

ASCK MIDWEEK SERVICE, WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2016
THE HEART OF GIVING – 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

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It is a great pleasure and joy and, indeed, a privilege for me to share a teaching with you this evening. I am very grateful for the leadership of this service for choosing this topic for me because 'Giving to God' is a subject very dear to me and close to my heart and so my prayer this evening is that this sharing is going to be beneficial to many of us.

LET US PRAY

Our topic is: "The Heart of Giving" and the important words are: 'Heart' and 'Giving'.

Giving is 'transferring something *voluntarily* from one person to another – it could be an idea, an advice, material things, it could be monies, it could be a teaching ... name it. Giving is from personal volition, choice, or decision; if force is applied on the giver, it is not giving, and if something is taken by force, this too is not giving.

Heart – besides the heart of flesh in a person or any other animal creature, 'heart' means the CENTRAL or MAIN PART, the CORE of anything. For instance, people talk of 'the heart of the city', 'the heart of the matter', 'at the heart of it all, and many others.

Heart also means the MIND or the INNER BEING of a person and that is why, many times, we hear such talking as, "What the Lord has put on my heart to talk about ..." many preaches say this; "I have decided in my heart"; "From the bottom of my heart" which means very sincere and truthful. The heart is the reasoning base or center within a person.

Therefore, the **Heart of giving** is simply, MAKING GIVING TO GOD THE CENTRAL or MAIN PART of one's relationship with God. It means TAKING A VERY SINCERE and TRUTHFUL decision from your heart or your mind, your inner-self, to give. And this decision to give does NOT mean the OUTSIDE VISIBLE ACTION OF GIVING. Because, by the time you actually physically give, a decision has already been made by you to give. It is the agreement inside you which guides the visible action and determines the what, how, and why, to give – counting the specific amount, or pulling a goat for offering, or driving a car to church ... follows what you have decided within you. That decision may have been reached at home, or even, many days or weeks, before the visible giving is done.

In the text which was read for us from 2 Corinthians 9, it says that this kind of giving MUST NEVER be done GRUDGINGLY; or done COMPLAINING; or done because you are COMPELLED or FORCED; or because others are doing it; or for fear of what people will say if you do not give; it should not be COMPETITIVE to beat others on it;

no!! Giving to God, or even, for that matter, giving to anyone, should be your own personal decision which you MUST DO CHEERFULLY! (V 7)

Our Lord Jesus Christ took it a notch higher! He taught that giving should be private and secret, comparing it with the RIGHT HAND GIVING without the LEFT HAND KNOWING what the right hand has given. (Matthew 6:3)

We know that it is good and healthy for a husband and wife or a family to discuss and agree on what give like in the story of Ananias and Sapphira in the Acts of the Apostles 5, but this family giving should NOT replace your individual giving to your God which you must decide upon alone

Friends, the Heart of giving is based on the realization that ALL YOU HAVE has been given to you by God and, therefore, giving, so to say, God's own things back to Him because they are His and you are only a steward or keeper of them.

It is like someone leaving you in charge of his gardens and so, after harvest from time to time, you send food items to that owner of the gardens. Yes, it is your GOODNESS, it is your KINDNESS, your CONCERN and DECISION to send these foods to the owner of the gardens, but the truth (the heart of the matter) is that the foods you sending are NOT yours, they are the garden owner's foods!

Of course, there could be a bad worker who may refuse to send such food claiming and pleading that there was a poor harvest; or that bad worker may sell off the master's foods. But this bad worker is ignorant of the master's plans, he could have left another person to monitor what is happening on the farm, or the master being a known person, the neighbours may have reported what was happening on the farm. And for sure, this stealing worker would be punished.

In fact, this stealing from the master is ably demonstrated in Malachi 3 where God says that failing to give what is due is ROBBERY, it is STEALING from your master's resources. And, permit me to say, that many of us are caught up in this category of 'thieves' robbing and stealing from God because we do not truthfully give our TITHES in full or in the right proportion to the harvest or the income we have received and thus 'robbing' God. May God help us to think again about our giving and what we give.

In another teaching, our Lord Jesus Christ said that when you DO NOT GIVE, you are ACTUALLY STEALING FROM YOURSELF! Can you imagine secretly stealing your own things? It is NOT only ABNORMAL it is FOOLISH!! You put money aside for food, and then you go and take part of it. You go to the garden and cut a banana and go and secretly sell it; you get a salary and declare only part of it to your family ... yes, stealing from yourself.

And you may ask, how do we steal from ourselves? Look at St Luke 6:38, it says that what you receive depends squarely on the measure you use to give! In other words, you cheat yourself by giving little because in return you also will receive little. It is the measure you use to give that determines what you yourself will receive. By giving little you actually deprive yourself or you make yourself lose a lot of what you would have otherwise received!

Again, in our today's reading, St Paul is telling Corinthians the simple truth that God CANNOT be duped or hoodwinked like a human being. The simple logic is that if you cultivate a small garden, you harvest little; if you have a big garden, you proportionately get a big harvest. If you plant bad seeds, you get bad fruits; if you want lemons you do not plant lemons; yes, it is simple logic, but it is very important for our relationship with God, and indeed, any other relationship.

Giving has got different dimensions, for instance, the widow gave very little in amount, but was praised for giving more than the others, (Luke 21:3) because that LITTLE she gave was EVERYTHING she owned in her life! In other words, her giving was a matter of life and death. Remember, you cannot give all you have because you have too much!!

Notice, that it is NOT what you give, but it is the SINCERE and TRUTHFUL decision you make to give. We do not give what the shopkeeper refused as 'bad' money; we should NOT give what remained after our own shopping; we should not give whatever little is found in the pocket, no! Decide in advance what to give.

Another dimension of giving is in Romans 12 where it says that you can give yourself as a holy and acceptable sacrifice to God. In fact it says that in order to be acceptable, you need to be transformed in your mind or heart and thereafter, you present yourself – you do not offer yourself accidentally, you must prepare yourself in advance.

A story is told of a farmer who became very ill and his animals on the farm were concerned. And the horse which was ready to take the farmer to the doctor if need be, suggested that the animals could save their master. The cow was to give more milk, the chicken was to give more eggs, and the pig was to give bacon.

The pig thought carefully about the proposal and after some short time responded. Yes, for the cow giving more milk is normal practice; the chicken laying an egg or two each day is actually a luxury; but a pig can only give bacon once in a lifetime and may not live to see the healed master. And so, for a pig to agree to this proposal to give bacon must be out of TOTAL COMMITMENT!

In the same way, to give yourself to God as a sacrifice must come out of your total commitment, like the song says: All to God I surrender!

However, in addition or besides giving yourself:

- ✓ You can give your time by being physically present for your God's service. Dr CHOU of Korea spends a minimum of 6 (six) hours in prayer each day and he has one of the biggest churches in the world!!
- ✓ As we saw in Luke 6, you can give to other people who are in need and that giving is counted as giving to God. Our Lord Jesus Christ confirmed it when He said that, "**Whatever you do to these little ones, you do to me**"!
- ✓ You can give your expertise either physically doing something or giving expert advice in or for God's work.
- ✓ You can serve God by being available to serve, say, in Church on the Boards or Committees.
- ✓ You can give for the cause of God's work, say, in Church building or purchase and or donation of Church equipment.

Yes, when we give to God, we are giving only a very small part of what God has given to us. For instance, in Genesis 2:7, a very wonderful and fundamental verse, God gave to us **HIS OWN LIFE-GIVING BREATH!** God gave Himself to us in His Breath and He never gave it to any other creature, only human beings. Secondly, out of His love for us human beings, God gave us His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that through Him we could get salvation. Notice that no any other creature other than human beings is offered salvation. What can we give to God in return? How much can we give in proportion to what God has given to us?

As I conclude, let me give you a few, ACTUALLY SEVEN, verses on giving and the benefits of such giving.

1. **Proverbs 3:9-10a** – Giving honours God and it has promised benefits from God which are attached to such giving. "Honour the Lord with your wealth and with the first-fruits of all your produce; then your barns (stores) will be filled with plenty ..."

2. **Matthew 6:20-21** – When you give to God, you are actually amassing and storing up treasures for yourself in Heaven where no pests can eat or spoil them and where no thieves can steal them. And that your heart and your mind will also be there in Heaven ... because where your treasures are, there your heart will be also.

3. **1Timothy 6:17-18** – The Heart of giving makes you a generous giver, ready to share out from what God has richly provided, but also sounding a warning that you must NOT be haughty or miser because God rewards the generous giving.

4. **St Matthew 2:11** – The Heart of giving is giving our very best, our treasures or our treasured property. My stewardship Professor at Seminary stressed that if you give and do not feel anything, you have not given enough or your best! You should give and feel that you have lost something in that giving or give and feel some pain. Yes, the widow gave everything she had! The wise men worshipped and then opened up their treasures which they gave. Notice that these jewels and other ornaments were gifts they had prepared before they started the journey only in the hope that they will see the one to give them to!!

5. **Psalms 50: 14-15** – Notice that WE WORSHIP GOD IN GIVING, “Offer to God and fulfill your pledges ... and (in worship) call upon the name of the Lord ...” in which act and as a result, you will glorify God.

6. **Malachi 3:10** (*the very famous verse on giving*) – Again notice that the reverse of 5 above is also true, IN OUR GIVING WE WORSHIP GOD. Give all that you are supposed to give, but only that which you have decided to give – tithes, offerings, thanksgiving – and in so doing test God, just to see what He can do if you fully fulfill your part of the bargain. And the promise of God attached to this giving is that He will send blessings so much so that you will not have enough stores for them.

7. **Acts 20:35** (*another very famous verse on giving*) – IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE, in fact, our giving determines and has a very big bearing on the blessings we receive, and, therefore, giving to God decidedly is very important.

May God help us and give us the wisdom to always truthfully decide in advance in our heart what to give to God and whatever it is we have decided to give it cheerfully.

In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, **Amen**.