

## The Joy of Giving

Philippians 4:10-20

Today is our last Sunday looking at Generosity through the Generations. Today – in a real way – we pull the past two weeks together – Still looking at “Why should we give?” – and this week we focus on the fact that we give because giving to God is a part of **how we worship the One who spoke the Universe into being**. The generations before us worshipped God as they faithfully gave to build and expand the ministries of our church. Each of you have kept ministry going but have helped expand and adapt the ministries of our church as you have worshipped God through your faithful giving.

Our passage today is from Paul’s letter to the Philippians. The 4<sup>th</sup> chapter – beginning with the 10<sup>th</sup> verse.

**<sup>10</sup> I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. <sup>11</sup> I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I**

**have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

**<sup>14</sup> Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; <sup>16</sup> for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. <sup>17</sup> Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.**

**<sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

As a church – across all areas of ministry – our primary goals are to help you connect to Christ as your Savior, and to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ. Across the past months – we have

been working on developing new Bible studies, Small groups and small group resources, new events and opportunities for connection, and so much more that we will be bringing to life across the coming months. We truly want to encourage and equip everyone so that you can grow in your relationship with God. And, the fact is, that is why we are discussing your financial giving today. How did you like that segue; I thought it was fairly smooth.

Here's the thing: as believers – as people of faith - we all have been blessed to be a blessing. We understand that to whom much is given much is required. And we realize that we can do all things through God who gives us strength – and what we give is an offering given to please and worship the God we serve. When we give to God's church, to help build the Kingdom of God right here and right now, then we are not only giving to God today, but we are giving for the future and what God may do next.

In our scripture today - Paul is writing this letter to the Philippi churches from a prison cell. Paul thanks the church for sending money to support him and his ministry. He describes their gift as their

participation in the proclamation of the Gospel. His language compares their gifts as a fragrant aroma and as an acceptable sacrifice to God. Now, I know that sounds a bit like Old Testament language, but the message to us is still the same. We give to glorify God.

Here is an amazing thing. Because of their generosity to Paul, the believers of the Philippian churches are spreading the Gospel in a way they could not achieved otherwise. That means they are a part of something bigger than themselves. They are partners with the great Apostle Paul and his amazing work to spread Christianity.

So, it's also vital for them and us to understand that the value of their generosity is not limited to the help that it provided Paul, but rather it is valuable because it brings God joy when his children are generous. Pull that forward to modern time – and every time we give – in whatever way we do it - we are giving pleasure to the One who lived, taught, died and rose again. Through our giving we are continuing the work of the generations before us – and we are partnering with God to build His kingdom right now so that the future can be different.

Generosity has brought us from a worship service lead by a pastor and a choir on a flatbed truck in 1952 to a church who, despite a global pandemic, has worked to stay relevant, connected to you and to others, and to expand our ministries to help others in ways we could not have imagined a year ago. A church that is working to become a hybrid church – where people in person or online can grow in their faith and develop as disciples of Jesus Christ.

So – back to our question - **Why Should I Give?** Through the history of our church we know that we enjoy the benefits of those who came before us and who faithfully shared their time, their talent, and their treasure. We are living a dream from people we will never meet but will always be grateful to. Why Should I give? We give to generously support our church right here and right now. Your gifts and tithes keep the church going – moving forward. Why Should I Give? We give to expand our ministries both inside and outside our church. To bring hope and help and new life into our troubled world. We give to be a part of something far bigger than ourselves. We give because we believe these words each time we pray the Lord's Prayer: thy kingdom

come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” We give because we are kingdom builders and God is using us to change this world one person at a time. Why Should I Give? We give because God has no back up plan; we are it and that means everything we do, say, and give matters. It really matters.

So, we give for the future of this church. Have you ever seen the movie, *The Bucket List*? Two terminally ill men develop a list of all the things they always wanted to do. They face this task with a great sense of urgency. Why Should I Give? We give because our church has a bucket list as well; most of the time we call it the vision for VHUMC – we want to create an environment where everyone can experience a **Christ-centered life of purpose.**

Where does God want us to be in 5 years, 10 years, 25 years or more? I am confident that God’s dreams for our church are far bigger than we can begin to imagine. When you factor in the power of the Holy Spirit – in the life of our church and in the life of each of us - the sky is the limit.

It's true for us as it was for the generations before us – we give because there are generations coming that we may never meet – but we want them to meet Jesus. So, we give to make sure that we continue to not only introduce people to Jesus, but also to help them fall in love with Jesus and stay in love with Jesus. We give for a future that we cannot imagine but we want our church to continue changing lives and helping God change our world.

So today, as we pledge – we do so because we know that God has plans, and dreams, and a vision for our church and when we worship him through our tithes and offerings we are partnering with him to build a future that will be better than we can ever imagine. A future that will bless generations to come.

And when we give, as the Apostle Paul said, **“To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”**