

## **Sermon Reading:1 Chronicles 29:10-20**

*David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,*

*“Praise be to you, LORD,  
the God of our father Israel,  
from everlasting to everlasting.*

<sup>11</sup> *Yours, 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, LORD, is the kingdom;  
you are exalted as head over all.*

<sup>12</sup> *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.*

<sup>13</sup> *Now, our God, we give you thanks,  
and praise your glorious name.*

<sup>14</sup> *“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. <sup>15</sup> We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. <sup>16</sup> LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. <sup>17</sup> I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. <sup>18</sup> LORD, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. <sup>19</sup> And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided.”*

<sup>20</sup> *Then David said to the whole assembly, “Praise the LORD your God.” So they all praised the LORD, the God of their fathers; they bowed down, prostrating themselves before the LORD and the king.*

## **Sermon Theme: Joyful and Generous**

There's more to using our gifts as God desires than throwing some money into the offering plate or signing your name on a volunteer sheet. There's more to it than deciding one day that you are going to change. Because there is more to it, I pray you haven't decided to tune out for the next 15-20 minutes because you don't want to hear about this stewardship business. How we give, how we use our gifts, is not only a reflection of what God has

done to us and in us, it can also be a reflection of how we view ourselves. We've seen and wrestled with this struggle that if I'm convinced—or at least not sure—that God has or will give me enough, it will affect how I use those gifts. I may be reluctant to give because what if *this* happens... I might become worried and overly anxious about these physical things, try to find comfort and peace in the material things while not trusting in God's promises. I may become jealous of others and what they have and what they can do. Trusting God's promises that he has already provided abundantly for me right now in this moment of my life, we will give joyfully, willingly, and generously what I've chosen in my heart to give.

King David had wanted to build a house for God. David had already built himself a great beautiful palace and now David wants to build something for the Lord. At that time in history God's house was still the tabernacle; a beautiful, great work of art that God had told his people to make back when they were in desert before entering the Promised Land. But still it's a tent. This isn't sitting well with David who wants to praise and thank God for all that God had done for him and for the people of Israel with building a beautiful temple. And God tells David, no. It wasn't going to be David who would build this but his son Solomon.

David knows he's not going to be seeing this temple. He knows that he's not going to get any use out of it himself. This temple wasn't going to be serving him in any way. And still, he lays the groundwork for the future building project. This structure would not be "just good-enough" so that it would get by and serve the purpose. When David made his gift for the building of God's temple, he gave three thousand talents of gold and ten thousand talents of silver. That was 110 tons of gold and 260 tons of silver. That was about five billion dollars today. As a point of reference, one of the newer football stadiums built, the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, costed just \$1.2 billion dollars. Some scholars say that David gave his entire personal treasury for the future building of the temple.

This easily could have been a point of pride for David. No one would have blamed him if he asked for just a hallway to be named after him. But instead, he asks an interesting question in verse 14: **"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."** Who was David? Well he was a king. But by asking this question we see David recognizes that without the Lord he would still be just a shepherd taking care of the sheep. He was obviously quite wealthy. But without the Lord David would have had little claim to anything significant as the youngest of seven sons. David was quite the successful general extending the boundaries of Israel, defeating the enemies of God's people time and again. But David knows that it wasn't by the strength of his own hands that he could defeat them. You can read in a number of the Psalms David confesses that his enemies surrounded him night and day and his only hope was in the Lord. Who

was David? He was a great king and loved by his people. He was also a great sinner. Some of the things we read him do are quite cringe-worthy. And David knows it. He confesses in Psalm 51, **“I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you [Lord], you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...Surely I was sinful from birth sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”** David knows how without the Lord he would still be in that sin. He admits in our reading v. 15, **“Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.”**

“Who am I?” It’s a question we can ask ourselves. It can be a point of pride that I got to where I am today because of my hard work, my dedication, my determination and perseverance, what I accomplished and what I did for me. The lie of the devil is a lie we hear all around us: if you want to get anywhere, it’s up to you and what you do for yourself. And when we fall into sin and listen to those lies we may start to believe: my things are mine and serve me and me first. It’s my money. I worked hard for it. I put in the time and I effort. I should hold onto it. It’s my precious.

We then glorify “self” and what we have done. We blow up that pride like an over-inflated balloon while conveniently forgetting or ignoring whatever might make us look bad. Who am I? Answer that question not by looking into the smoky, lying mirrors of the world around us, your own conscience, or gut-feeling. Who am I according to God’s Word? As David recognizes, confess with me: I know my sins and they are ever before me. Surely I have sinned against not just my neighbor and loved ones, but far worse against God in thought, word and action. The sharp stab of God’s Law deflates that overly-inflated pride and shows that without God I have nothing and really am nothing. For in sin, we are already dead. Your days on earth are like a shadow; they are here one moment and the next...gone. Without God our days have little to no purpose or meaning. Psalm 90 say, **“The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away”** (v. 10).

Who am I? Who are you? Again, look in God’s Word. The Lord has the greatness, power, glory, majesty, and splendor, owns everything in heaven and on earth, has the wealth and the riches, possesses the strength and the power. And out of all the people who have lived or will live, that same God chose you to be his own. God makes you special and something important. God gave his Son for you so that through him and by him you have meaning and purpose. He takes you who were dead in your sin, hopeless and helpless, and makes you alive in Jesus. God gives you a certain hope because of Jesus’ death and rising from the grave forgiveness is yours and where sins are forgiven, there is life and salvation. And from him, God gives you all that you have in life. Everything that is yours and that you are comes from the Father’s merciful hand that opens and satisfies the desire of every living thing. As David said, we are but strangers and foreigners in this world. We spend a short time traveling through this earth like a shadow while looking ahead to our home in heaven.

David sees what God has done for him. He recognizes the complete and total depravity of his sin. He is well aware of what his sins should do to him. David knows that he deserves nothing and that anything he does—even his stewardship and the giving of this offering—comes from someone else. He's not giving to God; he's giving from what God already had given him. And David rejoices. He praises the one who gives him every good thing. David writes in Psalm 32, he is blessed because the Lord does not count his sin against him. His sins are covered with the perfection of Christ. The debt of his sin has been forgiven. He is filled with joy and David sees that his God gives him the opportunity to be part of something huge. And being filled with joy, David gives.

David says in v.17: **“I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent.”** David knows his heart and that God sees clearly what is in his heart. No one forced David to give as he did. He's not giving unwillingly or reluctantly. There are no ulterior motives or hidden agendas with strings attached. He gives joyfully and willingly.

Can you say the same about your offerings and service you give? Another way to ask yourself is, “Why do I give? What is my attitude?” Is your service and offerings given joyfully or does it feel like you are losing out on something or giving it up so it's done reluctantly or out of a feeling of obligation? Do you give because you feel that in some way you are making up for a sinful life in the past, a sinful attitude, lost time? Is it because you think that for some reason God needs your money for his house to be built up and the doors to stay open? Do you fall into this way of thinking that you, your offering, your time, your efforts are more important, more needed than someone else? Or, do you have feeling that it is someone else's responsibility to serve and support the church with their time, with their talents, with their money? Do you feel there are others who can give more, so you leave it to them?

That sinful pride is an interesting beast. On the one side, it can convince you that your stuff isn't important or great enough, so you shouldn't give or be expected to. On the other, it can convince you that you are too important, so you are frustrated with how things are done. That sinful pride ignores the seriousness of sin and the sinful attitude in service to God, while, at the same time, idolizes what you have accomplished or haven't done.

Remember God doesn't need your money. He doesn't need your help. He's not a beggar on the street corner asking for your spare change so that His church can survive. Too easily do we seem to put God in a box thinking that he is unable to do what he needs to so that his will is done and his promises fulfilled.

If you had tuned out, tune back in. Because here is where we see God's grace. He doesn't need you. He chooses you. That's why he sent you Jesus who forgives you all your sin, including that sinful, selfish pride. He doesn't need your help. He gives you the

opportunity to do so. He doesn't need any favors from you. But he gives you meaning and purpose to serve him and one another. He doesn't need your money. He gives you gifts to possess and the freedom to choose what you will give. See how quickly a child's spirit is crushed when you tell them you don't want them to help. God doesn't do that to you his child made alive in baptism. God loves you so much that he saved you. He loved you so much that he makes you part of something greater and bigger than you; that is, the work of saving souls. God works through you so that this Good News that Jesus saves sinners is spread.

For the joy set before him Jesus went to the cross to save you (Hebrews 12:2). For the joy of making you his child God willing gave you his Son. And so we joyfully, willingly, and generously give from what God has given to us. Giving generously isn't a set dollar amount, number of minutes of service. It's the attitude and purposes of the heart. Therefore, we can give different amounts that we have chosen in our hearts to give because he has blessed each of us differently. And when those gifts are given cheerfully and willingly, God declares them generous, accepts them, and blesses you even more.

I thank God for you. I praise and thank God as I see Him working through you in so many different ways to carry out this important work. Too easily do we focus on the negative and how we come up short in one way or another; instead, focus on God's promises and his blessings. Rejoice in how he has worked in you and through you to give and support the work of his church. I am confident that he will continue to bless us because he promised he will. I have seen how willingly you have given to the Lord and my prayer is David's prayer: "Lord, keep these willing and joyful thoughts and desires in the hearts of your people forever, and Lord keep our hearts loyal to you." Amen.