REMEMBER: Look What God Has Done!

1 Chronicles 29:10–14

Big Idea: Generosity begins by remembering that everything we have and everything we've accomplished comes from God.

I have a confession to make. I'm a pretty forgetful person. Not about everything. But there are certain things in ministry that, for whatever reason, my brain just refuses to remember.

I've literally had conversations with some of you that go something like this: "Hey! How are you guys doing? Remind me, when did you two get married?" "Pastor... you married us!" "Ohhhhh! That's right! Of course I remember! I was just wondering about the exact date…"

And it's not just weddings. It's baptisms, too! I've asked people, "Hey, have you considered being baptized this month?" "Pastor... you're kidding, right? Did you forget you baptized me?"

And I'm thinking... "I DID?!" These are some of the most important moments of people's lives! And apparently, I'm just showing up and forgetting them!

Now, I promise you, it's not because I don't care about these people. I love them! But here's what I've learned: **Just because something is important doesn't mean we won't forget it.**

And that's not just true of weddings and baptisms. It's also true of what God has done in our lives.

Think about something you once prayed desperately for. A job. A relationship. A car. A home. And when God answered, you couldn't stop thanking Him. But somewhere along the way, what once felt like a miracle started feeling normal.

Yesterday's answered prayer became today's expectation. And that's why Psalm 103:2 says: *"Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits."* **Because what we fail to remember, we eventually begin to take for granted.**

And church, that's why we're going to do something a little different today. As we begin our Building for the Future series, before we talk about what we're building, what we need, or what we're going to give, I want us to remember.

Because for 72 years, God has been faithful to Light & Life!

And today, we're not here to celebrate how great our church is. **We're here to remember how faithful our God has been.** That's exactly what David does in 1 Chronicles 29.

David has spent years preparing for the construction of the temple. He's gathered materials, organized the work, and made significant personal contributions.

In chapter 29, David challenges the leaders to give willingly. And they respond with extraordinary generosity. And notice what happens next.

1 Chronicles 29:9: *"The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord."*

The people are rejoicing! There's generosity. There's celebration. There's gratitude.

And then David stands before the entire assembly to pray. **He could have congratulated the people for their generosity. Instead, he praises the God who made their generosity possible.**

Let's read 1 Chronicles 29:10–14.

> *10 David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,*
>
> *“Praise be to you, Lord,*
> *the God of our father Israel,*
> *from everlasting to everlasting.*
> *11 Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power*
> *and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,*
> *for everything in heaven and earth is yours.*
> *Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;*
> *you are exalted as head over all.*
> *12 Wealth and honor come from you;*
> *you are the ruler of all things.*
> *In your hands are strength and power*
> *to exalt and give strength to all.*
> *13 Now, our God, we give you thanks,*
> *and praise your glorious name.*
> *14 “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.*

1 — LOOK BACK: Everything we have comes from God. (vv.10-12)

David's prayer begins with praise. Notice the repeated emphasis on God's ownership:

- Verse 11: "Everything in heaven and earth is **yours**."

- Verse 12: "Wealth and honor **come from you**."
- Verse 12: "**In your hands** are strength and power."

David understands something profound: Israel may be preparing to build a temple for God, but everything required to build it has already come from God.

Even David's position as king, his wealth, and the people's ability to contribute were gifts from God.

And here's what David understands: ***God doesn't depend on our resources. We depend on His provision.*** And that changes how we view everything we've accomplished.

David understood that before anything could be built for God, everything needed to build it had to come from God.

Think about your own life. The abilities you have, the opportunities you've received, the people who've helped you along the way. How much of what you call ***your accomplishments*** would have been possible without God's provision?

You want to know one sign that we've forgotten everything belongs to God? We become more *protective* of what we have than *grateful* for what we've received.

We start talking about my money, my house, my career, my accomplishments. And there's nothing wrong with calling those things ours. But somewhere along the way, we can forget that everything we call ours was first a gift from God.

David understood something we easily forget: We're not owners. We're stewards. And church, when I look back at 72 years of Light & Life, I'm reminded that everything we have today began with people who understood that truth.

Let me take you back to 1954. There was no Light & Life Christian Fellowship as we know it today. No sanctuary. No Ministry Center. No multiple services. No church plants around the world. Just a small group of believers from First Free Methodist Church of Long Beach who had a burden to reach the people of North Long Beach.

They started with a Bible study. That's it! But they had faith that God wanted to do something in this community.

And in 1957, they took a step of faith and purchased a piece of property at the corner of Downey Avenue and 59th Street. There was just one problem. **They had land, but they didn't have a building!** And they didn't have much money either.

So you know what they did? They brought in a big yellow school bus, parked it on the property, and started having church! I'm serious! People sat in the bus seats, and the preacher preached from the front.

Can you imagine? Some of you complain when the air conditioning isn't working. Imagine coming to church in a school bus!

But here's my favorite part of the story. **They filled the bus!** Come on, church! They filled the bus! Before we ever had a sanctuary, God was already drawing people to Himself. Before we had a building to fill, we had people to reach.

And those early believers kept praying. They kept giving. They kept serving. They kept trusting God.

Year after year, through changes in leadership and seasons that weren't always easy, they remained faithful. And then, in 1976, the doors of this sanctuary opened for the first time. Can you imagine what that moment must have felt like for the people who remembered sitting in that yellow school bus?

What had once seemed impossible was now standing right in front of them. And they opened those doors with praise and thanksgiving to God.

Church, some of you are sitting in the very sanctuary that earlier generations prayed for, sacrificed for, and trusted God to provide! And four years later, in 1980, this church opened a Christian school that would serve families in our community for 27 years.

Think about that. A little Bible study became a church in a school bus. A church in a school bus became a congregation with a sanctuary. And that congregation began finding new ways to serve the next generation.

We didn't begin with resources. We began with a calling. And God provided the resources. Can we take a moment and thank God for those early believers?!

For their faith. For their prayers. For their generosity. And above all, for the God who provided everything they needed!

Look what God has done!

2 — LOOK AROUND: Everything God has done deserves our praise.

1 Chronicles 29:13: “Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.”

Let’s return to King David’s prayer to notice something about the movement.

He has just witnessed an extraordinary act of generosity from the people. He could have congratulated the leaders. He could have praised their wealth or celebrated his own leadership.

Instead, he says: **1 Chronicles 29:13: “Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.”**

David acknowledges the people's generosity without confusing the instruments with the source. That's an important distinction. God works through people, but the glory belongs to God, always.

This also explains why the people are rejoicing in verse 9. Their giving is willing and wholehearted, and the response is joy.

Gratitude recognizes God's hand behind the work of His people. We can honor the people God has used without taking the glory away from the God who used them.

Let’s be honest! Sometimes Christians can be a little awkward when it comes to receiving a compliment. You tell somebody, "Man, you did an amazing job singing today!" *And they say, "Oh, no, no, no! ALL glory to God!"*

And you're thinking, "Well, yes, absolutely! But YOU were the one singing! I just wanted to say thank you!" And I understand what they're trying to say. They don't want to take credit for something God has done.

But here's what we need to understand: **Giving God the glory doesn't mean pretending people didn't do the work. It means recognizing who made the work possible.**

David doesn't ignore the generosity of the people. In fact, the Scripture celebrates it! But he recognizes that even their ability to give came from God. **We can honor the people God has used without taking the glory away from the God who used them.**

And that's important as we look back at our history. Because there are pastors, leaders, volunteers, and entire generations of believers who have poured their lives into this church. *And we should honor them!*

But ultimately, **we're not celebrating how great those people were. We're celebrating how faithful God has been through them.**

CELEBRATION MOMENT — GOD REVIVED A STRUGGLING CHURCH

And church, when we look at our history, we have so much to celebrate! But remember, our story is not that we never struggled. Our story is that God remained faithful through every struggle.

By 1991, Light & Life was struggling to survive. The church was small, without a pastor, and uncertain about its future.

But an older generation made room for younger leaders, and together they began praying for God to move. One evening, while the congregation was praying at the altar for people to come to Jesus, a stranger named Tony Cook walked through the back doors.

He walked down the aisle and asked: "Can you tell me how to become a Christian?" Come on, church! They were praying for someone to come to Jesus, and someone literally walked through the doors asking how!

And that was only the beginning!

God brought Pastors Larry and Deb Walkemeyer. People began coming to Christ. Families were restored. And by 1997, Light & Life had become the fastest-growing church in our denomination!

A church that had been struggling to survive was now reaching people for Jesus! Can we give God praise for that?

But God wasn't finished! Over the years, this church began sending out pastors, leaders, and families to plant new churches.

Light & Life Belmont Shore. Light & Life West. Halogen Church. Chapel of Change. Storehouse Church. And many more!

There are people worshiping Jesus today in churches that exist because people from Light & Life were willing to go! And the impact didn't stop there.

Through our Community Center, families have received food, children have been cared for, and neighbors have experienced the love of Christ.

And from Guatemala to Indonesia, Ethiopia to the Philippines, God has used ordinary people from this church to carry the gospel around the world! Our influence isn't measured by the size of our parking lot, but by the reach of our obedience.

And church, the evidence of God's faithfulness isn't just somewhere overseas or in another congregation. It's right here in this room.

How many of you can say God has used this church to change your life? Would you raise your hand? Church, look around!

These aren't just numbers or accomplishments. These are people whose lives have been touched by Jesus! And that's why we can say with David: **"Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name!"**

Light & Life, look what God has done! As we look around, we must also look AHEAD because…

3 — LOOK AHEAD: What God has given us is meant to be given away.

I love David's question. After witnessing all this generosity, David doesn't say, "Look how much we've given!" Instead, he asks, **"Who are we that we should even have the privilege of giving?"**

Think about that.

David understood that everything the people had, even their ability to give, came from God. He goes on to say, *"Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand."*

Generosity isn't about meeting God's needs. It's about participating in God's purposes. God doesn't need our resources to accomplish His will. But in His grace, He invites us to participate in what He's doing!

And church, I believe one of the most important decisions in our history came when Light & Life embraced that very truth.

In 1998, Light & Life stood at a crossroads.

The church was growing. We were running out of room. And there was an opportunity to relocate to a much larger property. We could have moved, expanded, and pursued becoming a megachurch.

But through prayer and the vision of Ezekiel 47, God gave Pastors Larry and Deb Walkemeyer a different picture.

A river.

In Ezekiel chapter 47 vision, water flows from the temple, growing deeper and bringing life wherever it goes. And our leaders began to sense that God wasn't simply calling us to gather more people in one location.

He was calling us to **equip disciples, raise up leaders, plant churches, and send people into the world.**

We could have built a bigger lake. Instead, God called us to become a river. And church, look at the fruit of that decision!

Churches planted. Pastors sent. Missionaries serving around the world. Lives changed far beyond North Long Beach. God has even allowed this church to be recognized among America's most influential and multiplying churches.

And here's what makes my heart so happy. **Seventy-two years later, we still have 39 parking spaces! But look how far the gospel has traveled!**

Church, God didn't call us to become a megachurch, and believe me, those churches serve a great purpose. But He called us to become a **multiplying church.**

And that requires generosity. Because **God never blessed us so that His blessings would stop with us.**

And I'm here to tell you that our calling hasn't changed. We're still called to **REACH, TEACH, MEND, and SEND.**

We're still called to be a river, not a reservoir. And everything God has entrusted to us—our facilities, our finances, our gifts, our time—is an opportunity to participate in His purposes.

But before we talk about what we can give, remember what God has already given. Because the greatest demonstration of generosity isn't a church building, a ministry, or even 72 years of faithfulness.

It's Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:32 says that God *"did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all."* **Before God ever invited us to be generous, He demonstrated His generosity toward us.**

And that's why we give. Not to earn His love, but because we've already received it. Church, we're not building for the future because we're dissatisfied with our past.

We're building for the future because we're grateful for what God has done, and we believe He's not finished!

Next Sunday, we're going to ask a simple question: *What's in your hand?*

But today, I want to leave you with this: **If God could do all this with what previous generations placed in His hands, imagine what He could do with what He's placed in ours.**

Closing — Look What God Has Done!

Seventy-two years ago, a handful of believers offered God what they had.

And look what God has done!

We've seen His provision. We've witnessed His faithfulness. We've watched Him transform lives and send people to the nations. And the same God who was faithful then is still at work today.

So before we ask God for anything else, can we take a moment and thank Him for everything He's already done? **[Would you stand with me as I pray a blessing over you with the help of our pastors?]**

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Almighty and most merciful God,

From you comes every good and perfect gift.

We give you praise and thanks for all your mercies.

Your goodness has created us, your bounty has sustained us, your discipline has chastened us, your patience has borne with us, your love has redeemed us.

Give us hearts to love and serve you, and enable us to show our thankfulness for all your goodness and mercy by offering ourselves to your service, and cheerfully submitting in all things to your blessed will;

through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.