

**Matt. 6:19-21  
2 Cor. 3:12-18; 4:6**

**Oct. 27, 2019**

## **Our Giving God**

The Bible reveals to us that our God is a Giver even as the Lord's Prayer reminds us: *"Give us today our daily bread."* Everything of value that we possess, including the very breath we breathe, comes in one way or another from the hand of Almighty God.

Three weeks ago I began these series of messages about our giving God with a little story about a dad and his son at a fast-food restaurant. When the dad reached for a French fry the son pulled the fries away and said, "No. These are mine!" The dad realized that he didn't really need or want the fries as much as he wanted his son's willingness to share with him....

How often have you pulled back from sharing what you have with God saying, "No, this is mine!" And here is God, the Source of all we have, not needing our stuff but wanting our willingness to share. He wants that kind of relationship with us.

## **His Image, His Glory**

*And we all ... are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory... 2 Corinthians, 3:18.* Made in God's image we reflect His glory when we follow His lead. Made in His image we have actually been designed to be givers so that we might be conduits of blessing to one another, to our families, to our community and beyond. *And*, so that we might have the joy of giving, just like God.

I believe God blesses us with material wealth so we'll have more to give. He wants us to know the joy of giving, the pleasure of taking part in His creative work on this earth, the beauty of participating in the lives of others for their betterment and wellbeing. We are made for this, and when we construe our lives as the striving for wealth, or the will to power, rather than the work to have more in order to give more, we miss out on all that makes our lives fulfilling and wondrous. He calls us to something more. God wants us to give/share because when we do so we become more like Him.

## **On Loan From God**

The harsh reality is: we won't live on this earth, in these bodies, forever. Life is on loan to us from God; given to be lived well and shared. Jesus said, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.* John 10:10

All this talk of giving, that we've been doing for the past month, can be a little frightening or off-putting if you feel pinched already in your finances. When

**I was younger and our children were small ... or better yet, when one of them was in college, I felt like that. But I couldn't avoid giving to God first, through my monthly tithe to the church – and some months I hesitated, really hesitated. Amazingly the other needs fell into place – even several times when I couldn't see how. In the process I began to know God ... I mean really, not just know about God, but know God and who He really is. Maybe this sounds weird or maybe self-serving, but one of my most transforming personal encounters with Jesus has come through giving over my money to His care all these years. Not that it happened overnight, but just the monthly discipline of giving worked on my heart ... not that I'm some saint now, but this process has made me trust God more, maybe become a little more like His image. Sure we could have spent more on entertainment, food, vacations, but we still did a lot of things and enjoyed living, and in the process our kids got educated, got good opportunities, and hopefully began to understand that God provides.**

**Giving to God becomes less difficult when you understand that everything you have is a gift from God and the only thing you take with you from this life is the love you have in relationships with family, friends, church family, and your Heavenly Father. Sometimes it takes a harrowing event to make us realize this. I read about author Stephen King speaking at the Vassar College commencement in 2001 (May 20). He is a millionaire many times over. He told how two years earlier he had been lying in a ditch by a country road, seriously injured after being hit by a van as he walked beside the road. "I had a MasterCard in my wallet, but when you're lying in the ditch with broken glass in your hair, no one accepts MasterCard." On that day and in the following months, he got a painful but important insight into many of life's simple truths: "We came in naked and broke. We may be dressed when we go out, but we're just as broke."**

**He drew this sobering conclusion: "Warren Buffet? Going to go out broke. Bill Gates? Going to go out broke. Tom Hanks? Going out broke ... Steve King? Broke. You guys? Broke. Not a crying dime. And how long in between? How long have you got to be in the chips? 'I'm aware of the time passin' by, they say in the end it's the blink of an eye.' That's how long. Just the blink of an eye."**

**[Then he added these words that sound like he had been reading the words of King David: "I want you to consider making your lives one long gift to others, and why not? All you have is on loan anyway. All you want to get at the getting place, from the Maserati you may dream about to the retirement fund some broker will try to sell you on, none of that is real. All that lasts is what you pass on. The rest is smoke and mirrors."]**

## **A Steward Not A Supplier**

**Give as a steward not as a supplier. Everything that is given to you is given in trust to you. The blessings that you have are not given to you for your**

**personal benefit alone. What is given to you in trust is given that you might bless others and glorify God.**

**Made after God's likeness we were made to be in charge of His stuff. The steward manages or administers the property or affairs of someone else. The message of the Old and New Testaments is that human beings act as stewards of God for creation.**

**For those who find their true life in Christ, achievement is not measured by how much one makes or how much one has. Rather it's by how well possessions have been used for the purposes of their owner: God. It's true, really, about our whole life ... we're not all given the same stuff but how we manage that stuff, with God's help, makes a difference in this world.**

**Our giving is not supplying God with what He needs from our own stores. Our giving is managing for His purposes, what stores He gives us. That's something to think about. God holds us responsible for the way we handle His money, and we must not take that responsibility lightly. In all my years as a pastor I can think of no other factor that has transformed people's relationship with God more than the decisions related to giving. Because as long as we think it's ours.... we haven't awoken to reality yet. Billy Graham once said, "If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life."**

### **Giving From the Heart**

**Throughout this sermon series we've been trying to communicate one thing: Giving is not really about the money or things or even time. It's not about new buildings or equipment. It's about your heart and your faith and about your relationship to God. It's about our shared commitment to the work of God through First Church in Bakersfield and beyond. It's our commitment to be part of what God is doing in the world today. If we have trouble with our giving, it's probably because we've never really figured out that everything comes from God. We don't own a thing. It's all loaned to us and someday God will take it all back.**

**Our buildings, our programs and events, are simply ministry tools to allow us to help people meet Jesus and grow in Him. Our church staff is dedicated to facilitating all this. What we build will not last, but God will remember forever what we have done and why we have done it. My hope is that all of us will want to give gladly and freely to see the church move forward by faith.**

**When we give generously, we're saying, "Lord, it's all yours anyway." When we give generously, we're investing in the Kingdom that cannot be shaken. When we give generously, we are declaring, "There's a lot more where that came from." When we give generously, we're laying up treasures in heaven. John Wesley (1703-91) put it this way: "I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity."**

## **We Have A Fortune**

**We have a great fortune in God who is good, all the time, and who is a giver. God has blessed this church in the past through the generosity of those still here and those gone before us and my prayer is that such a desire will be continue in us and into the next generation. Long ago King David prayed, "*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,*" 1 Chronicles 29:1-20. We need God's heart of generosity to burn within us and all around us. Why not us? Why not now? Why not here? This moment speaks to us... the heart of generosity builds God's Kingdom, here at FUMC and in our community and beyond.**

**We are surrounded by thousands of people navigating life here in Bakersfield. There are so many misguided longings for love... and meaning ... and purpose. We're right smack dab in the middle of it. Imagine the significance of being Christ's Body right here.**

**God is a great giver ... He gave His only Son that we should not perish. And He has made us to be givers.**

**Though we cannot out give God, we can give *like* God.**