



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for November 10, 2019

**“Our Grateful Response: Living
Generously”**
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: 1 Chronicles 29:1-9

Why Do You Give?

Over the years I have found that people give for all sorts of reasons. Some do so out of guilt, others out of a sense of duty, still others in order to be noticed.

Some give as a matter of spiritual response.

Those who give as a matter of spiritual response have experienced the powerful and profound love of God and can do no other but give.

Those who give as a matter of spiritual response recognize that all that is comes from God. They understand themselves to be stewards of what God has first given.

Those who give as a matter of spiritual response recognize that, “*every good and perfect gift is from above,*” and because of that seek to offer a *Grateful Response*.

Why do you give?

Generosity—A Radical Idea

The notion of *Living Generously* is viewed by many as a radical idea, particularly when set against the backdrop of a money-adoring, shopaholic, me-oriented society.

We live in an age where enough is never enough. More is better and extravagance is better still.

Speaking into the wilderness of what is a money-crazed culture is the voice of God assuring us that he will take care of our every need, that abundance is not always defined by what we have, and that generosity is the way he wants us to live.

William Barclay puts it well when he says, “*No one is ever the loser when he/she is generous.*” William Barclay

Whenever we are asked to give, we find ourselves challenged to consider who we are and what we believe.

Giving is a very tangible response and, to a large extent, defines what we believe about God and his provision for our lives.

If we really believe that all things are from God and that we are to bring those things entrusted to our care under his rule and authority.

The question confronting us then is not so much, “*How much of what I have will I give to God?*” but “*How much of what is already God’s will I keep for myself?*”

The latter is a wholly different way to look at things.

It Is Just in Us to Give

Let’s face it, God’s people have always been asked to give. It’s just in us to do that. As God has given so we seek to give as well.

Take, for instance, the circumstances surrounding our scripture for this morning. It’s a wonderful scripture about the generosity of those who seek to honor God.

In I Chronicles 29, King David makes an ardent appeal to the people to contribute to the building of God’s temple. It was an early capital funds campaign, if you will, and David served as consultant.

“*The task is great,*” he says.

Even today we realize that the needs of God’s church are great and demand the *Grateful Response* of his people. Together we can get done what God is calling us to do.

Leading the Way

In I Chronicles 29, David challenges the people to give, but not before he had given himself. He counted it an honor to lead the way.

“*With all my resources,*” he said, “*I have provided for the temple of my God.*”

David went on to list everything he had given—gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, onyx, turquoise, marble—all in large quantities.

David’s leadership was important in spurring others on. Your leadership is important as well as we embark upon this year’s financial stewardship campaign.

For Cheryl and me, our financial commitment to the ministry of this church is an important expression of our relationship with Christ. We are not just casual bystanders when it comes to giving to the church.

We not only count it an honor to support the ministry of the church, but to offer our *Grateful Response* to the great things God is doing in our lives.

We are thankful for his every blessing and want to show our gratitude.

Who Then Is Ready to Respond?

Upon David leading the way by his generous offering, he then turned to the people to make their response.

He made, what is called in fundraising circles, “*the ask.*”

David offered this challenge, “*Who then is willing to consecrate themselves to the Lord?*” I Chronicles 29:5

When you hear the word “consecrate,” you get the idea that what was asked for was a lot more than a simple monetary gift.

The people were being challenged to be wholly dedicated to God. Their gifts were simply an expression of that.

The response of the people that day was overwhelming.

The scripture says that they gave, “*freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord.*”

Why Not Give It Away?

Medical researchers at the University of Louisville have discovered that money can actually be hazardous to your health.

Their research asserts that 13% of coins and 42% of paper money carry disease producing organisms. Small bills and coins are more dangerous because of their rapid turnover.

Recently, I heard about a study done where it was found that a lot of the money we handle is laced with at least a degree of cocaine.

So then, if money is going to make you sick or worse yet high, why not give it away?

Surely there are much deeper reasons to give. How about making a *Grateful Response* for starters?

Stuck in a Rut

When it comes to giving, you very well may be stuck in a rut.

You might be giving and not considered for a while the “*why’s*” of your giving.

You have not taken the opportunity to prayerfully consider God’s great blessings and in response to those blessings ask yourself what you need to be doing.

I had a fellow in my first church in Madisonville who lived with his wife on the old family homestead. It was right in the middle of a huge strip mine.

The mining company had mined on that guy’s property for years. He was worth a fortune. I was always convinced that he really didn’t know how much he was worth.

Occasionally, I would come by to visit him and his wife.

The man always made a donation to the church. If he reached for his wallet, it’d be a twenty and if he went for the cigar box on the mantle, it’d be a fifty.

The man, while well-intentioned, hadn’t really considered the joys of generous giving. He was stuck in a rut when it came to such things and was going nowhere.

There he was sitting on a veritable fortune and all he could offer was what he had always done.

How Much Should I Give?

The question comes to each of us on such occasions as this, *“How much should I give?”*

The answer to that question certainly involves more than simply throwing a twenty here or a fifty there.

When it comes to considering how much we should give, we are called to plumb the depths of our souls.

We are challenged to consider those things that are dear to us and ask if God is dearer still.

Think Proportionately

The Biblical standard for giving is the tithe or ten percent. It is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments.

The tithe is a high calling and, for many, seems so far out of reach as to be impossible.

Let me encourage you to do as Cheryl and I did on our way to a tithe. Let me encourage you to think proportionally. I learned about such thinking years ago when I was here before.

Some of you will remember Carl Greer. Carl championed what he called *“The Alabama Plan,”* which encouraged people to think proportionally when it came to their gifts to the church.

Carl had learned about *“The Alabama Plan”* from his roots in the Episcopal Church and I have been talking about it ever since.

“The Alabama Plan” asks that you consider what percentage of your income you now give to the Lord and then put a plan in place that will get you where you want to be.

Say you’re giving 3% of your income presently, why not make it 4% next year?—all with an interest of giving 10% sometime in the future.

You and I both know that that sort of thinking may very well mean a total re-orientation of the way you and your family live your life.

Paul writes in II Corinthians 9:7, *“Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

Sowing Generously, Reaping Generously

Paul also writes, *“Remember this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”*

The truth is this, when we sow generously, we can also expect to reap generously those things that make one truly rich—things like love, fulfillment, peace, and contentment.

Simply put, we are rich when we give.

We are also freed from the hold money so often has upon our lives.

Some of my friends will assert that I am a fairly tight-fisted. I contend that I am simply *“value conscious.”*

The strange irony about money is that sometimes the very thing we hold so tightly really has a hold on us. I have to check myself on that occasionally. I do that every time I give. I also do that when I make a commitment to give.

By so doing I am miraculously freed from the hold money has on me. I recognize it for what it is. It is to be used rightly and to the glory of the One who first gave it.

Considering Where We Are in the Lord

While a discussion about money is often times unsettling around the church, it gives us pause to consider where we are and, more importantly, where we need to be.

In the midst of that type of discussion, some people get downright defensive. Some even get angry. Others though take the time to consider where they are in the Lord, which, by the way, is always a good thing to do.

This week we are asked to pray, to consider God’s goodness and our response in light of that goodness.

As I mentioned in the letter I sent this week God’s *“gifts toward us are many, notwithstanding the greatest gift of all, his Son, Jesus Christ.”*

We have every reason to be thankful for what God is doing in our lives and in the life of this church. There are so many great things going on.

Let’s take a couple of minutes to consider just a few of those things.

Video

Now that’s some exciting stuff and, think of it, it is only the tip of the iceberg of the great things that go on around here.

Let me encourage you to consider making a pledge to the 2020 Ministry Budget. I am learning that that budget is really a *“ministry funding plan”* and your financial support of that plan will help make great things happen in support of Christ and his church.

But first let me encourage you to pray, trusting in the Lord’s leadership as you pray.

As I said earlier, Cheryl and I count it an honor to give to God through the ministry of this church. While our gifts may not be the gold and silver of a David, I can assure you they represent that to us, just as your gift represents that to you.

Our tithe is just one small part of the whole. Join us, won’t you? As together we seek to live generously.