

The Heart Behind Generosity  
Advent 2022 - Week 2  
1 Chronicles 29:10-18  
12/4/22

### Introduction

**Pray.**

**CELEBRATIONS.** Well in case you weren't aware – today is a day of celebration. This is a day we've been praying for for almost 2 years – that we would have a space to gather to worship Jesus on Sunday mornings. And the Lord has provided for us abundantly. He's taken care of our church and that is worth celebrating.

Because, here's one of the least controversial statements I will ever make as a pastor – **Good things are worth celebrating. Right? Good things are worth celebrating.**

I was reminded of that last weekend – Lindsay and I both graduated from the University of South Carolina and last weekend we beat our rival Clemson in football. And when that game was over I was instantly taken back to my senior year of college, largely because that was the last time we had actually beaten them. And I remember that night because it was our senior year, our final home football game, we had beaten our rival and finished the year with 10 wins, which is a big deal - and I remember it was just one big celebration downtown. All of our friends out enjoying this last football hurrah for us in our college years. **Good things are worth celebrating.**

We've got some couples in our church getting married at the beginning of the year – and we're going to party. **Good things are worth celebrating.**

We've got a number of folks having kids in the next 6 months – **Good things are worth celebrating.**

We've got some friends in this room who have recently gotten promotions, new jobs, bought houses – **Good things are worth celebrating.**

**Recap of series.** In case you missed it last week we kicked off our Advent series we're calling **GIVE LIKE GOD**. Our big idea for this series is because God has been sacrificially generous toward us, we are called in response to be sacrificially generous toward others.

And my aim as we keep working through this series today is to show us from the Scriptures that **generosity is a good thing worth celebrating.**

Rather than a drudgery or a "have to" or a wearisome duty – that generosity is actually meant to be a practice of great joy for followers of Jesus.

**In 2 Corinthians 9**...the apostle Paul is writing to the church in the city of Corinth, and he's encouraging them to take up an offering to financially support not only his ministry but also other churches in the surrounding region. And this is what he says:

**5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction. 6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

## God loves a cheerful giver.

I love the way one commentator translates this passage into modern day language. He says - **“I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind about what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving.”** (Eugene Peterson)

That’s the goal - that the giver would delight in the giving. That generosity towards God and His people would be a good thing worth celebrating – both for the one who receives the gift, **but especially** for the one who gives the gift. How beautiful! That is our aim.

### 1 Chronicles 29 - Background

**And I can think of few more beautiful pictures of this in the Scriptures than in 1 Chronicles 29. So turn over there with me - we’ll hang out here for the rest of our time together.**

To give you some background – This is a story that takes place near the end of King David’s reign over Israel. David becomes convicted that he lives in a giant palace but God’s presence lives in the tabernacle, essentially a glorified tent. And so he’s resolved to build God a more beautiful dwelling than his. He wants to build God a temple. God says “no, not you, your son Solomon will build it, but you should collect an offering so that he’ll have what he needs to build it when he takes over as king.”

So David challenges all of the tribes of Israel - get together and decide how much you want to give, and we will collect the offering and use it to build the temple. And the people do so and they bring an offering to David that scholars say is equivalent to about \$400 million dollars today. And that’s awesome. I mean that is a successful building campaign if I’ve ever seen one.

But what’s even more beautiful is what comes after that. They bring all their offerings to David and then look at what happens...

**9 Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.**

So David’s rejoicing at this great offering – but so are the people who gave it. And notice why – **because they had given willingly. Generosity is a good thing worth celebrating. God loves a cheerful giver!**

So here they are, giving what they have, sacrificially and generously, in service to God and His Kingdom purposes and plan – and the result is they break out in one giant praise party.

This is skipping ahead a bit, but the passage ends with a summary like this... **1 Chron 29:22 - 22 And they ate and drank before the Lord on that day with great gladness.**

One giant chance to eat and drink and worship and rejoice, because together they had all given freely what they had.

**Which is convicting to my soul.** Right? I mean think about it – when’s the last time you brought an offering to church (or I guess in our day and age gave a gift via bank withdrawal or credit card) and went immediately into a praise party? Went and ate and drank before the Lord with great gladness because your giving just went through? “Honey! Get a babysitter, we’re having a date night because our gift to the church went through today!” That’s weird, right?

**Even more so** - When's the last time we had a member meeting and said "we met budget this year because of the generosity of folks in our church" and that led to all of us eating and drinking and dancing before God?

**Or even when it comes to this Give Like God initiative** - are you giddy or excited for the possibility of rejoicing that could come if we were able to get up on January 8th and say - we had the goal of raising \$5,000 for various mission projects in our city and across the country and we raised WAY more than that - and so we just threw a party because generosity is a good thing worth celebrating??

**And I know that sounds just a little bit strange, but that's what they're doing here in 1 Chronicles 29.**

That's the heart we're called to have in our generosity. Which, if I'm being honest, is so very much **not** my heart when it comes to giving most of the time.

**HVAC.** About a year ago our HVAC in our house just completely shut down. We have one of those nest thermostats - it was there when we moved in. And one day it just stopped working. And I'm not the greatest with technology. Bit of a luddite. So I just immediately called a guy - "can you come look at it?" And it's one of those where it's like "Could be \$10 or \$10,000, type deals you know?" Turns out our whole HVAC unit was crap. Had to get the whole thing replaced. New A/C unit, a new furnace - everything. Which, to replace that and bring a house built in the 1960s up to code is not exactly the cheapest thing in the world.

And I remember in a particular moment of frustration, because this is how not like Jesus I am, going back in our google spreadsheets, which is what we use for our finances in our house, and counting up all of the money we had given to the church that year and my first thought (I know I'm a pastor I'm sorry) my first thought was - *"If we hadn't given that money this year, we could pay for this. You know if we didn't give next year or just sort of turned down our giving a little bit we could pay this off and I can still feel good about my generosity."*

And my heart for the next several months every time I had to put that number into our budget of generosity my heart was completely the opposite of cheerful. It was frustrated, greedy, and annoyed. So I'm preaching to myself today just as much as I hope I'm preaching to you.

**That is not the way of Jesus or the invitation of the Scriptures – God loves a cheerful giver.** God loves those who bring their gifts willingly and with rejoicing to sacrificially give of what they have in service to the Lord.

That's what Paul encourages the church in Corinth towards. That's the picture we get from the Israelites in 1 Chronicles 29.

**So the question we have to ask then is...how?**

- How do we actually have hearts that rejoice in our collective giving?
- How do we move from being someone who doesn't give, or gives under compulsion and without joy to someone who gives cheerfully?
- Gives with rejoicing in our bones? Gives with celebration?

**How does generosity move from a wearisome duty to a worshipful delight?**

Well I think we have something to learn from David and the Israelites in 1 Chronicles 29. Specifically, I want to show us **3 perspective shifts** towards our money, possessions, finances that will help us move generosity from a wearisome duty to a worshipful delight. Three perspective shifts that will grow us towards being cheerful givers.

### 3 Perspective Shifts

#### 1. From everything belongs to me to everything belongs to God.

9 Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly. 10 Therefore David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: "Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. 11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.

Notice that key line from David – *For all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours.*

The first perspective shift we must make in learning to be cheerful givers is from *everything belongs to me* to *everything belongs to God*. Another way you can say it is from *ownership* to *stewardship*.

The Scriptures are very clear on this → Everything on the earth belongs to the Lord. It does not belong to you, it does not belong to me. It belongs to the Lord. You are not actually the owner of anything – God is.

God Himself says it this way in Psalm 50...

10 For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. 11 I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.

Everything you "own", you do not actually own. According to the Scriptures, God claims ownership over it all.

#### **Meaning:**

- The car you drive is not yours, it's God's.
- The house you live in is not yours, it's God's.
- The clothes you wear, the food you eat, the phone you use is not yours, it's God's.
- This space we are gathering in is not ours, but it's not even technically the YMCA's, it's God's.
  
- Romans 14 would tell us - that that even applies to us as individuals. You are not your own. You also, if you are a Christian - belong to God. He owns everything!

So David says – God we bless YOU! Because this is all yours anyways! Anything we are offering up to you is really just a return. It was never ours. It was always yours. We are just handing back to you what belongs to you anyways - so that is worth celebrating!

**In order to be cheerful givers, we must switch our posture towards our possessions from owner to steward. From owner to manager.**

Oh this? This is the Lord's, I'm just managing it for Him. So whatever He tells me to do with it, that's what I'm going to do - because He's the owner, I'm just the manager. I'm just taking care of it for Him because He's entrusted it to me. But if He says "give" it's not like "oh I don't know God", no it's like "yeah, you're the owner, of course."

**Financial Planner.** Think about it this way...Lindsay and I have a financial planner. A good friend of mine, named Ryan, who helps us invest wisely and save for retirement and the girls' schooling and all that fun stuff. We give him money, he puts it into stocks and mutual funds and helps it turn into more money, Lord willing, over time. But make no mistake – it's our money. Ryan's just the manager. It does not belong to him. He just takes care of it for us.

Can you imagine if one day I called Ryan and said - “hey man, we need to take some cash out of our account. We need to pay for some school, or a house project or car or whatever.” And Ryan was just like “no.” What do you mean no? That’s our money.

And then imagine he said “Sure, but you gave it to me. And I have some plans for what I want to do with it. I’ve got some things, some really good things, that I’d like to use that money for.”

We all know – that would be ridiculous.

**But hear me on this – for so many of us that’s the posture we take towards God.**

We wrongly and sinfully think it belongs to us – so when He asks us to be generous – to give of what we possess to our church, to someone in need, to a friend or family member, to use it for the kingdom purposes He designed it to be used for – we think “nah”. It’s **my** money I’ll spend it how **I want**. I’ve got some plans with it, I’ve got some good things I’d like to use it for.

I’ve got vacations to take. House projects to accomplish. School to pay for. Clothes to buy.

And listen, if that is your posture – Everything I have is mine – you will never be able to be a cheerful giver, because you will always think God is stealing from you. You will always think “I own it and God is taking from me what I own.” Rather than seeing - “oh no, this belongs to God. I’m grateful He trusted me to manage it for Him. Here’s how I’m going to use, what is not mine, for the glory and praise and renown of the one it belongs to.”

**House Projects.** I was talking to a member at our church this week and for the past few months he’s been telling me about house projects that him and his wife were excited to tackle in their new home. They were trying to be good stewards of their money, so much so that they specifically allocated all of their savings account to the last dollar to specific projects to make sure they didn’t overspend and all of that.

But they were both really convicted by the Holy Spirit after last Sunday’s sermon and realized - oh those were all of our plans, but it’s not our money. It doesn’t belong to us. It’s God’s. And they’ve decided to push back a few of the projects till later on so they can give and be generous during this campaign.

And listen to me – that’s a weighty, hard, difficult sacrifice to make – but there’s joy on the other side. There’s rejoicing that comes with that - if we’re willing to step into the reality that it all belongs to God.

*When you understand that every single thing you have belongs to God, generosity makes total sense: if it all belongs to God anyway, then doing what he wants with it is a logical response.*

*First perspective shift – everything I have belongs to me → everything I have belongs to God. Owner → Manager.*

## **2. From everything I have I’ve earned to everything I have I’ve received.**

**12 Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. 13 And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. 14 “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. 15 For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding.**

Look at what drives David to worship here. Look at his perspective on this offering from the people:

- God is the one who makes people great and gives us strength.
- All things come from God.
- His days on earth are like a shadow (a vapor in Eccl - here today and gone tomorrow), but God is the one who has abundance.

And then look at what he says in v16...

**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.**

So not only does it all belong to God, but because it all belongs to God, everything we have is because He has chosen to give it to us. Meaning – everything you have is a GIFT! And if it's a given, it can be given on. If it's a gift, it can be shared. If it's a gift, it can be released with joy!

**Harper.** I think about this a ton with our toddler. I used to think she didn't struggle with being selfish...then she got a sibling. You don't have to teach a child to say "mine." So the other day I'm hanging out with the two girls, and Norah, our 7mo old is at the age where she can start to grab stuff. And in particular she likes to grab the little baby Jesus from our little play nativity scene. And so it's laying next to Harper, Norah grabs it. And Harper starts freaking out.

"No Norah! That's MINE!" Then she looks at me – "Daddy, I WANT JESUS." Which it's like - yes you do! Alright! But in this moment she's incredibly selfish because she thinks that nativity scene is hers. It's not. We gave it to her. We bought it for her. It was a gift, so it's meant to be shared, not hoarded.

But how quickly our posture changes from - I've received this as a gift, to "MINE!"

Which then brings the obvious push back you might be thinking - of course that's true for her, she's a toddler. But I'm an adult. I have bought my own things. I have earned my possessions. I worked hard to get where I am in life. I studied hard in school. I put in the time and effort at work. I managed my finances well, and didn't take on too much debt. I got me to where I am today.

**But let me just ask the obvious questions:**

- Who gave you the strength to work hard?
- Who gave you a brain that can handle all of the things you learned in school?
- Take it even another step down - who puts air in your lungs to breathe so that you can be alive to go to work and make money?
- Who put you into the family you were born into? Into that particular neighborhood, or school, or church, or social system?

Doesn't Acts 17 tell us it is GOD who gives life and breath and everything to mankind?

I love Tim Keller here addressing how no one is truly self made in our world, this is from his fantastic book *Generous Justice*, he writes...

**Tim Keller - If you had been born on a mountaintop in Tibet in the thirteenth century, instead of a Western country in the twentieth century, then no matter how hard you worked, you wouldn't have had much to show for it. If you have money, power, and status today, it is due to the century and place in which you were born, to your talents and capacities and health, none of which you earned. In short, all your resources are in the end the gift of God.**

So we must understand – it all belongs to God so we are managers not owners. And therefore - because it all belongs to God, anything at all that we have is because He chose to give it to us as a gift.

This is what Paul tells the Corinthians back in 2 Corinthians 9:11...

**You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.**

God gives you what He owns so that you, in joy, will give it away in generosity.

**But, let's be honest...this is incredibly difficult work. To loosen up our grip on what we claim to own, what we claim as ours for our consumption, our use, our good and instead learning to be joyfully generous is not something that will come easily or naturally. Which leads to shift #3...**

### **3. From human effort to Spirit-empowered obedience (v17-18)**

**17 I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you. 18 O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you.**

David asks the Lord, at the end of His prayer of thanksgiving - to keep in the hearts of the people a spirit of generosity. He prays - direct their hearts to you! Let this not just be a one-time thing for Israel. David's prayer is that this would not be a "back then" moment in the history of Israel. You know what I mean by that? When we take a leap of faith at some prior period of our lives and now we use it to quiet our conscience to current acts of faithfulness?

We do this with everything, including generosity. I know I do.

- Hey, remember when we were super generous back then?
- Hey, remember that time we sold our car and helped someone in need, back then?
- Hey, remember when we weren't sure how to pay our rent that month but we God called us to be generous so we stepped out in faith, back then?
- Hey, remember when our church did a Christmas Offering so we gave sacrificially, back then?

And David says - Lord, let us not be a back then people. Let us be a people whose hearts are always directed towards you. Who always have purposes and thoughts of joyful generosity.

But in order for us to do that – **God we need your help.**

Setting out to be a cheerful giver on our own is impossible. Without God our hearts are bent and crooked and turned inward on themselves. Left to our own devices and wants and interests – we will not default into joyful generosity, but always into forced obligation or selfish greed.

The only way we will ever learn to be cheerful givers, the only way my heart gets shaped away from looking at my budget with frustration because of my HVAC to dance parties because of generosity – is through the work and power of the Holy Spirit.

Which is why I ended this week and will challenge you again – **My invitation for you in this series is not actually about giving. My invitation is that you would get alone with the Holy Spirit (and with your spouse if married) and ask Him to show you what it is you should do in regards to these 3 initiatives.**

And then when He calls you to something, which I believe He will - to step in with obedience even while you're waiting for the joy. Because we give not just from joy, but for joy. That's what it means to be a cheerful giver.

***Giving out of and for abundant joy.***

### **Gospel Conclusion**

**This is what we see in the story of Christmas, is it not?**

**Joy to the World.** We sing this song around Christmas time called "Joy To the World." You know the one? "Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth, receive her king..." Yeah that one. All about how Christ coming to earth was an offer of deep, deep joy to the world. This world sitting in sin. This world sitting in darkness. The light of Christ shines bringing joy and hope to all who would believe. It's beautiful...and true!

But do you know what is also beautiful and true – **Jesus coming to earth was not just for our joy, but also for the joy of God as well.** Jesus showing up as a baby in a manger, the arrival and ushering in of the kingdom of God did not only declare joy to the world, but also joy to the God of the Universe!

In Luke 12, Jesus says it this way, it's actually the same teaching as Matthew 6 about God clothing the lilies, feeding the birds, and us not being anxious. Same teaching but in Luke's telling Jesus ends this way:

#### **Luke 12:32-34**

**32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."**

It is God's good pleasure, God's joy and delight to give us the kingdom. To send Jesus into earth, born in a manger that first Christmas night, ushering in the kingdom of God – That was God's good pleasure and joy on display in his generosity towards His people.

So here's the key – **God loves a cheerful giver, because God Himself is always a cheerful giver.**

- When you pray for God's provision - you're not prying anything out of his hands. He is always a cheerful giver.
- When you ask for forgiveness of sins through Jesus - you're not getting God's reluctant mercy. He is always a cheerful giver.
- God delights in clothing us and feeding us like he does the lilies and the birds. He is always a cheerful giver.

It is His good pleasure to give us the kingdom! So God is our great example – one who gives sacrificially with great cheer and joy. And we model our lives after Him.

**BUT...the gospel is even better news than that. Because Jesus is not only our great example of giving with joy and celebration...he is also the one who makes it possible for us to have hearts that can give with joy and celebration.**

When Jesus dies on the cross and rises again and we put our faith in Him – the Bible says God removes our heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh. A heart soft to the things of God. A heart ready to be changed and molded by the Holy Spirit. A heart that doesn't have to cling to its possessions for worth, value, and security – but knows that true life, true joy is found in cheerful generosity. That's what makes cheerful giving possible. A heart changed by the gospel.

**Communion.**