

Joyful Generosity 4

October 8, 2017

1 Chronicles 29:10-20 (CSB) – ¹⁰ Then David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly. David said, May you be blessed, LORD God of our father Israel, from eternity to eternity. ¹¹ Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the splendor and the majesty, for everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to you. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom, and you are exalted as head over all. ¹² Riches and honor come from you, and you are the ruler of everything. Power and might are in your hand, and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ Now therefore, 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? For everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your own hand. ¹⁵ For we are aliens and temporary residents in your presence as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. ¹⁶ LORD our God, all this wealth that we've provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand; everything belongs to you. ¹⁷ I know, my God, that you test the heart and that you are pleased with what is right. I have willingly given all these things with an upright heart, and now I have seen your people who are present here giving joyfully and willingly to you. ¹⁸ LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors, keep this desire forever in the thoughts of the hearts of your people, and confirm their hearts toward you. ¹⁹ Give my son Solomon an undivided heart to keep and to carry out all your commands, your decrees, and your statutes, and to build the building for which I have made provision. ²⁰ Then David said to the whole assembly, "Blessed be the LORD your God." So the whole assembly praised the LORD God of their ancestors. They knelt low and paid homage to the LORD and the king.

Introduction

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 get 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 Araunah, the Jebusite. That piece of ground would later become the site of the temple. When David asked to buy the piece of ground, Araunah offered to give it to him for free. But David said, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." 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 costs us nothing. Have you ever daydreamed about winning the lottery and thinking what you'd do with all that money? I have, even though I don't buy tickets. I dream about what fun it would be to help start a new mission congregation or build a new church and school on our land or set up scholarship funds at Fox Valley, Martin Luther College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Those daydreams make me feel kind of good about myself. But is it joyful generosity if it isn't real, or if it costs us nothing?

Theme: Joyful Generosity Is Gospel Driven

When David made his gift for the building of God's temple, a temple he'd never see but which his son would build, he gave 100 tons of gold and 250 tons of silver. That was about \$5 billion. Some scholars say that 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.**

Part 1: A heart that responds to the generosity 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*. Everything he had belonged to the Lord. God made him king. God made him wealthy. God gave him 100 tons of gold and 250 tons of silver. God gave him all this wealth and said to David, "Here, go out and have some fun." So, that's what David did. Giving all this to build God's house was more fun for him than building a bigger palace in Jerusalem, a seaside resort on the Mediterranean, or a ski chalet on top of Mount Hermon.

Why was this so much fun for David? 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? For everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your own hand. For we are aliens and temporary residents in your presence as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. LORD our God, all this wealth that we've provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand; everything belongs to you."** "Who am I?" David asks. Where would David be without the grace of God? He'd still be a shepherd tending the flocks, because the youngest son in the family never really got to be his own boss. He just tended the sheep. Where would David be without the grace of God? He'd still be the adulterer who stole Bathsheba from his faithful soldier and the murderer who put him on the front lines to be killed. Where would David be without the grace of God? Where would David be if God hadn't sent the prophet, Nathan, to bring him to repentance? Well, let David say it in his own words. **"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away as I groaned all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me. My moisture was dried up by the droughts of summer."** David would've lived his life in dark despair and with no hope of heaven. He would've had nothing and he would've been nothing but for the grace of God in his life. He would've come to the end of his life and had no future in sight.

Ask yourself that question. Where would you be without the grace of God in your life? The answer is that you'd be in the same place that millions of people around you are in right now. You'd be living your life without any real purpose in life at all. You'd be trying to be somebody by making a name for yourself. You'd be checking your Facebook page every ten minutes to see if someone likes you. You'd be looking back on all the mistakes in your life, all the sins you've committed, and have no relief for a guilty conscience. You'd 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, You'd be even more terrified. Where would you be without God's grace in your life?

Instead God has called you to faith in Jesus and given you a hope you never deserved. David had it all, didn't he? Don't you have it all, too? Do you remember from last week what Jesus said to his disciples one time? **"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom."** He's made you to be kings and priests in his kingdom. He's taken away your guilt and your despair. He gives you the joy of being God's children. He's redeemed you and made you his own. There's nothing that he withholds from you. He's even filled your purses with gold and silver and says, "Here, go out and have some fun."

Do you remember what Jesus says after he tells you not to be afraid because he's given you the kingdom? He says, **"Sell your possessions and give to the poor."** For people like David and people like you, giving to help others is more fun than spending money on yourself. It's more fun to donate to Apple Valley Food Pantry than it is to buy new clothes. It's more fun to provide a scholarship to a student than to drive a new car. It's more fun to make sure that missionaries can go to China than it is to take a cruise in the Caribbean. Why? Because the generosity of God's grace opens a well of joyful generosity in our hearts that will never run dry. Joyful generosity responds to the generosity of God's grace. **"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? For everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your own hand."**

Transition

Joyful generosity is a response to God's generosity of grace, and it prioritizes the kingdom of God.

Part 2: A heart that prioritizes the kingdom of God

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 said, **"I know, my God, that you test the heart and that you are pleased with what is right. I have willingly given all these things with an upright heart, and now I have seen your people who are present here giving joyfully and willingly to you. LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors, keep this desire forever in the thoughts of the hearts of your people, and confirm their hearts toward you."** Notice that David didn't talk about how much the people gave, but why they gave. They gave with integrity, with a single-minded devotion for the gospel. He thanked God for that and prayed that God would always keep that desire in their hearts.

Many years later, Jesus would worship in the temple that King Herod built. This was the same Herod who wanted to kill the baby Jesus right after he was born, and who killed all the infants in Bethlehem to try to kill Jesus, too. He built a magnificent temple that was one of the wonders of the world at the time. Why would he do this? King Herod was a selfish man who only thought about himself and HIS kingdom (not God's kingdom). Why would he build a temple to the Lord? Because he was an Edomite, a distant cousin of the Jews, and he wanted to gain the favor of the Jewish people. There wasn't an ounce of integrity in his heart and his "generosity" wasn't pleasing to God at all.

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'd 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've 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 is what I seek: that I live 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."**

If David wasn't 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 that God would keep him devoted fully in his heart to God's purposes and God's mission. He wanted a place where people would come from distant lands 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 that why you give to the Lord's work as well? You see a purpose for your life and the wealth that God has given you that far surpasses self-gratification. Your gifts to our congregation have a kingdom focus. Your gifts support the pastor who preaches and teaches and baptizes and visits people when they're sick, suffering, or dying to comfort them with the gospel. Your gifts support reaching out to our community. Your gifts support our preschool, elementary school, Sunday school, and area Lutheran high school, where children are learning about Jesus and studying his Word so they can be strong in their faith. You support the national and global mission efforts of our 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? How much fun could you and I have in giving to our Savior and his work!

Conclusion

Joyful generosity is gospel driven. It responds to the generosity of God's grace and it prioritizes God's kingdom. Pray that God would give you and me such hearts! Amen.