

Finding Joy in Giving
May 3, 2015
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By this point, I'm guessing decisions are made. You've wrestled with the scriptures, you've done the hard work of figuring out what sacrificial giving looks like for you and you are ready to turn in your commitment card. So, today's message isn't a word to help you in the decision-making process; that's done. Instead, I'm hoping that today's message might heighten and increase your joy in giving. I want to help you put your commitment cards in that box joyfully. More than that, I want all your giving from this day until your last day to be filled with joy. I want you to sing the praises of God for the rest of your lives as you give to help people see and know Jesus Christ. Our passage helps us do that.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Chronicles 29. As you do, let me shed some light for you about what's been happening in this book so far. David is King in Israel. Throughout his life he's had his ups and downs. Some ups include defeating Goliath, being crowned king, his many victories on the battlefield and having the people sing his praises. The downs include adultery, murder, his own son leading an insurrection and a family torn apart. But, as David approaches his latter years, he's walking with the Lord again. He's repented of sin and has found God gracious and forgiving.

And with this new-found devotion to the Lord he realizes, "I'm living in a palace, the ark of the covenant is stored in a tent." So David wants to build God a temple. But God says, "No!" David has been a man of war; he has blood on his hands. God says Solomon, David's son, will be the one who will build the temple of the Lord.

But David can't sit still; his passion to help with the temple turns him into an effective importer/exporter. David stockpiles tons and tons of material for the construction of the temple so that when Solomon actually begins construction he has everything he could possibly need.

David is now an old man in chapter 29 and he gives his final instructions to Solomon and to the people. His death is imminent; in fact, it's recorded shortly after his final speech, which we are about to read. Let's see what he says (READ vs. 1-22a).

Can I quickly explain the difference between building a temple and building new ministry facilities? Before God instituted the New Covenant by the blood of Jesus, the people of God were to demonstrate their allegiance and loyalty by centralizing their worship in the temple of God. At the temple they would give, at the temple they would make sacrifices. At the temple they would pray. Certainly, they could do those things in other places, but God placed a priority of his people coming together, relying on the priesthood and obeying his temple commands. But when Jesus came and instituted the New Covenant, things changed. Rather than going to a temple to worship (or a church building), the NT teaches that we bring

the temple with us. We are the temple of God. God doesn't inhabit buildings, he inhabits the praises of his people. The temple walls have been toppled; the curtain has been torn. The Holy Spirit isn't hidden in a small room, the Holy Spirit lives with power in each one of us.

It's important to remember that difference and remember that we're not looking to build new facilities because our worship of him is somehow inadequate; no, we are the place of worship. Our spiritual act of worship is our very lives laid down as a living sacrifice. For us, a new building is about mission. It's about ministry. It's recognizing and believing that ministry space is a crucial aspect and tool of reaching out to Taylor County and beyond. We want more people to be worshippers of God, we want more people to know God loves them. We want more people to hear his word. That's why we believe we need to add more space to keep growing and reaching out to more people.

But both of these projects require giving; they require sacrifices. And I'm inspired by David's joy in giving; I'm inspired by the giving of the people. Chapter 22 says that David began to store up provisions for the temple. It doesn't say how, but it seems he was gathering as an official officer of the people. Why do I say that? Because look again what this passage says; David does a little inventory inspection in vs. 2. He says, "I've provided gold, silver, bronze, rare stones and wood, iron. Everything that's needed." But look at vs. 3, "Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God." David digs deeper, doesn't he? He doesn't just dip into the treasury of Israel, he dips into his own treasury. His sacrifice is personal. Why? He says, "Devotion." My devotion to the house of my God doesn't just motivate me to give and serve faithfully as the king, but I want to give what I don't need to give... out of my own wealth.

David gave a lot; 3000 talents of gold and 7000 talents of silver. A talent is approx. 75 pounds. That means David gave about 110 tons of gold; 260 tons of silver. That'd pay for our building, wouldn't it? David is stepping up. He's the leader, the king of Israel. His giving isn't going to be merely what the people provided through taxation; he's giving of his own wealth.

He then makes this call (vs. 5): "Who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself today to the Lord?" I find a couple significant points in that question that leads to the first answer to our big question, which is, "What needs to happen in me where I find joy in my giving?" First, notice the phrase "willingly." No one is coerced to give anything. Who's willing to give? Who wants to? Because if you don't, don't give. There's a direct connection, a direct line from our heart to our gifts. And if the heart isn't in it, it's not the kind of giving God is looking for and there's no joy.

Secondly, listen to that statement one more time. "Who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself today to the Lord?" Do you see what David is saying about cheerful giving from the heart? He's saying when you give willingly you consecrate yourself to the

Lord. The word used here for “consecrate” means “to ordain.” It’s a word that’s used when priests were finally ordained to their service and dedicated their entire life serving in the temple of God. So, what David is saying is when you give so willingly, when you give from your heart, you are actually giving yourself. And in that, there’s joy. Look at vs. 9 (READ).

It’s really not about the money; it’s not really about the gift. Yes, of course, money and gifts are needed for the construction of the temple. But, God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. God will provide in his way and in his time. If God can turn stones into worshippers of his, he can surely provide the resources for his projects. In the giving, in the gifts and money and service God is seeing, “Do I have all of Brian?” It’s just like that video we watched; when you give your best you are actually giving yourself.

Do you know what that reminds me of a lot? I urge you my brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God for this is your spiritual act of worship. Worship of God is the offering of ourselves to him. And here’s David, 1000 years before the time of Christ saying when you give willingly you are actually consecrating, ordaining yourself to the Lord today, which is what Paul said in Romans 12 is true worship.

Hasn’t it felt that way? I can see it so many of you; you’re not just giving a gift, you’re giving yourself. You are consecrating yourself to the Lord; you are laying yourself down on the altar and saying, “God, take me.” And if that’s what you’re doing, offering willingly, then I’m sure there’s joy in your giving. Giving willingly and joy follows.

This passage highlights another aspect of joyful giving. It’s found in vs. 14 (READ). Why would David feel so humbled - and in addition, feel so honored - to give willingly to the Lord’s work? Because that’s what he’s feeling, right? He’s humble; humble people say, “Who am I?” Proud people don’t say that; proud people say, “Who are you?”

And you can hear the joy in that, can’t you? “Who am I and what are your people that we should be able thus to offer willingly?” If you’re married, how did you propose or how did your husband propose to you? If you’re single, how might you propose some day (or how might you wish someone might propose to you)? “Who am I that you would spend the rest of your life with me? Who am I that you would take my hand in marriage? Who am I that you would want to grow old with me?” There’s joy there, right? David is full of joy in his giving.

Look where that comes from; look at the end of vs. 14, “For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.” Humility breeds joy in giving. Here’s the big question: where does that humility come from? It comes from remembering God’s ownership over all things. Do you hear what David is saying? David’s 110 tons of gold, his 260 tons of silver. Everything else that he gave for the building of the temple, they already belonged to God. They were already his. David wasn’t doing anything altruistic? He only was giving to God what God had already given to him.

Here's another example of God's amazing grace. You and I, we are nothing. In fact, we are worse than nothing. In our sin we've hated God; in our sin we've worked against God's glorious purposes in this world. We deserve the full force of God's wrath. Is that what we get? No. God sacrifices himself in the person of Jesus Christ. He pays our penalty, he bears our shame, he suffers for our sins so we can be forgiven. No longer are we guilty before God; no longer do we stand condemned. We are no longer God's enemies.

But, it keeps getting better. God doesn't just say, "Ok, be on your way and stay out of trouble and out of my way." God then makes us his children. He adopts us as his very own. God includes us in his family and invites us to dine at his banquet table. As second class citizens? As the black sheep of the family? No! He blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He grants to us an inheritance from the riches of God's grace. He heaps upon us gifts and more gifts.

Is it done yet? No, his grace isn't even done yet. So then, our God comes to us and says, "I have this plan; I have this mission. I want to invite and adopt even more people. I have more room in my house and at my table. I want more worshipers so they can enjoy my glory and love. And remember all those gifts I gave you; I not only want you to enjoy them, I want you to use them to help more people come to me. And whenever you use the gifts that I've given to you for my purposes, I will reward you even more."

Can you believe that? We went from enemies and paupers to children filthy rich with God's grace. We didn't earn any of it; God gave it to us all. And if we use what God gave us to help more people come to know him he gives us even more. Who is this God? Who is like this? Who would be so kind, so gracious and so lavish? I know who: the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Can you see a little better why David would say, "Who am I and what are my people that we should be able thus to offer willingly?" David is overcome that he would have the opportunity and the glory of contributing God's wealth to God's project. He's thrilled. And when we see the privilege that David sees, we'll be thrilled, too.

Questions for the week

- Have there been times when you've regretted giving to the Lord's work? Why or why not?
- How important is it that your giving and service is willing?
- What do you believe God is after in your giving?