



“Giving”

1 CHRONICLES 29:1-22

Baxter T. Exum (#1181)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
September 23, 2012

If you have been here over the past month or so, then you know that we are wrapping up a series of lessons on the various acts of worship that we participate in as a congregation on the first day of every week. We started by looking together at the Lord’s Supper from 1 Corinthians 11. We continued by studying a two-part lesson on prayer from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6. We then looked at the preaching of God’s word based on a passage in Ezekiel 3, and then last week we looked together at the singing that we do as a congregation – the *“fruit of lips”* that give praise to God’s name.

This morning I would like for us to conclude this series by looking together at the giving that we do as a congregation – the weekly contribution. Certainly we can look at the New Testament, and we find that the church is to be financed by a free-will contribution that is taken up on the first day of every week – we learn about this in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. Earlier this week, I got a call from a company pitching their fundraisers, and the poor woman on the other end was so excited – she just jumped right into the call as a great salesperson. She started rattling off all of the benefits, and how easy it is, and how much money we can raise for the church using their program, and all of this was before she took her first breath! So, when she stopped to inhale for just a split second, I very kindly thanked her for calling, “Thank you for letting us know about this, but as God’s people the only way the Bible allows us to fund what we do is through the weekly contribution.” I honestly think she felt a little bit sorry for me, and yet it is actually a thrilling challenge to provide for the Lord’s work through nothing but the weekly free-will contribution. As simple New Testament Christians, we do not have bake sales or garage sales, we do not sell coupon books or calendars to our members and visitors, we do not charge admission to our worship services, we do not have a Starbucks in the entryway, but we simply pass the basket one time every week where each person is given the opportunity to give as he or she has prospered during the week. Like the other acts of worship, the concept of giving is also amazingly simple.

There is so much more we could consider from various passages in the New Testament, but this morning I would invite you to turn with me to a powerful passage from the Old Testament, to an amazing example of a massive free-will contribution that took place near the end of the reign of King David. The passage is found in 1 Chronicles 29 (p. 689). I know that sometimes we think of the Old Testament, and we think about giving in terms of the tithe. Just a week or so ago, I received a sermon request for more information concerning the “tithe offering.” The tithe, of course, refers to the 10% that was to be given back to God under the Old Testament. Before we begin our study of this passage in 1 Chronicles, I would point out that even in this Old

Testament passage, the tithe is not mentioned, and to me, that is significant. In a sense, the tithe under the Law of Moses was almost a tax. It could almost be considered the bare minimum. God gave us 100%, and as a base, those under the Old Law were to start by giving at least 10% of everything they earned back to God. With that in mind, it is interesting to me that the tithe is never commanded under the New Covenant. In other words, under the New Covenant, our giving is never regulated as a tax. I hope you will allow me to share my personal opinion here for just a moment, though, and that is, even though 10% is never commanded, we still end up giving some percentage – so, where do we start? In my opinion, 10% is not a bad place to start. I share this because of my understanding of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

I might have shared this before, but when Keola and I were getting ready to get married, we sat down and wrote out a budget. And for the kids here this morning, I'll tell you that this is my version of a spreadsheet! As far as numbers go, this is about as complicated as I will ever get. As you can see, my salary at that time was just over \$22,000 per year. The church also provided health insurance and something for retirement, so the grand total came to right at \$26,000 per year. And so we were looking at a blank slate – we had this \$26,000, and we had to divide it. As a young married couple, we made the decision that God's part would come out first. So, 10% of \$26,000 comes out to exactly \$50 per week. So, we started there, and then we plugged in all of those other things of *lesser importance* – things like housing, and food, and medical care. Of course, these figures are more than 20 years old now, but I share the concept to let you know what my personal conviction is on this very important subject. Thankfully, God has allowed us to increase this percentage through the years as our faith has grown and as our finances have changed. I can assure you that we no longer spend only \$70 per week on food! With the carload we bring with us on Sunday morning, we come close to spending that much on one meal on Sunday afternoon! But even over the past few years as the economy has slowed, and even as my wife's income has taken a rather large hit due to her situation at work, we have still managed to increase the percentage of the part that is set aside for God. I'm still not sure how that is possible, we are amazed at how God continues to take care of us, but it has been possible. We thank God for that.

In my opinion, though, that 10% can be a pretty good place to start, and I say that because as in so many other areas, we sometimes go back to the Old Testament for comparison purposes. Think for just a moment, for example, about some of what the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount as He compared the Old and the New. Under the Old: No adultery! Under the New: No lusting! Under the Old: No murder! Under the New: No hatred! So we ask ourselves: Did the Lord revise the New Covenant up or down? Did He make the New Covenant more intense or less intense? In fact, He made it more intense! And that is how we personally look at our giving. As I have pointed out before, we as Christians should not be saying, "Yay! Since Jesus died on the cross, now we can reduce our giving from 10% to 2%!" 2%, by the way, is the percentage that is given in many churches in America these days. Concerning the actual amount, though, the New Testament simply tells us to give as we have prospered – we are to give in proportion to our income – an exact percentage is never commanded or even discussed under the New Covenant. I have made these comments in response to one of our members requesting some information on the "tithe offering."

As we prepare to look at this morning's text, I would point out that the people in 1 Chronicles 29 are living at a very exciting time in the history of God's people. David is coming near the end of his 40-year reign, the kingdom has expanded tremendously, the finances of the nation are amazingly strong, and yet for hundreds of years now, God has been worshiped in a tent. The time has now come, though, to transition from David to Solomon, and for Solomon to take on the challenge of building a more permanent temple. In 1 Chronicles 29, we read about David getting ready to step aside as king, but before he dies, he starts the process of collecting funds for the new temple. If you will, then, please look with me at 1 Chronicles 29:1-22,

1 Then King David said to the entire assembly, "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is still young and inexperienced and the work is great; for the temple is not for man, but for the Lord God. **2** Now with all my ability I have provided for the house of my God the gold for the things of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, onyx stones and inlaid stones, stones of antimony and stones of various colors, and all kinds of precious stones and alabaster in abundance. **3** Moreover, in my delight in the house of my God, the treasure I have of gold and silver, I give to the house of my God, over and above all that I have already provided for the holy temple, **4** namely, 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the buildings; **5** of gold for the things of gold and of silver for the things of silver, that is, for all the work done by the craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?"

6 Then the rulers of the fathers' households, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers over the king's work, offered willingly; **7** and for the service for the house of God they gave 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, and 10,000 talents of silver, and 18,000 talents of brass, and 100,000 talents of iron. **8** Whoever possessed precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, in care of Jehiel the Gershonite. **9** Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the Lord with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly.

10 So David blessed the Lord in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, "Blessed are You, O Lord God of Israel our father, forever and ever. **11** Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. **12** Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. **13** Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name. **14** "But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You. **15** For we are sojourners before You, and tenants, as all our fathers were; 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 to build You a house for Your holy name, it is from Your hand, and all is Yours. **17** Since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You. **18** O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers, preserve this forever in the intentions of the heart of Your people, and direct their heart to You; **19** and give to my son Solomon a perfect heart to keep Your commandments, Your testimonies and Your statutes, and to do them all, and to build the temple, for which I have made provision."

20 Then David said to all the assembly, "Now bless the Lord your God." And all the assembly blessed the Lord, the God of their fathers, and bowed low and did homage to the Lord and to the king. **21** On the next day they made sacrifices to the Lord and offered burnt offerings to the Lord, 1,000 bulls, 1,000 rams and 1,000 lambs, with their drink offerings and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. **22** So they ate and drank that day before the Lord with great gladness.

As we look back at these 22 verses, I would like to suggest several very basic ideas that apply to the giving that we do today. And yes, we are dealing with the Old Testament, and yet there are still some basic concepts that I believe will have a way of encouraging us today, nearly 3000 years after these events took place.

I. **To begin with, we notice in verse 1 how King David realized that HE WAS GIVING NOT TO MAN BUT TO GOD (verse 1).**

And as we begin, I want to point out that as we study I'll be sharing just a few of various artists' renditions of what the temple would eventually look like – it was a magnificent building. But here at the beginning, I should probably also give you just a little more background. King David wanted to build this house for God; however, you might remember how God would not allow that to happen, because David was a man of war. David was a man after God's own heart, and yet he had too much blood on his hands, and so God said that the building of the great temple would fall on King David's son, Solomon. Think about this for just a moment – at this point, David could have got upset. David could have just walked away from it, "Fine! You don't want me to build this? Then I won't build it! I won't have anything to do with it!" David could have walked away in anger. Certainly David realized that this was a temple he would never see. Certainly David understood that he would never have the privilege of worshiping in this amazing building. Notice: By the end of this chapter, David is dead. Certainly, then, David could have reasoned, "There is nothing in this for me!" And yet we find in this passage that David was the one who stepped forward first and led the effort! David made the first contributions, and David challenged the rest of the nation through his own example. And the reason for David's excitement here is summarized right at the end of verse 1, **"...the temple is not for man, but for the Lord God."** In other words, David was not giving for some physical building, David was not giving for his own comfort and pleasure, but David was giving to the Lord Himself. Even at the end of his life, David's attitude was: I want to invest in the Lord's work in any way that I can! He was willing to finance a place of worship even though he would never live to see it. The giving, then, was not about David, but it was all about God. And that right there is something to remember as we give under the New Covenant. We are under a different Law, but our giving is also directed to God.

II. **There is something else to notice here, and that is: King David (and the rest of the people) GAVE GENEROUSLY (verses 2-7).**

In verse 2, we have a list of the wealth that David contributed. Then, in verses 3-5 he goes on to say **"moreover,"** and then he goes on to list all of those things that he contributed above and beyond what he had done previously. After setting the example, notice the question David asks at the end of verse 5, **"Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?"** The word **"consecrate"** refers to having your hands full. In other words, after setting the example, King David is asking, "Who else wants to come to God with their hands full? Who else wants to bring an offering to God?" And then we have a list of what some of the other leaders contributed. I know there are a lot of figures here, but down in verse 7, we read about 5,000 talents of gold. As I understand it, a talent was about 75 pounds. You multiply 5,000 by 75, and we come to a figure of 375,000 pounds of gold. That's a lot of gold! As of this past Friday, the price of gold came to \$1772 per ounce. I tried that on my 10-digit calculator, and I got an error reading – not enough digits. My calculator said, "How dare you do that to me?" So, I used the calculator app on my MacBook Pro, and the dollar amount of just the gold from the leaders comes to \$10.6 billion. For an idea of how much that is, I typed "\$10.6 billion" into Google, and it turns out that's how much Facebook was hoping to make earlier this year with their initial public offering. It also turns out that \$10.6 billion is the amount that Freddie Mac asked for in what I believe was their second bailout back in May 2010. You guys know I'm not a numbers guy, but that is a lot of money! In fact, if we were to try to collect that amount from the residents of Wisconsin, every man woman and child

would need to come up with nearly \$2,000. Just the gold collected from the leaders would build a grand total of 27 Miller Parks. That figure alone could purchase more than 88,000 buildings just like the one we are in this morning. Again, that is a huge figure!

But what about the weight? How about if we try to visualize 375,000 pounds of gold. I typed “375,000 pounds” into Google yesterday, and it turns out that is the amount of thrust generated by the three engines underneath the space shuttle. It turns out that 375,000 pounds is the maximum capacity of the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner, and it also turns out that 375,000 pounds is the maximum weight limit of a new off-road trailer made by Trail King out in Mitchell, South Dakota. I don’t know much about trailers, or thrust, or airplanes, but I do know that if you wanted to move all of the gold contributed just by the leaders of Israel, and if you wanted to move it all at one time, that is the kind of equipment you would need to do it.

We might say that these men and their families were committed to the process. Remember, in verse 3 David pointed out that he was motivated by his *“delight in the house of my God.”* David and the other leaders of Israel, then, they gave generously. They gave willingly. Their arms were not twisted. They didn’t do it for the tax break. They were not guilted into it. But they gave all of this as a free will offering. And that is where we see the comparison to our giving today. I don’t know about you, but when I read this chapter, I don’t see anything about 10%, do you? I don’t see it, but I do see a bunch of people making some rather large free-will offerings under no obligation whatsoever. I believe it was C.S. Lewis who said, “I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare.” I believe that is an accurate statement! These people in 1 Chronicles 29 came to God with their hands full. They gave generously.

III. As we move on in this chapter, there is a brief but important lesson in verse 8, where we find that David and the others GAVE WITH CONFIDENCE, knowing that their contribution was handled properly.

In verse 8, we are even given the man’s name, Jehiel the Gershonite, a man I would describe as the “Harold Hann” of King David’s administration. As I see it, it is significant that this man is called out by name. These donations totaling in the billions of dollars were not tucked away in some secret account somewhere, but they were handled with the utmost of care and respect. Everything was above board, so to speak. I have been at congregations where deposits were only made once every two or three months. In between deposits (we discovered later), the cash and checks were stashed away in the church treasurer’s desk at home. Nobody had any idea where there money was. Some of the senior saints were starting to get on me – wondering why they couldn’t balance their checkbooks going back several months. I am so glad we do not have that problem here. Deposits are made immediately, bills are paid on time, and every month we get a printout of the check register from the previous month – just a simple list of deposits and checks. In the church where I grew up, the treasurer for a while was just a genius with numbers (very successful in the business world), but nobody could figure out the monthly financial reports. Those reports were eight pages long! We are blessed here with a treasurer who gets the job done, honestly and openly, in a way that all of us can understand.

To me, it is interesting that even the apostle Paul took some amazing precautions concerning how the various financial gifts were handled. Over in 2 Corinthians 8:20-22, Paul spoke of a very well-known brother who was appointed not by Paul but by the churches who were making the contributions. Paul explained that the contribution was being sent with multiple men *“...taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and*

found diligent in many things....” In other words, it wasn’t enough that Paul trusted the couriers, and it wasn’t enough that the contributing churches trusted the couriers, but the whole process also had to look good in the eyes of the world. In the same way, the administrator of the temple funds was named – King David and the others could give with confidence, knowing that their gifts were being handled properly.

- IV. There is another even more important lesson down in verse 9 as we find (on top of all that we have already learned) that **THE PEOPLE GAVE JOYFULLY.**

“Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they had made their offering to the Lord with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly.” As the Lord Jesus once said, ***“It is more blessed to give than to receive”*** (Acts 20:35). Or, more literally, ***“It is happier to give than to receive.”*** In my own life, some of the happiest people I know are also some of the most generous people I know. Some of the stingiest people I know are also some of the most grouchy people I know. It is truly ***“happier to give than to receive.”*** And then as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:7, ***“Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*** In Greek, that word ***“cheerful”*** is the basis for our English word “hilarious.” God loves a hilarious giver! For thousands of years, God’s people have loved giving. For thousands of years, giving has made God’s people happy. I know in our worship services today, the actual taking up of the collection is not a very exciting part of the service for many people – I mean, it’s four guys walking around with baskets, and yet for many people it is truly a highlight. The weekly collection is where we finally get to put our money where our mouth is. Through the collection, we willingly and cheerfully give back to God just a small part of what He has given to us.

- V. As we continue, we also find that **THE PEOPLE GAVE WITH THE DEEPEST OF HUMILITY,** knowing that God already owns everything that we have (verses 10-19).

Starting in verse 10, David leads the entire nation in prayer, praising God. In verse 10, ***“Both riches and honor come from You.”*** In verse 14, ***“But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from you, and from Your hand we have given You.”*** In verse 15, David describes the Israelites as ***“tenants,”*** God is the landlord. In verse 16, God provided the abundance, ***“...it is from Your hand, and all is Yours.”*** In other words, King David did not have the idea that they were doing God a favor by giving, but he had the very clear understanding that everything was already God’s to begin with.

We remember the danger Moses addressed in Deuteronomy 8:17-18, as the people were getting ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses told them to be extremely careful concerning their attitude. He said, ***“Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth....”*** I know in our culture today, we tend to look down on those who are rich – in our view, if someone is rich, then he must have done something dishonest to get that way. But the Lord said back in Deuteronomy that He gave people ***“the power to make wealth.”*** With that wealth, though, comes responsibility, a responsibility to remember where that wealth came from. In this passage, then, King David keeps the focus on God. They gave with humility.

- VI. There is one final thing I’d like to point out in this passage, and that is: The people understood that **THEIR GIVING WAS AN ACT OF WORSHIP.**

In those last few verses, in response to what they had been able to do, the people blessed God, they bowed low, they did homage to the Lord, and on the next day they offered many sacrifices and then had a huge celebration – and remember: This was not because the temple had been complete, but rather, this is all

because they had the privilege of contributing toward it. Many of those assembled would not live to see the temple completed, and yet they were thrilled to be a part of it. So many times, we as a society pay homage to our blessings. As a society, we get up at 3 in the morning, we interrupt our regular schedule, and we stand in line for 6 hours, waiting for the release of the latest gadget. As a society, we bow down to our stuff. But the people assembled here with King David gave a part of their blessings back to God and worshiped God in the process.

Conclusion:

And with that, we come to the end of our series on the five acts of worship: the Lord's Supper, prayer, preaching, singing, and giving. As Christians, our worship is incredibly simple, and for each act, God is the focus. God is the reason why we come together on the first day of every week. I am so thankful for your kind attention over the past few weeks and also for the questions and requests that led to these lessons.

As our tradition is, we would like to invite everyone here to respond to the word of God in some way. For many of us, a proper response to a lesson of this nature would be to reconsider our giving – to rethink what we are doing in light of God's word. For those who have not yet obeyed the gospel, we would invite you to put on Christ in baptism. Once we make the decision to turn away from sin, we are then ready to confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and to then be buried with Him in baptism. If you have any questions, please let us know, but if there is something we can help you with right now, please let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com