



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
12700 W. Hwy. 42, Prospect, KY 40059  
stjohnky.com  
Message for November 17, 2019

**“Our Grateful Response: Living Faithfully”**  
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb  
Scripture: I Chronicles 29:10-20

### **He Has Never Failed Me Yet**

A few years ago, St. Paul Church held a Capital Campaign to help eliminate a debt that had accumulated during an earlier building program. We also needed to tackle head-on some pretty significant maintenance issues.

The campaign represented a stretch for Cheryl and me. We were already giving pretty significantly to the church. On top of that, our oldest son Brian was just about to head off to college.

The campaign was held in March. The consultant we had hired to help us with the campaign encouraged Cheryl and I to think about our commitment and come prepared that Sunday to report it to the congregation.

Cheryl and I talked and arrived at a figure that we really weren't sure how we were going to meet.

Even as I reported it to the congregation, I remember praying, *“Oh God, please help us.”* Our faith was being stretched.

A month later Cheryl and Brian went to Centre College for a scholarship competition. A couple of days after that, Brian received a call from Centre offering him a full scholarship.

Now that will make you think. We were overwhelmed. I do believe in the broad provision of God. He has never failed me yet, nor do I expect him to.

### **A Matter of the Heart**

When it comes right down to it how we respond when asked to give says something about the state of our hearts.

King David recognized this reality when it came to his own stewardship and the stewardship of those around him.

I Chronicles 29 reports the generosity of King David and the people in supporting the construction of the temple in Jerusalem.

We had said last week it was a sort of capital funds campaign and David was not only its lead giver, but financial consultant.

David, being a *“man after God’s own heart,”* was quick to acknowledge that when it comes to giving it is all about the heart.

*“I know, my God,”* says David, *“that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity.”* (I Chronicles 29:17)

The gift is not nearly as important as the intentions behind it.

Martin Luther, the great reformer once said that *“Every person is in need of three conversions: a conversion of the heart, a conversion of the mind, and a conversion of the purse.”* Martin Luther

All three are very much related.

### **Skewed Vision**

As we know from experience money has a way of skewing our vision.

A. W. Tozer rightly asserts that *“money all too often comes between us and God.”*

*“It’s funny,”* he says, *“what a couple of well-placed dimes can do. Two dimes put over our eyes obscures not only our vision of others, but everything around us.”*

It doesn’t take a lot, wrongly placed, to come between ourselves and God.

Not so with David and those who gave to the building of the temple.

### ***“Willingly and with Honest Intent”***

David, upon thinking about his own giving, commented that he had given *“willingly and with honest intent.”* (I Chronicles 29:17)

He also commented about how the people had done the very same thing.

*“I have seen with joy,”* he said, *“how willingly your people have given. 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.”* (I Chronicles 29:17-18)

David knew that hearts dedicated to God would be their saving grace.

A “loyal” heart, given over to God was the very thing that would keep them strong. It was the very thing that would keep them alert to God’s presence.

A “loyal” heart, faithful in every way sustained their relationship with God and put them at the very place they needed to be.

### **“Who Are We?”**

Upon the people making their *Grateful Response*, David exclaimed,

*“But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this?”* I Chronicles 29:14

I am particularly taken by that passage. It gives me pause to consider the very same thing.

It gives me pause to consider the One who gives and gives and gives again. He provides in so many wonderful and beautiful ways.

We simply can’t out give God. All we can do is offer a grateful response. What we give is in response to God’s good work in our lives.

God’s generosity leads us to be generous, just as his faithfulness leads us to be faithful.

A **grateful** response is a **faithful** response, which is the very place God wants us to be.

And upon making our grateful response, we not only become keenly aware of the good things God is doing, but find ourselves trusting in him all the more.

### **Putting Things into Perspective**

During the dark days of 1929, a group of ministers in Boston gathered to discuss how they should conduct their Thanksgiving services. Things were about as bad as they could get with no relief in sight.

The bread lines were depressingly long, the stock market had plummeted, and the term “*Great Depression*” seemed to describe the mood of the country.

At first, the ministers thought they should only lightly refer to the subject of thanksgiving in light of all the suffering around them. There just wasn’t a whole lot to be thankful for.

William Stiger, one of the pastors begged to differ, “*This is not the time,*” he said, “*to merely mention giving thanks.*”

*In fact, we need to do just the opposite. This is a time to get matters in perspective and thank God for his blessings, which are always present.*” Stiger was right.

The most faith-filled moments of thanksgiving are not found in times of plenty, but when difficulties abound. It's then that our faith is stretched and our thanksgiving becomes a deeply spiritual endeavor.

We are drawn to God and realize he is present, and not just present, but at work to see us through.

Again, a **grateful** response is a **faithful** response, regardless of the circumstance.

### **A Prayer of Thanksgiving**

It's no coincidence that our passage for today has as its centerpiece a prayer of thanksgiving.

It's a prayer we need to pray today. It's a prayer that hopefully you have been praying as you've prepared to make your grateful response.

Again, to set things into context, it is a prayer that was prayed by King David as he and the people offered their gifts to the building of God's temple.

*"Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. 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. 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. Now, our God we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name."* (I Chronicles 29:10-13)

There in the midst of that great display of generosity, David could do no other, but be thankful.

It was as if he couldn't say enough good things about God and what he was doing. He knew, as we know, that that's certainly the case.

God is that great and worthy of all the praise due him.

As we said last week, we have every reason to be thankful—as individuals, as families, and as a church. So let's offer our thanks to the Lord. Let's offer a grateful response his way.

Allow me to share this video of some of our own who offer their thanks for the great things God is doing in our midst.

**(Show video)**

Amen!!

### **Stretching Our Faith**

I mentioned last week that giving and, particularly, making a commitment to give always stretches my faith. It gives me pause to consider what I really think about God.

It is okay to stretch when it comes to faith otherwise our spiritual lives are left wanting. An anemic, lifeless faith gets us nowhere. Faith that is constantly stretched brings us to the place that awakens us to God's greatness and the wonderful things he wants to offer.

Whenever my faith is stretched, I am at a much better place to recognize God's good work.

I trust less in myself and more so in God. In fact, when really stretched I find myself trusting in him all the more.

### **What We Do Here Today**

What we do here today is between you and God.

What we do here today is a spiritual response.

What we do here today recognizes who God is and what he is doing in our lives.

What we do here today is fundamentally a grateful response to the One who has not only turned our lives around, but sustains them each and every day.

What we do here today is a very tangible sign that, above all things, we want to live faithfully in every area of our lives.

So join me, won't you, in supporting the ministry of this great church, both here and beyond. I can think of no better thing to do.