

“Tag- You’re It-Part 3-Gifts- 1 Chronicles 29: 1-18

Dusty Baker who is currently the manager of the Washington Nationals was in November of 2002 hired to be the manager of the Chicago Cubs. When he became their manager he was asked about the team’s long history of post-season futility. Upon being told that the Cubs had not won a playoff series at then 94 years, he asked the questions that Cub fans had been asking for decades, “Why not us?” Why not now? Why not here? If not us, then who? If not now, when? If not here, then where? So what does all this baseball talk have to do with this sermon. Hold on for a bit. We are in the third of a series of sermons entitled, “Tag: You’re It.” As we look at how we can be excellent stewards of all that God has given us. Two weeks ago we looked at the stewardship of the time God gives us to use in this life. Last week we looked at the stewardship of the abilities that God has given us. This morning we look at the stewardship of giving and we look at the life of King David.

In our passage to day we find that King David had a dream. A dream to build a magnificent temple for the worship of God. It would be the grandest and greatest building ever built. But God had other plans. David was not going to have the opportunity to build this Temple, but that task and honor would go to David’s son Solomon. So Solomon was charged with the task. David gives Solomon the detailed plans for this Temple. It is as if David was the architect and Solomon the builder.

There is, however, with any large project and that is the problem of money. Because David has such a heart for this project David first of all offers his own resources of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, marble, precious stones. He gives a tremendous amount. In verse 5 David puts out the challenge, “Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?” Who is willing to join me in financing this project for the glory of God? In verse 6 the Bible tells us that the leaders of the families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds gave willingly. This is leadership at its best. First the king gives and then all of the other leaders follow.

Notice then the reaction of the people in verse 9. They rejoiced. Why? Because first of all, they gave freely. That means there was no pressure to give. They gave cheerfully and with great thanksgiving. Second, they gave wholeheartedly. That means their giving had no limits to it. The same two signs may be found today whenever God's Spirit is moving. People will give freely and won't have to be pressured or enticed to give. They will also give without limit to the work of the Lord. David responds to all of this by breaking out into a psalm of praise. We too can praise God when we respond to his generosity with our own generosity. This leads me to a crucial point for us to consider: Generous giving is not difficult when we understand that everything we have comes from God. This truth explains the amazing response of the people in David's day. But it also stands as the basic truth that drives all of Christian giving.

All that we are and all that we have comes from God. Everything is a gift. Nothing is earned., everything is given. Our lives are a gift. Our careers are a gift. Our intelligence is a gift. Our strength is a gift. Our personality is a gift. Our children and grandchildren are gifts. Our friendships are a gift. Our possessions are a gift. We own nothing. Everything we have is on loan from God. He gives it to us for a little while and says, "Take care of it." We hold on tight to it because we think it all belongs to us. Sooner or later we discover that it doesn't belong to us. You have heard this before: You can't take it with you, but we can give it away while we are still here and what we give will still be doing good for others.

One of the things that God has given us and that we struggle with is money. The Bible warns us over and over again about the seductive power of money. In Paul's letter to then young man Timothy, he warns Timothy that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. The love of money corrupts us in so many ways. It makes us selfish, greedy and envious. Money has caused wars and misery in world history. It causes us to neglect our friends, trample on co-workers, ignore and neglect family. It seduces us with the promise of happiness, but then in reality does not deliver anything at all.

Let's get back to our story of David. David and his people built a magnificent Temple for God. The people in David's day sacrificed to build a Temple so that

people could worship God in a permanent structure and not a tent that moved around as they had up until that time. As we described earlier it was a magnificent building built with all kinds of precious jewels and marble and wood. However, 500 years later in the time of the Babylonians the Temple was destroyed. All of that investment and sacrifice of money and building materials, and valuable jewels was all destroyed. If you go to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the only things left from the great Temple that Solomon built are some enormous foundation stones visible near the bottom of the Western Wall. Everything else Solomon built 2500 years ago has disappeared. Think of all of that gold and silver and all of the love and sacrifice it represented-gone forever. All that we build must disappear. Nothing lasts forever. All that remains of Solomon's temple beside the big stones is the record of love and sacrifice of the people who built 3000 years ago. That is what will stand for eternity. The same is true for us.

God records our faith and our love and our sacrifice. What we build will not last, but God will remember forever what we have done and why we have done it. And for this reason we want to give gladly and freely⁷ to see the church move forward by faith.

Back in 2001 Stephen King the great author was addressing the commencement exercises at Vassar College. He is a millionaire many times over. He told the story of two years earlier of lying in a ditch after being hit by a van while walking and was seriously injured. He said he had Master Card in his pocket, but when you are lying in a ditch with broken glass in your hair no one accepts Master Card. On that day and in the months to come he got a painful but an important insight into life's simple truths, "We came in naked and broke. We may be dressed when we go out, but we're just as broke. Warren Buffet? Going out broke. Bill Gates? Going to go out broke. Donald Trump? Going to go out broke." Stephen King went on to say to the graduates that day, "I want you to consider making your lives one long gift to others, and why not? All you have is on loan anyway. All that last is what you pass on. The rest is smoke and mirrors."

Giving is not about money, it's never about money. It's about our heart and our faith and our relationship with God. It's about our commitment to the work

of God at Peace Church, the Fredericksburg area, and the whole world. If we have trouble giving it because we have never figured out that everything comes from God. We don't own a thing. It's loaned to us and someday God is going to take it all back.

When we give generously we're saying, "Lord, it's yours anyway." When we give generously, we're investing in God's Kingdom. When we give generously, we are declaring, "There's a lot more where that came from." When we give generously." When we give generously, we're laying up treasures in heaven." In God's economy, what we keep, we lose; what we give to God is ours forever.

I return to the words of Dusty Baker: "Why not us?" Good question. Why not us? Why not here? Why not now? This week you will receive a commitment card in the mail to designate what you are going to give God this coming year through Peace Church and bring it back next Sunday. I pray you will pray about and talk about how you will join us in demonstrating to the world that God is faithful to meet our needs. May our faith be made visible by the commitments we make. May David's prayer in our story today be our own prayer. "O lord, we have given generously and with joy because all that we have comes from you." Amen.