

10.27.24 ~ Pentecost 23
“Beautiful (Not Dutiful) Giving”
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

1 Chronicles 29:1-9 NIV

¹ Then King David said to the whole assembly: “My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God. ² With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities. ³ Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: ⁴ three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, ⁵ for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves to the Lord today?”

⁶ Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king’s work gave willingly. ⁷ They gave toward the work on the temple of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron.

⁸ Anyone who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the Lord in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹ The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

Leader: God Inspired these Words of Generosity!

All: Thanks be to God!

1 Timothy 6:6-19 NIV

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Final Charge to Timothy

¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which God will bring about in his own time—

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Leader: These Are Instructional Words of Stewardship.

All: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Merciful and loving God, we thank you for reminding us that we have all that we need because of you. Your generosity and creative nature overflow in our own lives. We love because you first loved us, and we give because you first gave all to us. May we model David's example of stewardship to honor and please you. Help us to share your love, beauty, and provision to meet the needs of others. As your kingdom co-laborers, we seek your guidance and abundance so that this church can serve in your name. Speak to us as we refuel for the coming weeks. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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As of today, there are only **8 days** left until the Presidential Election, so if you haven't already voted, please plan to do so. Every vote is important, just as every person and contribution to our church is important! After this challenging week for our church family, it seemed odd at first to preach about stewardship; yet after prayer and contemplation, the Holy Spirit and I concluded that it is still the perfect time and season to learn what God says about it. Even the recent losses and a congregant's surgery are good examples of God's excellent stewards in the faith and from our church.

Pondering these events reminded me that we **must** be good stewards not just of our financial resources, but also of our bodies, our health, time, relationships, work, intellect, emotions, and of our whole lives. King David had already chosen his legacy for God—his son, Solomon, and to build the new temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. Remember, the

temple was destroyed in battle, yet God promised, in response to Solomon's dedication prayer, forgiveness and healing to the distressed people if they sought him out—good advice for us too. Building the temple was for God though, not themselves, despite the beauty they would enjoy after. In the passage today, David asked for big financial and spiritual commitments. Why are we so hesitant or afraid to ask for big commitments to the church? Mostly it's because we have all seen the charlatans and posers on TV evangelism shows who dramatize and embellish their great acts of mercy and healing to motivate people to give their last little bits of income. It offends us because we see their million-dollar airplanes and extravagant lifestyles; some are so tempted by fame and fortune that they fall into other sinful behaviors. We justify ourselves by not trusting anyone with our money, not even God! *[At least, that was my story many decades ago as I witnessed hypocrisy.]*

Others choose not to attend church or not to tithe as a result of church trauma in their past—either from abuse or from weekly guilt messages to give more money or they would perish in Hades. If these “dones” do ever return to church life, they give out of duty and a guilty conscience of obligation, not out of love, trust, or mercy. We should be giving what we **can** give out of joy! We should be teaching our congregants and children to give to the church so that it can continue to serve those in need; some people wake up every day unsure of their own or their family's survival. They cannot see the beauty of the world if their children are hungry, or their living situations are crowded, broken down, drab, or non-existent. Yes, you may argue that through Christ, we can see

beauty and hope in all circumstances, but have you ever felt that fear that comes with losing a job? A car, a home, your family?

We, on the other hand, are so blessed with heat on a cold morning, a bathroom, kitchen, a warm bed, transportation, a beautiful place to meet to worship God, good friends, a meal after church, good health to celebrate, books to read, a personal Bible, and gorgeous music to lift us up out of our sadness. David teaches utter dependence on God; we must learn this sometimes the hard way. We also give in recognition of God's creative beauty in the world, acknowledging all we do is from and for God's glory. Our willingness to give makes our offerings pleasing to God. His pleasure in this area brings us contentment as well.

My life changed when I stopped giving a tithe "just because I was supposed to" and started giving my envelope contribution to honor God and how he had transformed my life. I prayed about it as I studied the Bible to learn more about God's instruction in this challenging area of balancing what we need or have with trusting God to provide for us in both the big things and little things. When I looked back over my lifetime, instead of poverty or struggle, the Holy Spirit helped me see many times that God blessed our family and even just myself when I couldn't make the mortgage payment one month. A housesitting opportunity appeared out of nowhere! They gave me money when I would have even done it for free! It was **just enough**. I also remember my mom writing a check for \$5.00 to a dress store where she owed a lot of money for new Easter outfits; I was embarrassed to take it to them because it probably cost \$10.00 to process, but they were kind people and allowed her the dignity of credit. Many of you have shared testimonies of "just-in-time" blessings

that had to come from God's intervention. Why aren't we speaking of those? Why don't we share more about how God provides what we need? I see it with our food giveaways. It's amazing how the volunteers and the food are just enough for each time, so please continue to pray and give if you can to this mission.

We may not relate well to the number of tons of building materials that David writes about in today's passage, but we can relate to the concept of giving more than you have. David's own example of giving \$60 million of precious stones set the expectation for his leaders to give more toward the temple. The principle is that if we give for the right reasons, God will increase our resources. That is true for the church as well as home budgets.

Today, the Church Council, and next week, the Church Membership will be looking at the United Baptist 2025 proposed budget plan, and we need your prayers and participation to surround it. We are a responsible leadership team with vision to grow this church body and how we serve our local community, bringing Jesus to them. Pastor Ed asked me if I knew where to get Spanish New Testaments, and I said of course! The ones we already gave away came from the Gideons who happen to meet in our building every Saturday morning at 7 am! They have been with us for years and again the community needs what they have to give, because we were listening! I will speak with them this week to get those Bibles. By giving more of ourselves (not just money!) to this Food Mission, God is helping us intersect with a group of people hungry not just for food but for Jesus! They are asking! **This is God's power and glory in action!**

Generosity is a spiritual gift that I realize not everyone has. The apostle Paul in our second passage is teaching Timothy and the church not to be tempted into greed or obsession with money. All he needs is daily food and clothing. This is important news for today's world because our culture is similar to Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. The rich and even the leaders in Timothy's churches were being warned against the pride that comes from wealth. What about us? Do we really need 24 rolls of paper towels or toilet paper this month? Do we have a need for 4 cars, a 10-bedroom home, or two homes with overflowing closets? Why are there so many storage places? Walter Brueggemann, a well-known theologian, and writer uses the term "morbid craving" to describe what we feel we must have, even though we bring nothing into the world, and can take nothing out of it. Acquiring stuff is a human habit that is really an illusion of satisfaction. The body can only consume so much food; Jesus' lifestyle of simplicity and humility should be our example. Paul warned Timothy to be content with the basics of life--food, water, and shelter. "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness," as you "fight the good fight of faith." That is our calling and our stewardship. Will you give out of beauty or duty? Love's rewards are eternal. Amen. ||

Let us pray. Creator God, we thank you today for these reminders that we give and serve only through your mercy and love. Please help us to be generous givers to your kingdom of our time, talents, and resources. Encourage us through these Scriptures to trust you in our ministries and find the beauty in generosity as we give and serve in community together. It is in Jesus' name, we pray, **Amen.**