

Theme: Joyful and Generous

Text: 1 Chronicles 29:10-20 for 8/27/2017

¹⁰ David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. ¹¹ Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. ¹² Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. ¹³ Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. ¹⁴ "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. ¹⁵ We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. ¹⁶ O Lord our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. ¹⁷ I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. ¹⁸ O Lord, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. ¹⁹ And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, requirements and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided." ²⁰ Then David said to the whole assembly, "Praise the Lord your God." So they all praised the Lord, the God of their fathers; they bowed low and fell prostrate before the Lord and the king.

Has the church ever asked you for money? Perhaps you find this question a little silly, yet when the church did ask you for money what was the first thought that came to your mind? Was it, "Wow, what an awesome opportunity to give!" Or was it perhaps, "Oh no, not again!" When David and his people had the opportunity to raise the money needed for building the temple, they didn't run away from that opportunity. They welcomed it with joyful generosity. In 1 Samuel 24, we have a glimpse into David's attitude about giving to the Lord. God had sent a plague among his people because of a foolish thing David had done. To stop the plague, God ordered David to build an altar and make a sacrifice on the threshing floor of a man named Araunah, the Jebusite. That piece of ground later became the site of the temple. When David asked to buy the piece of ground, Araunah offers to give it to David for free. But David says, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24). In other words, how would it be a sacrifice if it cost him nothing? Where would be the joy in that?

It's easy to be generous when it is not really a sacrifice. Have you ever dreamed about winning the lottery and thinking what you would do with all that money? You could give large amounts of money to start a new mission or give a huge endowment to Michigan Lutheran High School or to Martin Luther College. Daydreams like that can make us feel good about ourselves. But is it joyful generosity if it doesn't really cost us anything? How much of a sacrifice would it really be?

David's gift for building God's temple was certainly a substantial amount: three thousand talents of gold and ten thousand talents of silver. If you convert that to current U.S. dollars it would be about five billion dollars. Some scholars say David gave his entire personal treasury for the future building of the temple. What motivated David and his people to be so generous? Our text shows us that joyful generosity is gospel driven.

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1. It comes from a heart that responds to the generosity of God
2. It comes from a heart that prioritizes the kingdom of God

You see what's in David's heart in his beautiful prayer. First, David acknowledges that he isn't really giving something to the Lord. He's only giving something back. God made him king. God made him wealthy. God gave him all the gold and silver. God blessed David, and David used that wealth to honor and glorify the God and Savior who had given it to him.

Why was David so joyful in his giving? Because David's heart was responding to God's grace in his life. **"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you"** (vs. 14-16). "Who am I?" David asks. Where would David be without the grace of God? He would still be a shepherd tending flocks, because the youngest son in the family never got to be his own boss. He just tended the sheep. Where would David be without the grace of God? He would still be the adulterer who stole Bathsheba and then murdered her husband by putting him on the front lines of the army to be killed. Where would David be if God had not sent the prophet, Nathan, to bring him to repentance? In his own words David says: **"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer"** (Psalm 32:3-4). David would have lived his life in despair with no hope of heaven. He would have had nothing, and he would have been nothing, if it were not for the grace of God in his life. He would have come to the end of his life with only eternal punishment from God to look forward to.

Where would you and I be without the grace of God in our lives? The answer: We would be in the same place that millions of people around us are in right now. You would be living your life without any real purpose. You would be trying to be somebody by making a name for yourself. You would be checking your Facebook page every five minutes to see if someone likes you. You would be looking back on all the mistakes in your life, all the sins you've committed, and finding no relief from your guilty conscience. You would come to the end of your life, terrified in your soul, because you wouldn't know what was coming next. And if you did know what was coming next, you would be even more terrified. Where would we be without God's grace in our lives?

Thankfully we don't have to answer that question because God has called us to faith in Jesus and given us a hope we never deserved. David had it all, didn't he? He had money, power, fame, and a kingdom. Don't we have it all as well? Jesus said to his disciples, **"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom"** (Luke 12:32). Jesus has made you to be kings and priests in his kingdom. He has taken away your guilt and your despair. Jesus gives you the joy of being God's children. He has redeemed you from your sins of greed, and from all your sins. He has made you his own. There is nothing he withholds from you. He has even blessed us with wealth, so often more wealth than is necessary to provide for our needs. And our gracious God tells us to go and glorify him with that wealth.

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Do you remember what Jesus says after he tells you not to be afraid because he has given you the kingdom? He says, **“Sell your possessions and give to the poor”** (Luke 12:33). For people like David and people like you, giving to help others is more fulfilling than spending money on yourself. It’s more fulfilling to donate to a food pantry than it is buying new clothes. It’s more fulfilling to provide a scholarship so a student can attend a Christian school than to drive a new car. It’s more fulfilling to make sure that missionaries can go to China than it is to take a cruise in the Caribbean. Why is that? Because the generosity of God’s grace opens a well of joyful generosity in our hearts. It is a well that will never run dry because it flows from God’s unending love. Like David, all we can do is ask, **“Who are we that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from God, and we have given him only what comes from his hand.”** Joyful generosity is a response to God’s generous grace. It is a joy that moves us to prioritize the kingdom of God; to put God and his kingdom of salvation first in our lives.

When it comes to Christian giving, motivation is the most important thing. It’s even more important than how much we give. In David’s prayer, he says, **“I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you”** (vs. 17-18). Notice David doesn’t talk about how much the people gave, but why they gave. They gave with integrity, with a single-minded devotion for sharing the saving word of God. He thanks God for that integrity, and prays that God would always keep this desire in the hearts of the people.

David’s gifts for the temple along with the gifts of God’s people were given willingly and with honest intent. They were given with joy and not for personal gain. In fact, David would never reap the benefits of his generosity in his lifetime. He would never walk into this wonderful new temple, this house of God, and gaze upon its beauty. Yet he wrote a psalm for its dedication (Psalm 33). He even must have imagined what it would be like just to see this wonderful temple when he wrote these words in Psalm 27: **“One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple”** (v. 4).

If David was not going to get anything out of the gift that he gave to the Lord, then what was he giving it for? David was providing for the future of his church. David knew that God’s house was going to be a place where the truth of the gospel would be proclaimed for future generations. He wanted this for his son, Solomon, and prayed God would keep him fully devoted in his heart to God’s purposes and mission. He wanted a place where people would come from distant countries to learn of the only true and living God. He wanted future generations to come to this temple and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to find comfort in the promise of a Savior.

Isn’t this why we give to the Lord’s work as well? We see a purpose for our lives and our God given wealth that far surpasses self-gratification. Your gifts to our congregation have a kingdom focus. Your gifts support the pastors that visit people who are shut-ins, or are dying, and comforts them with the gospel. Your gifts support the outreach to our community. Your gifts support our worship, Sunday school and Bible classes where children and adults are hearing and learning about Jesus, studying his

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Word so they can be strong in their faith. You support the mission efforts of our larger Church body the Wisconsin Synod. Did you know that there are over 300 people in different countries around the world who are asking our synod to train them to be pastors?

What could we accomplish together for God's kingdom if this spirit of joyful generosity saturated our hearts, the way it did for David and his people? What if our generosity could impact just one person? There an elderly woman who lived in a nursing home for many years. During her time in the nursing home she was faithful in giving to her church. The sale of her family farm had supported her stay at the nursing home so she was able to give generously for many years. But eventually the estate money ran out. One day her church received a check for \$500 from her lawyer on her behalf. He explained in the letter that this was the last gift the church would receive from her. He also said, "If you talk to her about this, she may not know that I have done this, but I know how important her church is to her and that she would want her church to receive the last of her estate." Even her lawyer knew her priorities and understood the joy this woman found in giving to the Lord! Think of the impact we could have on those around us if they experienced us joyfully being generous.

Joyful generosity is gospel driven. It responds to the generosity of God's grace and it makes serving God's kingdom a priority. May God bless us with the generous heart of our Lord Jesus who willingly gave up everything he had so that he could joyfully give us all things. Amen.