

1 Chronicles 29:1-9 (The Message)

Then David the king addressed the congregation: “My son Solomon was singled out and chosen by God to do this. But he’s young and untested and the work is huge—this is not just a place for people to meet each other, but a house for GOD to meet us. I’ve done my best to get everything together for building this house for my God, all the materials necessary: gold, silver, bronze, iron, lumber, precious and varicolored stones, and building stones—vast stockpiles. Furthermore, because my heart is in this, in addition to and beyond what I have gathered, I’m turning over my personal fortune of gold and silver for making this place of worship for my God: 113 tons of gold—all from Ophir, the best—and 214 tons of silver for covering the walls of the buildings, and for the gold and silver work by craftsmen and artisans. And now, how about you? Who among you is ready and willing to join in the giving?”

Ready and willing, the heads of families, leaders of the tribes of Israel, commanders and captains in the army, stewards of the king’s affairs, stepped forward and gave willingly. They gave 188 tons of gold, 377 tons of silver, 679 tons of bronze, and 3,775 tons of iron. Anyone who had precious jewels put them in the treasury for the building of The Temple of GOD in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite.

And the people were full of a sense of celebration—all that giving! And all given willingly, freely! King David was exuberant.

Matthew 6:19-21 (NRSV)

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NRSV)

⁶The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And 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.

The only things we have that are not already God’s are our hearts. All the rest is simply given back to God. Our time, our talents, our service . . . even our money. Today we meet cheerful givers, who have opened their hearts and rejoiced at what pours out.

The people celebrate. The king is exuberant. Everyone has opened their hearts to God and the resources to build a temple in Jerusalem have come pouring out like water over a waterfall. If we are to join in this excitement over a building, we have to go back in time, to the time of Moses.

God moves in

When the LORD God freed his people from slavery in Egypt, he led them to Mt. Sinai, the mountain of the LORD, where God had first called Moses. There, God told Moses, “And have them [the Hebrews] make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell with them” (Exodus 25:8). . . . Dwell with them!?! . . . Frankly, God’s decision to dwell with his people is one of those key biblical themes we hear so often that we’ve lost any sense of shock at the claim. So let’s try to hear with new ears.

God, the creator of the universe and everything in it, is choosing to dwell with some dusty slaves who have run away from one of the greatest kingdoms on earth. God could dwell anywhere in the cosmos and with anyone – yet it is these landless, powerless, oppressed people whom he has chosen. It isn’t very hard to understand why the Israelites were seen as weird and at least half-crazy for making such a claim . . . and why they would be seen this way for millennia thereafter.

Now, the Jews weren’t so crazy as to think that they had God all to themselves or that they could contain God in any way. But they did believe that God dwelt with them in a way that God did not dwell elsewhere or with other peoples.

So God, in a very real sense, moved in with them. Because the Hebrews were nomads, God gave instructions for building a moveable tent, called a tabernacle, that would be God's dwelling place. In a small portion of the tabernacle, called the Holy of Holies, the Hebrews kept the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the stone tables on which were written the Ten Commandments. It was there that Moses, and later the High Priest, would go to meet with God. It was the place where heaven and earth met.

As the centuries wore on and the people settled into the land of Canaan, they desired to build a proper house for God. Much of the book of Chronicles is focused on the building of this permanent structure, the temple in Jerusalem. It is King David's son, Solomon, who actually undertakes the building of the temple.¹ In response, the people open their hearts and their purses in joy. The time had come to do right by their guest.

An emergency fund

From the days of Solomon, we zoom forward a thousand years to the city of Corinth, Greece, in the mid-50's AD. Though the apostle Paul's relationship with the Corinthian Christians has been contentious at times, their commitment to the gospel was evident in their enthusiastic response to Paul's collection for the poor among the Jewish-Christians in Jerusalem (2 Cor: 8-10). Paul has been amassing the collection from the various Christian communities he either founded or visited during his missionary journeys.

For Paul, this collection is the concrete expression of unity among the Jewish- and Gentile-Christians. It is an expression of reciprocity. The Gentile-Christians have been grafted onto the tree of faith whose roots are the Jews (Romans 11:17-24) and now these Gentile communities in Asia Minor and Greece can reciprocate this gift by caring for the poor in Jerusalem's Christian community, where all the Christians are Jews who have embraced Jesus as Messiah and Lord.

A Matter of the Heart

Rev. Michael Reeves, our Senior Associate Pastor and Director of Strategic Resources since 2006, takes a look at the theme of our stewardship campaign:

"The theme of this year's annual stewardship campaign is 'A Matter of the Heart' which is a recurring theme in scripture and Methodist tradition. When we think about how we express our love and affection, we often think about how we can give something to the object of our affection. Sometimes that means giving a tangible gift and sometimes, it is giving something of ourselves, our thoughts, our time, or our energy. Our financial support of St Andrew it is a reflection of our love for God as well as an expression of our maturity as disciples and our real priorities.

This year we have provided a narrative budget that expresses the categories of St Andrew's budget and what the categories support. We also have begun to send a quarterly update of our budget categories with some stories about what is happening in that area of ministry. It is important that we communicate the benefits of the investment in the ministry of St Andrew. However, this effort is much more than presenting what the church needs. The real motivation for giving comes as a matter of the heart."

But now, the Corinthians' earlier enthusiasm to help out with Paul's collection has flagged. So Paul writes urging that they finish what they started. He doesn't command them to do anything, though I suspect he feels like he could. Rather, Paul lifts up to them the generous act of Christ who became poor so that they might become rich (2 Cor 8:9), evoking Jesus' own words about storing up treasures in heaven.

Giving that pours out of the heart

In his commentary on today's passage from 2 Chronicles, Leslie Allen writes:

"David's appeal for contributions to the building of the Temple reminds the reader of the emergency fund Paul set up. . . . For both Paul and the chronicler², cheerful giving was a measure of spirituality. While in 1 Chronicles David is the example, in 2 Cor 8:9 the "generous act" (NRSV) of Christ choosing human poverty is the example. If the people and the king rejoiced at the willingness of the giving, God, too, 'loves a cheerful giver' (2 Cor 9:7) as 1 Chr. 29:17 hints. Consumers experience self-gratification in their spending, and so do misers in their saving; but givers know a deeper joy and a greater gain."

¹This is roughly 1000 years before Jesus. This temple would stand until it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587/86 BC. Keeping in mind today's passage from Chronicles (probably written about 350-400 years before Jesus) may help you to grasp the despair of the Jews at the loss of the temple built by Solomon. Think about this: What would the destruction of God's house at the hands of an enemy say to a Jew? What message would be heard?

²A common term for the anonymous writer(s) of Chronicles.

Today's Scripture Passages – Reflections by Rev. Michael Reeves

"In these three passages we find a recurring theme seen in other verses as well – giving is a heart decision. In the first passage, David is challenging the assembly of the children of Israel about supporting the building of the Temple. After establishing that they are following God's will and purposes in verses 1-3, he shares his personal commitment and asks who will join him(verse 5). The leaders step up and express their collective contribution in support of David's leadership(verses 6-8) and then in this verse the rest of the people respond to the leadership and make a commitment from loyal hearts. Some translations use the term 'whole' heart.

In Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount' in Matthew 6, Jesus is addressing the issue of putting God first and suggests that a part of putting God first has to do with where we put our treasure. In verse 21, he makes the obvious observation that our heart is seldom far from our treasure. He goes on in verse 24 to say that we cannot serve God and stuff – and he concludes this thought in the sermon in verse 33 when he says 'Seek first the kingdom of God...'

Then finally, Paul writes in his letter to the church leaders in Corinth to encourage them to fulfill a commitment they made to support the saints in Jerusalem with a special offering. When we become a part of St Andrew, we say that we will support this church with our prayers, presence, gifts and service. That is not a multiple choice commitment. Paul concludes 2 Corinthians 8:24 by observing that our giving reflects what we love, then he comes back in chapter 9 and says we need to make a heart decision about our giving.

These three passages are just representative of this recurring theme in both the Old and New Testament - that our giving is a matter of the heart – a decision based on our commitment as disciples and one of the ways that God grows us as his followers."

READING WITH HEART & MIND, OCT 14 - 20

Sunday, 1 Samuel 9:27–10:8 Samuel anoints Saul as the first king of the united Israel, bringing all twelve tribes under a human king. The Hebrew word for "anointed one" is *mashiah*, which is "messiah" in English and "Christos" in Greek. How might this story deepen our understanding of Jesus as Messiah?

Monday, 1 Samuel 12 Saul's farewell address to the Israelites. How would you summarize Samuel's history of Israel. What is God's message to the people in this address? What is the underlying theology?

Tuesday, 1 Samuel 13:1-15a This is the turning point in Saul's career and his relationship with God. What does Saul do that is wrong, that draws out God's anger? What are the consequences of Saul's rash act? What is the cautionary word here for us?

Wednesday, 1 Samuel 13:15b – 14:52 We meet Saul's son Jonathan. How would you describe their relationship? Note that Saul's rashness gets him in trouble again. He is rejected by his own people!

Thursday, 1 Samuel 15 What are the circumstances of Saul's third rebuke from God? Saul spares a life yet is condemned. What could possibly be the message for us in a story such as this? Is this about ancient notions of holy war or about obedience?

Friday, 1 Samuel 16 Though Saul is still king, God leads Samuel to a young boy who will be Saul's replacement: David, son of Jesse. What do we learn here about David's character? How would you describe Saul and David's relationship? What do you think is happening to Saul? Were there any clues about this earlier in his story?

Saturday, 1 Samuel 17 David and Goliath. What is it about this story that would make it so important to the Israelites? What is happening to Saul amid David's triumph?

Sermon Notes

Scott Engle's Sunday morning class, *Something More*, is now meeting in Festival Hall at 11am. We hope that you'll join us!

Because Scott is now preaching in the 9:30 service each week, his Sunday class has moved to 11am in Festival Hall. It is open to adults of all ages and focuses on a deeper understanding of Scripture. We have more time to deal with the Scripture passage and topic for the week. If you have questions, you are welcome to call Scott at 214-291-8009 or e-mail him at sengle@thebibleacademy.com.

Hold the date!! Kim Edwards on October 25 at 7pm

Kim Edwards, author of the huge international bestseller, *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*, will be at St. Andrew as part of our new St. Andrew Author Series. Her most recent book has been on the NY Times bestseller list for 65 weeks!

From Scripture to Canon

A one day workshop with Prof. Leroy Howe, Sat., Oct 27.

2 Timothy 3:16 speaks of "all scripture" as inspired by God. But what "scripture" was he talking about? This workshop explores the process by which individual writings that informed both Judaism and Christianity in the first and second centuries evolved into a single collection by the fourth, and how that collection came to be viewed as alone containing "truths necessary for salvation."

This Saturday workshop with Prof. Leroy Howe of Perkins Seminary will be held on Saturday, October 27, from 9-2. Lunch will be provided. To register, please go to www.thebibleacademy.com. Childcare is available and reservations can be made when you register for the workshop.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

Rev. Michael Reeves has provided us with some very thought-provoking questions about faith and money. Any of these could generate a lively and fruitful discussion. Use them in your classes, small groups, or even over dinner!

1. What is the most generous act of which I have been the recipient? What was my reaction and why?
2. When has God allowed me to practice an act of unusual generosity and what were the results and why?
3. Who is the most generous person I know? How has that person expressed his or her generosity?
4. How do I want to be remembered?
5. What are my true values?
6. What I like most about money is _____. What I like least about money is _____.
7. God is helping me deal with my love of money by _____.
8. Am I willing to make changes in the way I relate to money as I listen to God's voice in my life?