

In Christ, Our Generosity Is Joyful!

A sermon based on 1 Chronicles 29:1-20

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

It was a building project of epic proportions. When David and his people had the opportunity to raise the money needed for building the temple, they didn't run from that opportunity. They welcomed it with joyful generosity. And we're not surprised. The end of 2 Samuel gives us 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 later becomes the site of the temple. When David asked to buy the piece of ground, Araunah offers to give it to him for free. But David says, **"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 dreamed about winning the lottery and thinking what you would do with all that money? I have, even though I don't buy tickets. In those fantasies, I dream about what fun it would be to start a new mission or start an endowment fund here for for Evergreen Lutheran High School or MLC or the Seminary. And those daydreams kind of make me feel good about myself. But is it joyful generosity if it isn't real, or if it costs us nothing?

When David made his gift for the building of God's temple, a temple he would never see but which his son would build, he gave three thousand talents of gold and ten thousand talents of silver. That was 110 tons of gold and 260 tons of silver...about five billion dollars. Some scholars say 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 **joyful generosity is gospel driven.**

You see what's in David's heart in his beautiful prayer. First, David acknowledges 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 110 tons of gold and 260 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 than building another palace, or a seaside resort, or a palace on top of a mountain.

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? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you."**

"Who am I?" David asks. Where would David be without the grace of God? In Bethlehem...just 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's 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 had not sent the prophet, Nathan, to bring him to repentance? Well, let David say it in his own words. Psalm 32:3-4: **"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer."** David would have lived his

life in dark despair, with no hope of heaven. He would have had nothing and he would have been nothing except for the grace of God in his life. He would have come to the end of his life and had no future in sight.

How about you? Think about this question: Where would you be without the grace of God in your life? The answer is you would be in the same place millions of people around you are in right now. You would 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 has given you a hope you never deserved. David had it all, didn't he? Don't you have it all as well? Jesus once said to his disciples, **"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom"** (Luke 12:32). He has made you to be kings and priests in his kingdom. He has taken away your guilt and your despair. He gives you the joy of being God's children. He has redeemed you and made you his own. There is nothing he withholds from you. He has even filled your purses with gold and silver and says, "Here, go out and have some fun."

Do you know what Jesus says after he tells you not to be afraid because he has 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 the food pantry than it is to buy a new dress. 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? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand."**

Joyful generosity is a response to God's generosity of grace, and it 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 says, **"I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. 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."** Notice David doesn'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 thanks God for that and prays that God would always keep this desire in their hearts.

Many years later, Jesus would worship in the temple 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 was not an ounce of integrity in his heart and his "generosity" was not 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 would 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 have 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 only do I seek: that I may dwell 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 was not going to get anything out of the gift he gave to the Lord, then what was he giving it for? David was providing for the future of his church. David knew 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 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 this why you give to the Lord’s work as well? You see a purpose for your life and the wealth God has given you that far surpasses self-gratification. Your gifts to our congregation have a kingdom focus. Your gifts support pastors who visit people when they are dying and comfort them with the gospel. Your gifts support the outreach to our community. Your gifts support our [Sunday] school, where children are learning about Jesus and studying his Word so they can be strong in their faith. You support the 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? I want to tell you a story about an elderly woman who lived in the nursing home for many years. Her name was Marilyn. The sale of her family farm had supported her, but eventually even that money ran out. Then one day her church received a check for \$500 from her lawyer on her behalf. He explained in the letter this was the last gift the church would receive from her. He also said, “If you talk to her about this, she may not know I’ve done this, but I know how important her church is to her and she would want her church to receive the last of her estate.” Even her lawyer knew her priorities and how much fun Marilyn found in giving to the Lord!

Joyful generosity is gospel driven. It responds to the generosity of God’s grace and it prioritizes God’s kingdom. Givers, we pray God would always give us such a heart! Amen.