

Preacher: Pastor Twyla

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 29:10-16, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

1 Chronicles 29:10-16 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV): David's Praise to God: 10 Then David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly; David said: "Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. 11 Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. 12 Riches and honor come from you, and you rule overall. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. 13 And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

14 "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. 15 For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; 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 for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV): 6 The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. 9 As it is written,

*"He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever."*

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; 12 for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. 13 Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

When our oldest son was about three years old, the most important thing on his Christmas list was the game *Hungry, Hungry Hippos*. Every time a commercial for the game came on television, he got very excited. In case you don't know about this game, it involves four mechanical, colorful, plastic hippopotamuses operated by levers on their backs. When the lever is pressed, the hippo opens its mouth and extends its head forward on a telescopic neck. When the lever is released, the head comes down and retracts. White marbles are dispensed into the board by each player, and the players repeatedly press the lever on their hippo in order to have it "eat" the marbles, which travel down from under the hippo into a small scoring area for each player. Once all marbles have been captured, the player who has collected the most is the winner. It's noisy and entertaining.

Anyhow, as is the case with most parents, I wanted to get that all important item on my beloved child's wish list, so I got it for Nick. I could not wait until he would open it on

Christmas morning. My excitement intensified as he picked up the gift and began unwrapping it. I'll never forget how he shook with delight when he realized what was in the package. We had to play the game immediately. It was tough to get him to open the rest of his presents. The joy I felt was overflowing.

As I reflect on the benefits of having given him that gift, I feel satisfaction and delight that giving Nick the game made him incredibly happy. I also remember that the game provided many hours of entertainment for him; and, because I played it many, many, many times with him it afforded a way for Nick and me to enjoy one another, strengthening our bond with each other.

Have you ever experienced the joy of giving something to someone? I imagine you have. It feels good, doesn't it, just knowing you made someone happy. Or maybe your gift fulfilled a need, leaving you with a feeling of satisfaction just knowing you were able to help someone. Let me ask you this now. Do you find joy in giving to the church?

I've been reading through the Bible using a One Year Daily bible reading. I was working my way through Chronicles. I was fascinated by the story of the building of the temple. If you were here last week, you may remember my sharing that Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, and it cost a lot to build. Solomon's father, King David, wanted to build the temple, but God would not allow him to build it because he had too much blood on his hands from fighting battles and killing many men.

But David was able to prepare for the time when Solomon would build the temple. David gathered supplies for the building. We read in the verses, prior to what was read for us this morning, about the many who gave to make it possible to build the temple, beginning with David. I'm not going to read it for you, but in verses 1-5 you can read what David gave. David said he did this "because of my devotion to the temple of my God."

Then in at the end of verse 5, David asked, "Who then will offer willingly, consecrating themselves today to the Lord?" Beginning with verse 6 we read how the people responded: "Then the leaders of ancestral houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, and the officers over the king's work. 7 They gave for the service of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. 8 Whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. 9 Then the people rejoiced because these had given willingly, for with single mind they had offered freely to the Lord; King David also rejoiced greatly."

Then we read these wonderful words of praise shared by David, recognizing the greatness of God, and acknowledging that everything, all that he had been given came from God; and it brought him great joy to give and to see others give for building a wonderful house for his God. Didn't you just hear the passion in his words. Listen again as I read what he said from Petersen's, *The Message*, including verse 17:

"But me—who am I, and who are these my people, that we should presume to be giving something to you? Everything comes from you; all we're doing is giving back what we've been given from your generous hand. As far as you're concerned, we're homeless, shiftless wanderers like our ancestors, our lives mere shadows, hardly anything to us. God, our God, all these materials—these piles of stuff for building a house of worship for you, honoring your Holy Name—it all came from you! It was all yours in the first place!

"I know, dear God, that you care nothing for the surface—you want us, our true selves—and so I have given from the heart, honestly and happily. And now see all these people doing the

same, giving freely, willingly—what a joy!” What a joy it was to give, David said. Why? Because ultimately, he was passionate about worshipping God.

Let’s take a moment now to look at the 2 Corinthians text that John read for us this morning. Paul acknowledges here that some people hesitate to give generously because they may not have enough money left over to meet their own needs. Paul assures them that God will help them meet their needs. The main point in this text, however, has more to do with the attitude of the one giving. The person who can give only a small amount should not be embarrassed. God is concerned about how a person gives from his or her resources. Paul said, “God loves a cheerful giver.”

We are reminded in this text again that God gives us all that we have and provides what we need, so when we give, we are blessing God, showing our appreciation for all that God has done for us. But Paul also points out that giving generously makes it possible to serve others for the glory of God. So, I hear this saying that a cheerful giver is passionate about doing the Lord’s work.

The joy of giving then is a chosen attitude building on those things we are passionate about which, for followers of Christ, are passions for worshipping God, passions for doing the Lord’s work. What are your passions?

It’s interesting that when it comes to discussing money, our giving, our stewardship in the church, many of us squirm in our seats. But we may think nothing of discussing purchases we make, some needed perhaps, and others we made just for fun. We may not even think twice about purchasing something with our credit cards, pledging the to make payments for the next several months, or even years; but we get uncomfortable when the church asks us to make a pledge, even though we know we will never receive a bill which includes interest or may include late charges should we miss a payment. Don’t you find that to be a curious thing?

However, if we are passionate about our relationship with God, for worshipping God, for serving God, for fulfilling the vision God has for us, shouldn’t we feel less uncomfortable when asked to consider what we will give, to make a pledge.

In the short time that I have been with you, I see so many good things happening here, compassion for one another, outreach, service, wonderful worship, and I see the potential for more to happen. I’m still trying to get a handle on your vision. Maybe you are feeling that way too, but you are on the move, growing into that which God is calling you to be and do. Do you care about that? Are you passionate about following where God will lead you? You should be. This is a time of opportunity. This is a time for building energy and excitement, for moving into the future God has for you?

This is a time when you are asked to give joyfully, to joyfully make a pledge that you can drop in the offering plate or send back to the church, because you are passionate about following Jesus with your brothers and sisters here at Hagerstown, passionate about being a beacon that points others to Jesus, passionate about embarking on this new exciting journey to fulfill God’s vision for us.

A rich businessman and a prominent attorney were traveling around the world. They saw many impressive sights but agreed that something they saw in Korea was most impressive of all.

One morning as they walked along a country road in Korea, they saw a boy pulling a plow which was steered by an old man. It amused the attorney so much that he insisted on taking a picture of the scene with his little pocket camera. Later he showed the picture to a missionary in the next village, remarking about the peculiar spectacle.

"Yes," said the missionary, "it seems a very strange way to plow a field, but I happen to know the boy and old man well. They are very poor. However, when the little church was built here in the village, they wanted to contribute something. They had no money. They had not grain to spare and winter was coming on, so they sold their ox and gave the money to the church building fund, and now, minus the valuable animal, they have to pull the plow themselves."

The men looked at each other for a moment and then the attorney said, "But what a stupendous sacrifice! Why did you allow it?"

"They did not feel that way about it. They regarded it as a great joy that they had an ox to give to the Lord's work."