The Joy of Giving to God

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1 Chronicles 29:10-19

Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; David said:
'Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, for ever and
ever. [11]Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and
the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the
kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. [12]Riches and honor
come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it
is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. [13]And now, our God,
we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name. 14 'But who am I, and
what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill-offering? For all
things come from you, and of your own have we given you. [15]For we are aliens
and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are
like a shadow, and there is no hope. [16]O LORD our God, all this abundance that
we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your
hand and is all your own. [17]I know, my God, that you search the heart, and take
pleasure in uprightness; in the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all
these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering
freely and joyously to you. [18]O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our
ancestors, keep for ever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your
people, and direct their hearts towards you. [19]Grant to my son Solomon that
with single mind he may keep your commandments, your decrees, and your
statutes, performing all of them, and that he may build the temple* for which I
have made provision.'

1. The Giving Tree

You are probably familiar with a famous children's picture book called, *The Giving Tree* written and illustrated by Shel Silverstein. The book talks about the relationship between an apple tree and a boy. The tree is always helping and giving to the boy when he is young, a teenager, a man, and when the man is elderly. Every day the boy comes to the tree to eat the apples, swing from her branches, or slide down her trunk… and the tree is happy.

However, as the boy grows older, he spends less time with the tree. He visits her when he needs money, a house, and a boat. To make the boy happy the tree gives him parts of herself. Although the tree has to give to the boy, the tree is happy. But the tree is often alone because the boy does not come back to play with the tree.

At the end of the story, the boy and the tree are not happy with their relationship. The tree has given everything and is now nothing more than a

stump. After a long time, the boy comes back as a tired elderly man to meet the tree once more. The tree is happy to see him. But she says to him that she is sorry because she has nothing left to give: "I have nothing left. I am just an old stump," she says. The man says that all he wants is "a quiet place to sit and rest." And the tree is happy. This book is a beautiful story about giving.

2. David's Wish

Today's passage also talks about the joy of giving. The background of 1 Chronicles 29 begins in 1 Chronicles 28. In chapter 28, King David calls a meeting in Jerusalem for all of Israel's leaders. David says, "***Listen to me, my people. I wanted to build a place where the sacred chest would be kept, so we could go there and worship the Lord our God***." (28:2, Contemporary English Bible). David wants to build the temple of God, but God wants David's son Solomon to build the temple. Although David is not going to build the temple, he still wants to do his best to prepare for the construction of the temple. In 1 Chronicles 29:2-9, after donating his personal resources to the construction of the temple, David appeals to the people for their voluntary gifts.

According to the Bible, God asks for two kinds of offerings. First is tithing. Leviticus 27:30 says, **"*All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the Lord's; they are holy to the Lord*."** (NRSV) Tithing is 10 percent of an agricultural produce or personal income set apart as an offering to God. Tithing is a sign of our faith, a way that we remember that everything we have in life comes from God and has a purpose from God. When I read this verse the other day, I realized for the first time that God calls the tithe to be **holy** onto the Lord. This is so meaningful because the term "holy" means to be set apart. The action of tithing isn't necessarily something we do out of obligation. But we do it because God tells us to set this amount apart from our income for God's purpose. In the same way, we are called holy or set apart for God's purpose, God calls our tithe to be set apart as well.

The second offering is all the gifts that God's people bring for special purposes. The Israelites brought special offerings for the building of the temple, for forgiveness of sins, for fellowship with the Lord, and for making a special vow to dedicate themselves. How did the Israelites manage to both tithe and bring additional gifts to the Lord? How did they do this without feeling a deep sense of burden?

3. Praise and Thanksgiving

Before David talks about the gifts that they would bring to God, he praises the Lord and gives thanks for God's "***greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours"*** (29:11). ***"Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all"***

(29:12). "***All things come from you***" (29:14). David acknowledges how great the Lord is. God's power, glory, victory and majesty are his and everything in the world belongs to God, including everything that we have today.

4. Reasons for Giving Thanks

Last week, you probably received an email from Melissa, our church secretary about sharing your reasons for giving thanks this year. I'd like to share some of the responses we received from our church members.

-"*I'm Thankful for God's love, Mercy, and unfailing presence in my life.*
-Through His Spirit, His people, Angels, family and creation.
-God's continual presence, guidance and love in my life.
-Thankful that I'm alive.
-I am thankful to God for my family and for my church family.
-I'm thankful for my family, church family, the positive energy and inclusiveness at Swift."

I am grateful for your sharing.

Who can be thankful? If we understand who God is and who we are, we will be more grateful to the Lord. David already says who God is. God is the ruler of all. Who are we? David says in 1 Chronicles 29:15, "***We are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope***." We are just sojourners, temporary travelers, and we use God's resources while we are in our journey of this life. When we leave this world, we leave everything behind us. While we are alive, we need to remember why God has brought us here and try to implement his purpose.

David says to his son Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:9-10***, "You, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with single mind and willing heart; for the Lord searches every mind, and understands every plan and thought…. Take heed now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house as the sanctuary***.***"*** He reminds us what God does for us and what we are supposed to do. For David, it is a great joy to bring what he has to the Lord to build the temple. And David is thankful to see the Israelites are glad to bring resources willingly to build the temple. David says in verse 14, ***"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill-offering?"*** David praises God for giving him and the Israelites willingness to bring freewill-offerings. Bringing offerings is a privilege for him.

Why did David want to build the temple? Exodus 25:8 says, ***"Have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them."*** David knew that the tabernacle and the temple would remind the Israelites that God would dwell

among them. Today the church, the community of faith, reminds us that God is among us. I pray that all of us yearn to be with God's people on Sundays. Psalm 84:10 tells us how much the Israelites wanted to dwell in the house of the Lord. ***"For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness."*** Matthew's gospel reminds us that Jesus came to let us know that God is among us. "Immanuel" means God is with us. God loves to give us everything including his Son (Matthew 1:23).

5. Returning instead of Giving

Last week, I learned a very important lesson. We use the verb "give" when we bring what we have to God. But if everything we have belongs to God, we aren't "giving" to God. We just return it to God. When we bring our tithe and offerings to God, we are simply returning what is already God's.

Sometimes we can get caught in the fear of not having enough. And even though it is important to be good stewards of what we have, we are reminded today and every day that God's provision for each and everyone of us never runs out. God doesn't run out of resources, and when we reflect on what God has done in our lives and in the lives of others, we can see many instances where God has provided beyond our expectation or imagination, especially when we take the time to remember what God has done.

When our family lived in New Haven, CT, my younger son Andrew used to love sharing our food with the kids in the neighborhood. He enjoyed giving ice cream to his friends, and Christine would have to buy more later. My son never worried about not having something else to eat because he knew that there would be something later.

6. Conclusion

Many of us have experienced the joy of giving. We know that there is a joy that cannot be explained in trusting God with our finances in our tithes and giving and seeing God show us how much more He is faithful in our lives and provides us with more than we could ever imagine. During this time of year, we enter this season of reflection and thanksgiving, and are reminded of God's faithfulness even through our giving, as Acts 20:35 says, ***"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*** Do we really believe that?

7. Application

As we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, I would like to invite all of us to reflect on this past year and remember how much God has been giving us more than we expected. God knows what we need. As parents do for their children, God's provision is endless. God wants us not to be self-centered, but to be faithful stewards loving to give to God and to others. God wants us to have the joy of

giving, sharing, and returning to God and others. I pray that you have the joy of giving every Sunday and every day. Then we will be able to say as King David says in Psalm 23, "***The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want***." Amen.