July 15, 2018
8th Sunday After Pentecost
Psalm 24, 2 Samuel 6
Hymns of Our Faith sermon series
"What Gift Can We Bring” (UMH#87)

*“What gift can we bring, what present, what token?
What words can convey it, the joy of this day?
When grateful we come, remembering rejoicing,
What song can we offer in honor and praise?”*

My niece’s birthday is today. She turns 7. We are going to celebrate with her this afternoon with food, cake, and probably water fun. But a birthday party is nothing without the presents… right? But what do you get a 7-year-old? I don’t know! I don’t have a 7-year-old… nor do I hang out with 7-year-olds regularly. So, for the past month I have been agonizing over choosing the right present. Girls like dolls… right? And Barbies? The gift needs to be cool… because she sees her other aunt a lot more than me. The gift needs to be appropriately priced… because I don’t want to the one who gives her a $5 gift when everyone else spends $20.

Does this sound like something you go through around birthday or Christmas time? What is the right gift?

**(2) God once gave us a gift** that far exceeds anything we could ever expect or repay. This gift is so incredible and priceless that a simple “thank you” is inadequate. God gave His only begotten Son that we might have eternal life (John 3:16-17).

And if you look back at the last year, I’m sure you’ll find countless things God has done in your life. In fact, it’s hard not to say, “Wow, God is great! How can I thank Him for everything He has done for me? What can I possibly do to show my appreciation to Him?”

**(3) What gift can we bring to the Lord?** What can we give the God who has everything! The Psalmist wondered the same thing when he asked in Psalm 116:12 "What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?"

What gift can we bring to the LORD?
Regardless of our financial situation, we can always find ways to give back to God. Let’s look at these Biblical examples.

* **(4) Joseph** gave his talent of interpreting dreams and saved a nation (Genesis 4-5)
* Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19).
* Hannah gave Samuel to the temple (1 Samuel 1 & 2)
* The Widow of Zarephath gave the very last meal… last loaf of bread… till death/starvation (1 Kings 17)
* **(5) Mary sang (Luke 1:46-56).**
* Peter gave up job, home, and family… to follow Jesus (Matthew 4, Luke 5).
* The Good Samaritan gave mercy (Luke 10)
* A little boy offered up his entire lunch, 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish (Matthew 14)
* Mary Magdalene and other women helped support Jesus and the apostles (Luke 8:1-3)
* **(6) Zacchaeus** gives half of his money to the poor and repays debts 4-fold (Luke 19)
* The Widow at the Temple gave (two coins) a mite (Luke 21).
* Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus used expensive oil to anoint Jesus’ feet (Matthew 26, Mark 14, John 12)
* Joseph, a wealthy man, provided his own tomb for Jesus (Matthew 27:57-60).
* Nicodemus supplied expensive spices for the burial (John 19:39).
* **(7) Priscilla and Aquila** invited Apollos to their home to tell him about Jesus (Acts 18:26).
* The Corinthians gave money to help impoverished Christians in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
* Philemon opened his home for church meetings (Philemon 2).

**(8) Our scripture for** this morning is found in 2 Samuel. This summer we have been following David’s story in 1st and 2nd Samuel. Today’s story has David bringing the Arc of the Covenant to the city of David, Jerusalem. Then it says that David rejoiced and offered something to the Lord- he “danced before the Lord with all his might.”

David danced… he gave what he could… he gave his best… he gave from his heart.

Later in our scripture for this morning it also says that “David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord.”

**(9) So, let’s look again** at some of the gifts offered in the Bible.

* Talent- Can you give that to the LORD?
* Sacrifice a child or give your child to the temple/church- Is that something you would give to God?
* Give your very last meal before starvation- Would you be willing to do that?
* Singing and dancing- Can you give that as a gift to the LORD?
* **(10) Give up your job,** home and family- Would anyone do that?
* Mercy- Is that something you could gift to God?
* Money (some, half, or all depending on the story)- Is anyone willing to do that? (I’m taking names!)
* Expensive oil or spices- Can you give that to the LORD?
* Your tomb/burial plot- Would you give that to God?
* Your home to the church- Would anyone do that?

David danced… he gave what he could… gave his best… gave from his heart… can we do that?

So what gift can we bring to the LORD? That is the topic for the hymn for today titled “What Gift Can We Bring” by Jane Marshall.

**(11) Jane was born in Dallas, Texas**, on December 5, 1924. She began studying piano at an early age and started to compose music as a teenager. Jane attended Southern Methodist University (SMU) and became one of the first women to join the Mustang Band. She completed a Bachelor of Music degree in 1945 and her Master of Music in 1968. Jane taught music at SMU and then at Perkins School of Theology.

Since 1954 more than two hundred of Marshall’s anthems, hymns, arrangements, and poems have appeared in print. Following encouragement from friend and colleague, Marshall began writing her own lyrics. One notable example is the hymn and anthem, “What Gift Can We Bring”, written in 1980 to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Northaven United Methodist Church in Dallas. Jane served as a consultant to The United Methodist Hymnal (1989) committee… which you will notice is the current edition of our hymnals. Jane Marshall passed away in 2012.

The song "What Gift Can We Bring” has us sing:

*“What gift can we bring, what present, what token?
What words can convey it, the joy of this day?
When grateful we come, remembering rejoicing,
What song can we offer in honor and praise?”*

**(12) What gift can we bring to God?**

… and what is the right gift to give my niece for her 7th birthday? Well, I finally did something smart… I asked her! She wants anything Calico Critters or Teen Titans Go… whatever that is!

I think the same thing goes for God… if we want to know what gift to bring God, we need to ask.

It is lucky for us that someone did ask, and the answer is found in our Bible. We have two answers:

**(13) Micah 6:8**- “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

**(14) Romans 12:1**- "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

So what gift can we bring? What does God want?

God wants us to look for ways to bless others, to help others with our time, talents and treasures, and to give of our resources to further the kingdom of God. God wants us to give as David gave- give what we can… give our best… give from our hearts.

**(15) What gift can we bring?** Instead of that question… let me as a more specific question… not what CAN we bring… but what WILL we give to the LORD? Amen.