

# 1 Chronicles 29:1-20

Joyful Generosity #4, October 22, 2017

Theme: Joyful and Generous

INJ Building projects are an exciting time for a congregation. Do you remember when this church was built? That was 42 years ago. Or when the school was built? That was 27 years ago. Those were times of growth and expansion and confidence in God's working among our little group.

David was embarking on a building project for the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. The words of our lesson show us an example of Joyful Generosity. As we see David and his people be joyful and generous, may God give us a similar attitude of thanks for his undeserved love.

King David was not a perfect person. His sins are memorable. Here is one you may not have known: when David was near the end of his reign he did a foolish, sinful thing. God sent a plague among the people. David built an altar and offered a sacrifice to the LORD. The substitution of the animal sacrifice satisfied God's anger and ended the plague of death.

David made his sacrifice on the threshing floor of a man named Araunah. That piece of ground would later become the site of the temple. When David asked to buy the property, Araunah offered to give it to him for free. But David said, "No, I insist on paying you. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." In other words, David said, "How is it a sacrifice if it doesn't cost me anything?" Where would be the Joyful Generosity in that?

It's easy to be generous when it doesn't cost us anything. Have you ever dreamed about winning the lottery and how generous you would be with all the money? I don't buy lottery tickets, but I have thought about it. In my fantasies, I dream about what fun it would be to pay off our debt, or to fund a new WELS mission or to give an endowment to St. Luke's or to MLS. Those daydreams might make me feel good, but is it Joyful Generosity if it isn't real? Is it Joyful Generosity if it costs me nothing?

Our sermon text comes when David was planning to build the temple on that land he had purchased. The people of God were excited. They didn't hope someone else would give to make things happen, but they welcomed the opportunity to give with Joyful Generosity.

It was generous! When David made his personal gift for the building of God's temple, he gave three thousand talents of gold and ten thousand talents of silver. That is 110 tons of gold and 260 tons of silver. That could

be about five billion dollars today! What made David so generous? This is an important point: Joyful Generosity is gospel driven.

The words of David's prayer reveal the motivation for his giving. First, David isn't giving something the Lord doesn't already own. David is only giving something back – giving thanks. God had made him king. God had made him wealthy. God gave him 110 tons of gold and 260 tons of silver. It was all the LORD's! David could have fun using it to God's glory.

Giving to the LORD was fun for David because David's heart was responding to God's undeserved love. "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? Remember what grace is? It is God's intervention, his undeserved action in Christ Jesus to save sinners. Without God's grace David would still be a shepherd tending the flocks, because the youngest son never really got to be his own boss. Where would David be without God's intervention? He would still be the adulterer who stole Bathsheba from his faithful soldier and the murderer who put him on the front lines to be killed.

God intervened, sending the prophet, Nathan, to bring him to repentance. David explains what it was like to despise God's grace in Psalm 32: "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away as I groaned all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me. My moisture was dried up by the droughts of summer." David would have remained in unbelief and sin, in dark despair with no hope of rescue. He would have had nothing and he would have been nothing. On his own, he would have had no present and no future. But God intervened by grace.

Where would you be without the grace of God? The answer is that you would be in the same place David was. Where millions of people around you are right now. You would be living your life in the darkness of unbelief and the despair of sin. You would be trying to be somebody by making a name for yourself. You would be checking Facebook constantly to see if someone likes you. You would be looking back on all the sins you've committed with no relief for a guilty conscience. You would 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 would be even more terrified.

There you would be – without God’s grace!

God intervened. He called you to faith in Jesus. It happened in baptism. God gave you a confidence you never deserved. His word strengthens and keeps you in his grace. You have it all in Christ Jesus. Your sins are forgiven. You have peace with God. You know you are loved and you know what your future holds. You even know what to do with all the stuff God entrusts to you. You want to give thanks to him with everything!

Jesus once said to his disciples, “ Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.” He has made you to be kings and priests in his kingdom. Jesus 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 that Jesus withholds from you. He has even filled your purses with gold and silver and invites you to have fun using it to God’s glory.

What does it look like to have fun with our Joyful Generosity? There are plenty of options: Regular offerings to support our congregation and the proclamation of the gospel in this place. It might be a gift to the pregnancy care center in Saginaw. Maybe one of our WELS missions grabs our attention and we want to give something directly to it. There are endowment funds and scholarship funds. God’s kingdom is a priority for our thanksgiving! Yet our Joyful Generosity goes way beyond what is church related. Food pantries and community activities and the Red Cross and disaster relief and the love and support we give to loved ones – these are all fun ways to give God glory with the treasures he has provided!

The generosity of God’s grace opens a well of Joyful Generosity in our hearts. Joyful Generosity responds to God’s grace and we say with David. “ 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.”

Our Christian giving prioritizes God’s kingdom, but our motivation is the most important thing. Motivation is more important than any amount we give. David prays, “ 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.” David doesn’t talk about how much people gave, but why they gave. They gave with integrity, with a single-minded devotion for the gospel. May God always keep this desire in the hearts of his people!

Jesus didn’t worship in David’s temple, but in one built by King Herod. This was the same Herod who wanted to kill the baby Jesus. Who slaughtered the infants in Bethlehem. He did not believe in or serve the LORD, yet Herod had given much to build his temple. Why did he do it? He wanted to buy political favor. He wanted to receive honor and praise. His generosity was selfish and self-serving. It was not pleasing to God because it did not come from faith. David’s gifts for the temple along with the gifts of God’s people were different – given from trusting hearts, willingly, and with honest intent. They were Joyful Generosity.

David would never reap the benefits of his generosity in his lifetime. He would never walk into his brand new temple and gaze upon its beauty. Yet he wrote a psalm for its future dedication (Psalm 33). He must have imagined what it would be like to see the completed temple when he wrote 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 wouldn’t personally get anything out of the gift he gave to the Lord, then why would he give it? He was motivated by God’s grace to give. He had to give thanks! So he did. In addition, David was providing for the future of his church. David knew that God’s house would be a place where the truth of the gospel would be proclaimed for future generations. He wanted this for his son, Solomon, and for his children’s children. David wanted a place where people would come to learn of the only true God. He wanted future generations to “ gaze upon the beauty of the Lord” and to find comfort in the promise of a Savior.

We give to the Lord’s work because we have to give thanks to God for his grace. It is gospel motivation! Even if we never saw any benefit from our gifts, they would overflow from our heart of faith. Yet God has also given us the joy of seeing fruits from our giving. Our gifts to this church and to the WELS support pastors who visit people and comfort them with the gospel. We reach out to our community. We support our Lutheran Elementary School and our teachers so children can learn about Jesus and study his Word. While buildings are important, we don’t give to them. We give to the LORD! We want the next generation to have Christian faith and to be strong in it. The gospel moves us to Joyful Generosity!

How will the Lord God use the gifts we give as a spirit of Joyful Generosity saturates our hearts? I don’t know, but it will be fun, won’t it? God has been generous to us in his grace, and he has given us a place in his kingdom. Joyful Generosity is our response to his faithful love. SDG Amen.