

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
November 11, 2012
“Christ’s Love, Our Calling” –
True riches**

1 Chronicles 29:1-9

Week 3: Called to Give Our Best to God

- 1. The grand scene at David’s time**
- 2. The lessons we learn from this project**

Hymns: 241 – 489 – 623 – Closing: 484

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

1 Chronicles 29:1-9 – 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. 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. 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: three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, 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 himself today to the LORD?”

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.

“Called to Give Our Best to God!”

When a sermon has a title like that, it’s my experience that people do not have a problem with it when it comes to their time. God wants you to give your best when it comes to your time and to use your time wisely. Can you do better? Sure, you could. You know it.

It’s also my experience that people do not have a problem with the concept of “Called to Give Our Best to God” when it comes to their talents. The use of talents around our church and school is very evident, whether you think of musicians, those who teach, those who serve food, elected individuals who lead, those who do upkeep, ministry to children. Could you do better in using your talents for your Lord here? Many of you would say, “Sure, I could.”

But when it comes to the third area of stewardship, our treasures, that is the use of our money and possessions that God has blessed us with, this is often not the case. People often get uncomfortable and irritated when the pastor, as a leader of a non-profit, charitable organization, talks about money. Common social etiquette in the world is that there are inappropriate topics to bring up, and faith and money are two of those. Yet today, we must talk about those exact two topics.

There are reasons why we must do this (not simply because we’ve reached week 3 of this synod sermon series!):

1. The use of our money and possessions is an act of our faith. This is why Scripture has a lot to say about the subject. Our faith is expressed not only in our offerings, but in our overall view and use of our possessions.

Therefore, honest, yet difficult, questions are necessary to explore this. For example, if you went to the doctor and said, “I’m constantly tired and often uncomfortable and in pain,” he would need to ask personal questions. “What do you eat?” “How much do you sleep?” “How are things at work?” “Are you exercising to relieve stress?” If you say, “That’s none of your business. Your job is just to treat

symptoms; I don't want to talk about those things," the doctor would probably reply, "Listen, I can't help you then. These things are all connected." You can't departmentalize your life, because you are an interconnected whole!

Very similarly, God says that if you want to come to him because you want meaning in life, renewal, and strength, but you can't talk about your attitudes and use of your money and possessions, he can't help you. It is an interconnected part of your life.

2. Also, money can be a root of all sorts of worries, problems, and stresses. It can entrap people. The love of it is a dangerous, deadly temptation.

Therefore, this is something that we need spiritual guidance with. As we continue our sermon series called "**True Riches**," we will learn from an account of David from 1 Chronicles 29 this morning. It was quite a scene, as planning was going on for the building of the OT Temple. Let's examine that grand scene from David's time, and then learn valuable lessons about giving our best to the Lord in our lives.

1. The grand scene at David's time

We read in 1 Chronicles 29: "*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. 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. 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:*

three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, 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 himself today to the LORD?'

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. 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. Any who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the LORD in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. 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."

A building project was being planned! At the time of this account, David was coming to the end of his reign. For 40 years the Lord allowed him to be king, and that time was about completed.

As aged David contemplated his life and his Lord, he had the desire to build a permanent Temple for God. He said, "*Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.*" For David's whole reign, the Ark of the Covenant had remained in the tent called the tabernacle, which had first been constructed by Moses in the wilderness as the children of Israel journeyed to the Promised Land. David rightly felt that the Lord's house deserved to be a better structure and started to make plans to build the Temple. However, the Lord told him, "*You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.*" David was a conquering king. That had been his assignment from God. He was not to build the Temple, but his son Solomon would.

David, though, is compelled to get Solomon off to a good start with this project and he makes blueprints for the structure. In this last chapter from 1 Chronicles, which is the last

chapter of David's life, we come across this grand scene. The Temple would be spectacular. Look at these pictures of the final Temple complex on the screen up front. It was a massive undertaking.

Not only did David make plans for the building, he also described in our verses what he would like to contribute toward it. This was not done in a spirit of bragging, but a spirit of leading. He proclaimed that he will be giving 110 tons of gold and 260 tons of silver. Not only that, but it would be prized gold of Ophir, a location that we do not know anymore today.

David then asked the people who would consecrate himself willingly to contribute to the building. Leaders of the families and the government took a collection for the Temple, which amounted to:

- 190 tons of gold
- 375 tons of silver
- 675 tons of bronze
- 3750 tons of iron

There was great joy at the end of our reading, because of how God had opened up their hearts to give toward the building of his Temple.

What principles of giving their best to the Lord do we see?

- 1) Giving led by leaders – David was an example to the leaders in his government and the leaders of families in giving their best to the Lord. Inspirational giving by the leadership and mature believers is vital for God's people to see.
- 2) Giving considered to be a sacred privilege – Did you notice that David asked who was willing to "consecrate" themselves to contribute to the building of the Temple? That was the same word used for when a young man would become a priest. This was a sacred undertaking, even for those contributing! After all, whose Temple would it be? Many times we call the OT Temple "Solomon's Temple." That's not quite accurate, is it? It's wasn't "David's Temple" either. It was the Lord's Temple! For what would be happening at that place? Sacrifices that

prefigured the death of Jesus for the sin of the world. An altar of incense would be built, where prayers would be raised to God. Tables of showbread would be displayed, which symbolized God's constant providence. And the Ark of the Covenant would be located there, where God himself stated he would reside. This was a sacred place, and giving to it was a sacred act deserving the best!

- 3) Willing giving – This is another interesting Hebrew verb. "Be willing" or "volunteer" or "willingly offer." No coercion was involved. No arm twisting. No demanded minimum amount. This was a voluntary, willing gift from a heart of faith.
- 4) Generous giving – No much needs to be said about this! David's gift alone calculates out to almost \$5 billion in today's money. To put that into perspective, the most expensive building on earth today is the Wynn Resort and Casino in Las Vegas. Built in 2005, the building, with a Ferrari-Maserati dealership on site, a famous night club, and a towering waterfall pouring into its own lake, comes with a \$2.7 billion price tag. David's offering is twice that!
- 5) Rejoicing in giving – What a novel concept, that there is joy in sharing in the Lord's glory and his work!

2. The lessons we learn from this project

It's time to learn some lessons from this amazing account in the OT. How can we be inspired by it? How will this affect us today and in the future?

Our church members might be tempted to look at ourselves here and say, "We've done the same!" After all, look at the beautiful building that the congregation built ten years ago. Look at the annual budget of around \$900,000 that we must cover each year. Look at the many people and the many activities around here.

We have certainly reached a sanctified level of giving, we might think!

If we feel that way, we need an honest look at ourselves:

- What percentage of our households give leftovers instead of firstfruits?
- What percentage of our households give their gifts by deciding on a planned percentage? (What is yours?)
- What percentage of our teenagers and college students support our congregation's ministry?
- We have 322 envelope numbers/boxes issued to our confirmed members. Can we say that we have reached a "sanctified level" when in the past year 27% of those box numbers have not contributed anything to God's house here? (Of course a person can give cash or coin into the offering plate, but does that apply to all of these?)
- Can we say that when 40% of those envelope numbers have given \$156 or less in the past year?
- Of envelopes that give any amount, yearly average is \$2600. Are people considering using the OT tithe, which was a guideline for believers at one time?

Can we feel joy over this in an age where cell phone plans, data packages, cable TV, the NFL Ticket, specialty coffee and more are paid without blinking an eye?

This is not a speech to reinforce the idea that "All the church wants is my money." It is not intended to criticize widows' mites that are given or a spontaneous gift that wasn't thought through for a long time. **This is our doctor visit where honest questions need to be asked.**

We need help! We need a fresh look at ourselves if it is a matter of our fists closing over our treasures and being unwilling to let them go out of selfishness, greed, or fear. To find the help we need, we do not look to shaming with the law. The answer is not a tongue-lashing or a guilt trip.

The answer is found in another person's fists. Ephesians 5 says, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy,

cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

When we have been tempted to close our fists over treasures that we mistakenly thought were ours in the first place, we see the hands of Jesus that have been open. In his perfect life, his hands were open to obey the law perfectly in our place. They were open to love his neighbor as himself, to give aid to those in need, to show perfect Christian love. When he was arrested by his enemies, put on trial, and led to the cross, his hands did not close in fists or strike back at his accusers. Rather, his open hands received nails as he was nailed there for the sin of the world. **Christ willingly did all of this as he gave his all for you and for your salvation.**

As we consider that, why do we give of our treasures to the Lord and his work?

- Guilt?
- Duty?
- To "do my part?"
- To "meet a budget?"
- To feel self-righteous?

Certainly not! "We love him because he first loved us." Out of our love and thanks to God, we give to his church and his ministry. We do this so others may hear and believe the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

How can we do so? We do so in the same way that God's believers in our reading did. Led by your leaders here, we give to a cause that is a sacred privilege. Just as those OT believers could remember the sacred ministry of the Temple that they were giving toward, it is good for us to remember our ministry at Holy Trinity. Many times we might think we are only giving toward:

- Keeping an institution moving forward
- Meeting an annual budget
- Paying necessary utilities
- Funding programs
- Maintenance for a structure
- Buying floor wax

I think there is a more reverent and right way to look at what we all support. What are we supporting? It is better termed an "Annual Ministry Plan." We are giving toward:

- Organization and materials for a Sunday School for children
- Time spent for your pastors to plan enriching worship services to nurture your faith – Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas coming up!
- Counseling of people in crises, sickness, or near death
- Time spent to work on a sermon that is Scriptural and relevant
- Catechism instruction and Confirmation for our young adults
- Sunday Bible classes for your edification
- Nurture of our faith

Organized outreach programs that reach our community and neighbors

- Payment for our “temple,” which will one day be paid off
- A segment of our offerings that go to our Wisconsin Synod for its work in world missions, home missions, and training the next generation of called workers
- A segment of our offerings that go to Evergreen Lutheran High School for a vital school to our Pacific Northwest teenagers

Ministry such as this is what we all support as we bring our willing and generous gifts to the Lord here!

So finally, today is the time. It is time for you to personally analyze your life and your faith for a topic that makes many feel uncomfortable. It is time to remember that God is the One who is the Owner and Giver of all your treasures and possessions. It is a time to remember what he gave up for you. It is a time to reflect on the privilege of giving toward his sacred, vital work in the world. It is time to realize that you have been called to give your best to God.

May we do so today, as we truly contemplate what true riches are! Amen.