prosperity gospel' teaches that God's primary desire for His people is material wealth, and that poverty is evidence of insufficient faith. This theology turns the biblical witness on its head. It reads the Beatitudes backwards. It transforms the God who chose to be born in a manger, who had no place to lay His head, who was crucified between thieves, into a celestial venture capitalist dispensing returns on investment to the faithful.

Subtler and more pervasive is the 'theology of affluence' that has taken root in mainstream evangelical thought — the contention that God's primary will for human beings is material delight, and that the culture of modern capitalism provides 'unusually good' conditions for the expression of genuine Christian faith. This theology reads Scripture

through a doctrine of creation that subordinates Christology and soteriology to cosmology. The practical expression is a wealth management industry that advertises helping clients 'chart a path toward *your own definition* of wealth.' Scripture offers no such latitude. Wealth in the biblical imagination is never self-defined. It is always God-defined, other-directed, and measured not by the freedom it affords the holder but by its proximity to the poor.

PART II

The Vision: God's Economy of Grace

The God Who Gives: Creation as Gift

Everything begins with generosity. The first act of God recorded in Scripture is an act of giving — the giving of light, of land and sea, of vegetation, of life, of a garden, of breath, of companionship. Creation itself is a gift. If creation is gift, then all human possession is stewardship, not ownership. The Levitical declaration — *The land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants* — is not a legal technicality. It is a cosmological statement. Everything we have, we have received.

The God Who Liberates: Exodus as Paradigm

The Exodus is the central act of the Old Testament. And it is, at its core, a story of God hearing the cry of the oppressed and acting to deliver them. *I have observed the misery of my people… I have come down to deliver them* (Exodus 3:7–8). This God is not neutral. He takes sides. He sides with slaves against Pharaoh. And He commands His liberated people to build a society that reflects His character — structured by Sabbath, Jubilee, gleaning rights, the prohibition of usury, the protection of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan.

The God Who Descends: The Incarnation as Solidarity

> *"For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." — 2 Corinthians 8:9*

The Incarnation is the ultimate act of downward mobility. The eternal Son of God did not grasp at equality with God but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave. He was born not in a palace but in a stable, not to a queen but to a peasant girl, announcing His mission: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor* (Luke 4:18). The Incarnation is God's preferential option for the poor made flesh — and the pattern for Christian generosity: not giving from surplus but giving of self.

The Community That Shares: The First Christians

"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul… There was not a needy person among them." — Acts 4:32, 34

What the Torah legislated and Israel failed to sustain, the early Church achieved through the power of the Spirit. This was not proto-communism; it was the spontaneous, voluntary overflow of a community so transformed by the resurrection that private accumulation in the face of another's need became simply unthinkable.

Progressive divestiture — the gradual, deliberate, Spirit-led release of private accumulation into shared abundance — is not an optional posture for the unusually devout. It is the shape of participation in the Body of Christ.

PART III

The Declarations: Thirteen Theses on Generosity and Freedom

The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor, the wicked does not understand such concern. — Proverbs 29:7

I. God Is Generous Before He Is Anything Else

The first truth about God is not that He is omnipotent or omniscient. The first truth about God is that He gives. Creation is a gift. Redemption is a gift. The Spirit is a gift. To know God is to know a Giver. To worship God is to become like Him — which means to become a giver.

II. Generosity Is Not a Virtue Among Virtues; It Is the Shape of the Christian Life

The Christian tradition has sometimes treated generosity as one virtue among many. We reject this demotion. Generosity is the fundamental posture of the baptized life, the orientation from which all other virtues flow. Faith that does not give is dead. Love that does not sacrifice is sentimentality.

III. The Poor Are Not Objects of Charity; They Are the Body of Christ

Jesus did not say, 'When you served the least of these, you did a nice thing.' He said, 'You did it to me.' This is not metaphor. It is Christology. The poor are the location of Christ's presence in the world. To ignore the poor is to ignore Christ.

IV. Accumulation Without Generosity Is Theft

The Church Fathers understood this. Basil the Great declared: 'The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry.' John Chrysostom was blunter: 'Not to share our own riches with the poor is a robbery of the poor.' This is not socialism. It is the consistent teaching of the Church from the apostolic age to the present.

V. True Freedom Is Found in Giving, Not in Having

The world defines freedom as the power to acquire, consume, and dispose without limit. Scripture defines freedom differently. Barth demonstrated that the rich young man's inability to sell, give, and follow proved he was possessed by his possessions. Generosity is the practice that breaks the grip of Mammon and restores the freedom of the children of God. Every dollar given away is a chain broken.

VI. Sabbath Economics Is God's Alternative to Empire

The Sabbath, the Sabbatical year, and the Jubilee are not quaint antiquities. They are God's counter-proposal to the economics of empire — of Egypt, of Babylon, of Rome, and of every system that demands endless productivity and limitless growth. Sabbath economics says: there is enough. Jubilee economics says: wealth must circulate, debts must be forgiven, the enslaved must be freed.

VII. Generosity Must Be Structural, Not Merely Personal

Individual giving is necessary but insufficient. The prophets did not merely call individuals to be kind; they indicted systems. Amos did not say, 'Be nicer to the poor.' He said, 'You trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth.' A Christianity that addresses personal charity while remaining silent about structural injustice is practicing half a gospel.

VIII. The Prosperity Gospel Is a False Gospel

We say plainly what must be said: the teaching that God's primary desire for His people is material wealth is false. It contradicts the Beatitudes. It contradicts the life and teaching of Jesus. It contradicts the testimony of Paul, who learned to be content in plenty and in want. It is a heresy — not a secondary error, but a fundamental distortion of the character of God.

IX. Technological Consumer Capitalism Is Not the Gospel's Ally

The global market system is not evil in itself — markets can serve human flourishing when properly constrained. But the reigning ideology of consumer capitalism is, as Daniel Bell argued, a technology of desire — an ensemble of disciplines that captures the deepest human longing for God and redirects it toward the market. The liturgy of the market is shaping Christian souls more powerfully than the liturgy of the Eucharist.

X. The Church Must Practice What It Preaches

Every local congregation, every denomination, every Christian institution must examine its own financial life in light of these principles. How much of the budget goes to buildings, programs, and staff comfort — and how much goes to the poor? The Church cannot credibly call the world to justice if its own house is built on the same foundation it prophetically critiques.

XI. Generosity Is a Spiritual Discipline, Not a Financial Transaction

Giving is not primarily about transferring resources. It is about the formation of the giver's soul. Every act of generosity is an act of worship — an acknowledgment that God is provider, that we are stewards, that our security rests in Him and not in our portfolios. A Christian who does not give is a Christian who has not yet understood the gospel.

XII. The Measure of Generosity Is Not the Amount but the Sacrifice

Jesus watched the widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and declared that she had given more than all the wealthy donors combined — because she gave out of her poverty. For those with much, the tithe is only a beginning. The widow, who gives everything out of her poverty, gives like God who gave everything in his Beloved Son.

XIII. Generosity Is an Eschatological Act

Every act of Christian generosity participates in the coming Kingdom. When we feed the hungry, we anticipate the feast of the Lamb. When we forgive debts, we enact the Jubilee that Christ proclaimed in Nazareth. Generosity is not merely moral; it is prophetic. It declares that the kingdoms of this world are passing away and that another economy is coming — an economy not of scarcity and competition but of abundance and communion.

PART IV

The Call: An Invitation to Freedom

To Pastors and Church Leaders

Teach generosity as you teach prayer. Preach the prophets as you preach the epistles. Let your congregations hear the full counsel of God on wealth and poverty — not as a quarterly stewardship campaign, but as a permanent dimension of the Gospel. Examine your own budgets and ask whether they reflect the priorities of the Kingdom or the priorities of the culture. Lead by example.

To Christian Professionals, Business Owners, and High-Net-Worth Stewards

You are uniquely positioned to practice Sabbath economics in the marketplace. Pay just wages — not market wages, but wages that allow human flourishing. Use the tools of estate planning, charitable giving, and wealth transfer not merely as tax strategies but as instruments of justice and generosity. The same expertise that builds wealth can be deployed to redistribute it.

The challenge we issue to every high-net-worth Christian is this: What would you have to give away before it hurt? Before it changed your life? Before it required actual trust in God rather than trust in your portfolio? That is where your generosity begins.

To Donors and Philanthropists

Your giving matters — but not in the way the world measures it. The world counts dollars; God counts sacrifice. Do not give to be seen, but give in secret. Do not give to control, but give to liberate. Seek out the margins. Listen to the poor before you presume to help them. Accompany before you advise.

We call on every Christian holding a donor-advised fund to adopt a practice of distributing at least twenty percent of the fund balance annually — and to view the fund not as an investment account with a charitable label but as a pipeline through which resources flow to

where they are needed.

To Every Christian

You do not need to be wealthy to practice generosity. The widow with two coins proves that. Generosity begins with the recognition that everything you have is a gift — your breath, your time, your abilities, your relationships, your daily bread. Start where you are. Give something this week that costs you something. Open your hand, and discover that in opening your hand, you open your life.

Coda: Truly Free

We began by naming three captivities: accumulation, indifference, and false theology. We traced the biblical vision of a God who gives, who liberates, who descends in solidarity, and whose first community embodied a radical economics of grace. We offered thirteen declarations. We issued a call.

But a manifesto, in the end, is only words. And the Word became flesh.

At the heart of this manifesto stands a single figure: the rich young man who came to Jesus and went away grieving. He is the figure of every affluent Christian in every century. What he lacks is not a virtue or a practice. What he lacks is Christ himself — the freedom to receive what Christ offers and to follow where Christ leads. He is possessed by his possessions. And this is the deepest captivity: not that wealth makes generosity inconvenient, but that it makes discipleship impossible.

The Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep — freely, in obedience to the Father's command. Everything we give is an echo of what he gave. And he did this for a purpose: *I have other sheep… there will be one flock, one shepherd* (John 10:16). The Good Shepherd gathers. He brings the scattered into one — rich and poor, bond and free — not into a market where each pursues individual advantage, but into a flock where each is known, each is fed, and each belongs.

One flock. One Shepherd. Truly free.

June 5, 2033

On June 5, 2033, the Church of Jesus Christ will mark the two thousandth anniversary of Pentecost — the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the gathered disciples and the *ekklesia* was born. On that first Pentecost, the Spirit produced a community so transformed by the resurrection that private accumulation in the face of another's need became unthinkable. *There was not a needy person among them* (Acts 4:34).

We call upon every Christian entrusted by God with significant wealth to let the two thousandth Pentecost become a deadline and a destination — not merely a commemoration of what the Spirit once did, but a demonstration of what the Spirit can do again when the people of God open their hands, release their grip on accumulation, and step into the freedom of the children of God.

Seven Steps Toward Freedom by Pentecost 2033

First: answer the young man's question for yourself. Ask Christ, honestly: *What do I still lack?* And be prepared to hear the answer. It will cost something. That is how you know it is real.

Second: examine your formation. Recognize that you have been discipled by the market for decades. Name the twin habits of acquisition and enjoyment. Confess them. Repent. Replace them with the counter-disciplines of temperance, justice, solidarity, and self-denial.

Third: deploy your wealth for the poor *now* — not at death, not through instruments that defer generosity, but with the urgency of Zacchaeus: *Half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor* (Luke 19:8). If you hold a donor-advised fund, distribute substantially from it this year.

Fourth: examine your children's formation with the same rigor you apply to their education and health. The spiritual and moral formation of the next generation is too important to abandon to the catechesis of consumer culture.

Fifth: rebuild the *ekklesia*. The church must become what it was at Pentecost: an alternative community formed by the Eucharist and animated by the Spirit, whose primary loyalty is to the Body of Christ and not to the ethos of technological consumer capitalism.

Sixth: let repentance produce fruit. The model of Zacchaeus demands not merely generosity but honest accounting: Where have profits been derived from unjust systems? Make restitution where restitution is due. This is what salvation looks like when it happens in the house of a wealthy person who has encountered Jesus (Luke 19:9).

Seventh: bear witness. Let the two thousandth Pentecost find the church of Jesus Christ so transformed by the Spirit that the watching world sees what it has not seen in centuries: a community that holds all things in common, that has no needy person among them, that gives without fear because it has been given everything by a God who holds nothing back.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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David is a wealth strategist, attorney, and theologian who works at the intersection of high-net-worth planning, fiduciary stewardship, and Christian ethics. He serves as Wealth Advisor at EverSource Wealth Advisors in Little Rock, Arkansas, and is founder of BRS Consulting, Inc., a comprehensive life stewardship consulting firm, and the Law Office of David A. Sims (www.davidsimsjdphd.com).

David holds a Juris Doctor degree and a PhD from Durham University (UK), where his doctoral research examined the formative effects of consumer capitalism on children raised in affluent evangelical households. His dissertation was published as *The Child in American Evangelicalism and the Problem of Affluence* (Wipf and Stock, 2009). He is a Certified Kingdom Advisor (CKA®) and Certified Estate Planner (CEP®), specializing in complex charitable giving strategies, ESOP administration, and multigenerational wealth transfer for high-net-worth families.

Rachel Miller

Rachel is a published author and ghostwriter who collaborates with David on writing projects that bridge theological scholarship and accessible prose.

A companion academic volume — Christian Nurture in Affluence — *is forthcoming. The full edition of this manifesto includes two companion volumes: a chronological survey of fifty-plus manifestos that shaped the modern world, and a comprehensive scriptural foundation for God's preferential option for the poor.*

SCRIPTURAL INDEX

The following texts constitute the primary biblical basis for this manifesto, listed in canonical order.

Old Testament

Exodus 3:7–8 · Exodus 6:6–7 · Exodus 22:21–27 · Leviticus 19:9–10 · Leviticus 23:22 · Leviticus 25:10, 23, 35–37 · Deuteronomy 6:10–12 · Deuteronomy 8:3 · Deuteronomy 14:28–29 · Deuteronomy 15:1–4, 7–8, 11 · Deuteronomy 24:14–15 · Deuteronomy 24:17–21 · Deuteronomy 26:6–9 · Deuteronomy 28:47 · Psalm 9:18 · Psalm 12:5 · Psalm 14:6 · Psalm 34:6 · Psalm 68:5–6 · Psalm 72:1–4, 12–14 · Psalm 82:3–4 · Psalm 113:7–8 · Psalm 140:12 · Psalm 146:7–9 · Proverbs 14:31 · Proverbs 19:17 · Proverbs 21:13 · Proverbs 22:2 · Proverbs 22:22–23 · Proverbs 29:7 · Proverbs 31:8–9 · Job 34:19 · Isaiah 1:16–17 · Isaiah 3:14–15 · Isaiah 10:1–2 · Isaiah 58:6–7, 9b–10 · Isaiah 61:1–2 · Jeremiah 5:28–29 · Jeremiah 22:13–16 · Hosea 6:6 · Amos 2:6–7 · Amos 5:11–12 · Amos 5:21–24 · Amos 8:4–6 · Micah 6:8 · Ezekiel 16:49 · Zechariah 7:9–10

New Testament

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