

Giving is Worship

1. Who are we?
2. It's all the Lord's

*1 Chronicles 29:1-2, 10-18 Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God. 2 With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities. . . David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. 11 Yours, 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, 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 foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. 16 Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name 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 I have 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 Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.*

Over 300 tons of gold, 640 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, 3,800 tons of iron and precious gem stones of all kinds. The numbers are staggering. This is what King David and the leaders of Israel gave from their personal wealth for the building of God's temple in Jerusalem.

David was dying. This chapter is the last chapter of David's life. Later in this chapter Solomon, his son, would be crowned king and then David would die. Before that, though, we have these last words from David, his prayer about the gift of God's people.

David wanted to build a temple for God in Jerusalem. Good idea. Wrong person. It would be Solomon who would build the temple after David was gone. But David made all the preparations for the building of the temple including this large offering which he and the people gave for its construction. Over 300 tons of gold, 640 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, 3,800 tons of iron and precious gem stones of all kinds. The numbers are staggering. But what's even more impressive is the attitude which they had about this offering and the context in which they gave it. David didn't praise himself or his people. He put the glory where it belongs, with God. David was filled with joy because the people were giving their hearts to God. David recognized that giving is worship.

David confessed, 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 foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all lived in tents. Like David, they recognized that they were aliens and strangers in this world. The writer to the Hebrews said of them, All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left; they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

Where is your home? Who are you? What have you accomplished? David was a successful warrior and a great king. He had accumulated much wealth and yet he could say, 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.

One day a dad wanted to do something special with his 5-year-old son. He took his son to McDonald's to get him his favorite — McDonald's french fries. They got their order and sat down at a table. Dad was happy to see how much his son was enjoying the french fries. He decided he would have one, too. He reached over to grab a fry, but his son quickly pulled them to himself and angrily shouted, "These are mine. You can't have any." Dad was shocked. He paid for them. He bought them for his son. He has every right to have at least one. How could his son be so selfish?

God blesses us. He blesses us with more than we deserve. He gives us our french fries. Some have small bags and some have medium bags and some have been supersized, but they all come from God. Like that dad, God desires to sit down and enjoy fellowship with us. When God reaches over to use some of the blessings he has given us, what do we say? "No, these are mine"?

If God sat with you at a table and gave you ten dimes, what would you say if he wanted one of them back? Most Christians — not most people — most Christians give on average 2% of their income to support the work of the church. In other words, most Christians would tell God, "No, I won't give you that dime back. I will only give you two pennies." Then we get upset about the pastor talking about money. "He's always talking about money." No, not really. And it's not about money. It's about our hearts. Do you have a heart like God's?

God doesn't need anything from us. Everything is already his. David recognized what God wanted. He prayed, I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. Integrity: doing what is right. In other words, God wants us to be like him. Who is God? "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." (Exodus 34:6) He is the God who, so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16) God loves. God gives. He loved us so much he gave his Son. Now he tests our hearts to see if we are like him. Will we give as he has given?

Remember where everything comes from. David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. 11 Yours, 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, 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." Greatness, power, glory, majesty, spender, wealth, honor strength, power — all of this is God's, not ours. Who are we? Everything belongs to God. But God gives. He gives strength and ability. He gives more than we deserve. He gives food and drink, house and home, and all that I own. He gives my mind and all my abilities. Why does he give? Because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, not because we have earned or deserve it.

David praised the great offering the people gave joyfully for the building of the temple, not because they were so great, but because God is. When we give or serve, it's not because we are so great; it's because God is. Jesus said it in our gospel lesson: So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" (Luke 17:10)

The fact is, we haven't done our duty. We haven't always been forgiving of others. We have, at times, demonstrated self-righteous pride. We haven't always loved our neighbor as ourselves. So God doesn't owe us anything. But Jesus took our millstone of sin off of our necks and put it on his own. He sank into the depths of hell on the cross in our place. With such great love he freely gives us salvation. He continues to shower us with that love as he gives us his body and blood in the Lord's Supper.

May we respond to his love with love. May we respond to his forgiveness with forgiving. May we respond to his joy with the joy of serving. May we respond to his giving with our giving. Giving exalts God. Giving expresses trust in God and his love for us. Giving shows our hearts. Giving says that we love God. Giving says that we are thankful to God. Giving is worship.