Eager to Give

Fourth in the series, “Eager to Do What is Good”

# Scripture: 1 Chronicles 29:1-22

# Key Thought: When we discover the joy of giving, we are eager to give.

# Intro:

One time I heard that there are three kinds of givers. The first kind are like flint. When you ask for money all you get are noise and sparks. The second kind are like a sponge, the more you squeeze, the more you get. The third kind are like a honeycomb, the sweetness just naturally comes out.

For those of you who are new to Copper Hill, you can breathe a sigh of relief. Giving is different here. We don’t take pledges or come looking for money. But we do talk about giving since Jesus talked about it and we figure, as followers of Jesus, if he talked about it, then we should too.

Today, in our “eager-to-do-what-is-good” series, our subject is joyful giving. The honeycomb could make a pretty good illustration for us of the natural way that good deeds, including giving should flow from our lives. When we discover the joy of giving, we are eager to give.

# The joy of giving arises from thankfulness and generosity leads to thanksgiving as well

## David’s offering

The first principle that we need to discover from the experience of David as he collected gifts for the temple is this. Generosity and thankfulness are closely related. The more thankful we are, the more generous we are. When we are aware of all that God has done for us, we are more than glad to return back to him a generous part of what he is given to us. If we are falsely thinking that our own good luck and hard work are alone responsible for our material blessings, then we are likely not as generous, allowing that others should go out and earn their own too.

There is a second thanksgiving connection. When we are generous, we cause Thanksgiving to happen among those who benefit from our gifts. David introduced the offering for the temple project with a sense of Thanksgiving for how God had prospered his house.

“Yet the Lord, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever. He chose Judah as leader, and from the tribe of Judah he chose my family, and from my father’s sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel. Of all my sons—and the Lord has given me many—he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. 1 Chron 28:4, 5

Then after David had collected the offering, there is even greater Thanksgiving, both by David and by the people of Israel. In this Thanksgiving David again recognizes the ultimate source of all their gifts. Everything they have given back to God came originally as a gift from God. So in their Thanksgiving, they are thankful for the ability to give.

Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

 “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. 1 Chron 29:13, 14

Notice also the close interrelationship between giving and Thanksgiving. What a model for us. When we are thankful to God for all we have, then we are eager to give back to God as he asks us to do. Giving comes naturally.

## Paul’s teaching

Think about what Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. Paul starts by reminding the people that their giving will cause others to give thanks for their generosity. Then he ends up by reminding the Corinthian church that all of our giving arises out of Thanksgiving for the generosity of our God in sending us our Lord Jesus Christ the greatest gift of all.

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! 2 Cor 9:12-15

Again we see the double connection between giving and thankfulness. Thankfulness makes us eager to give and generous giving produces thanksgiving in others.

# Walking with God results in joyful giving.

The second principle we learn from David and the Israelites at the time that they prepared for the building of the temple is that joyful obedience and giving are related. Consider this passage from the Psalms.

I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.
 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.
I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. Ps 119:14-16

Notice that obedience to God’s word brings joy. David the king, felt led to set aside materials and funds for the building of the temple for God. But he also had been specifically guided by God that he was not the one to oversee the building. His son Solomon was to oversee the building. So David began collecting materials and gifts that his son Solomon could use. The people entered into David’s vision joyfully. Then, in turn, their willing participation and obedience brought joy to David as we read in first Chronicles.

And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. 1 Chron. 29:17

I think we can illustrate it like this. Think of the relationship between a parent and a child. When obedience is dominating the relationship, there is a sweet open spirit in the relationship and the child easily gives help to the parent and the parent rejoices in helping the child. But when disobedience is dominating the relationship then there are lots of barriers up. Any help that is given by the child to the parent is probably given grudgingly. And even the parents’ help for the child does not come quite as easily as it normally would. What makes the difference? A relationship characterized by obedience produces a climate were giving is a joy.

So in Scripture, we as followers of Christ are instructed to be generous (Deut 15:8-14; Prov. 11:25; 22:9; 1 Tim. 6:18)). When our relationship with God is good, we resonate with his command to be generous. But when we are in rebellion against him, we tend to also be more self-focused and less likely to give. When we are walking with God daily with a prayer time and devotional time, and God impresses upon us to give something or some funds to a certain cause or to a person we know, we will do so with joy, As the Bible says,

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Cor 9:7

People have been used of God in unusual ways because they gave as God asked. I read one story in this series about a lady who felt strongly led to give her friend a pile of small bills and change she had been collecting but she was so afraid that her friend would feel insulted that she was giving to her at all that she practically threw the gift in the car window at the last minute and left, unaware that her gift was a total answer to prayer, down to the penny—talk about a God thing.

Here is another such true story. Listening for God by Marilyn Hontz p. 124, Pumpkin Bread. When we get the nudge from God, whether it is about our giving to our church or about helping a neighbor, walking in obedience will bring joy and make us eager to do what is good the next time too.

# We give because we want to be part of God’s work.

The third dynamic I notice in First Chronicles is the dynamic of participation. When we know that we are participating in something bigger than ourselves, when we know that our gifts are part of a great project, it becomes a joy and a pleasure to participate. We feel honored, fulfilled and even privileged to be able to be a part of what is happening. This is exactly how the people of Israel felt as they were giving their gifts for the building of the temple. King David led the giving himself by example, the leaders of the people followed with their example and then the people of Israel gave joyfully also.

I can sense your joy here at Copper Hill United Methodist Church in being able to participate in what God is doing through our church family in the renewal of our church. Many of you have contributed financial to various projects such as the new sound and video system and the rug fund. God has been helping us to do our part in making physical improvements, and in increasing the ministries of our church. Others have been volunteering in new ministries and more familiar ones. All this requires good deeds of various kinds by all of us according to the gifting’s that God has given us. One of the gifts that God is given to all of us is the ability to give our finances. Some of us can give a little, and some of us can give a lot. Most of us can probably give a little more than we currently are, because we are in the process of learning to give, and learning to be generous. But it is crucial that we look at our gifts of time and talent and money not just as doing our duty, but as much more than that. They are a participation in the great work of God. We are doing our part to complete the work of Christ which is signed to his followers in the upper room.

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” John 20:21-22

The great work of God in this world called the church is enabled by your help and mine.

## An example from our church

As a church, we make a practice of regularly giving a portion of our offerings to the work of missions, over and above the portions that we are allotted for sending to the United Methodist Church. Our missions committee recommends the charities and missions projects locally, in our area in our country and around the world that will receive our gifts. You have heard some of the thank you notes that we regularly receive back.

Here’s one we received just a few months ago from Heifer international, an organization that helps develop agriculture in poor countries. (read note.)

Right now we are looking for a third volunteer, someone from the parent generation, (we have two volunteers already from the grandparent generation) to serve on this committee. (Likely one phone conference call per qtr. plus a little time getting to know some charities.)

# God’s blessing on our giving motivates us to continue to give.

## Not prosperity gospel

The last dynamic that I want to touch upon briefly is the blessing of God upon our giving. Now this is always a touchy point. The reason is that so many preachers in today’s world preach what is called a prosperity gospel. What they preach sounds like God wants to make you rich, and the more you give to him the richer he will make you. That kind of theology is so crass and even deceptive.

However, there is a grain of truth behind such teaching. That is how it got started. It is a distortion of a genuine emphasis of Scripture.

## But God blesses generosity

Consider for example this proverb.

A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.
Prov. 11:25

Notice pointedly that the proverb does not promise that the refreshment will be of the same kind as the gift. Frequently it is not. Yet the proverb does imply directly that God intends to bless those who are generous.

Consider another passage.

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.
2 Cor 9:10

This passage was written in the context of Paul’s discussion with the Corinthian church concerning giving an offering for the poor church in Jerusalem. Paul’s discussion makes clear that God intends to reward generosity with a continuing supply in order to enable more generosity. God’s not necessarily planning to make you rich, but he does want to help you be able to keep giving to others.

In the Old Testament, there was a special promise of blessing that went with the giving of the tithe.

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. Mal 3:10

The more general and more accurate way to express the Biblical principle is that God blesses generosity, understanding that God’s blessing can be of many different kinds. Usually his blessing does include financial well-being, but the blessing of God is thankfully a much broader concept that simply what humans call wealth.

When we experience the blessing of God upon our generosity, however that blessing comes, it encourages us to continue to do good with the funds that God places in our hands.

# Conclusion

I close with a second giving story from Marilyn Hontz

Listening for God p. 125 Whispers from God in Aisle Two.