
Sermon Notes

January 6, 2019

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

Made Rich 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

True Worship

- ❖ The Magi give us a picture of true worship not just by bringing "costly gifts" but through the attitude in which their worship is offered
 - *they fell down and worshiped him*
 - the word describing this posture of humility and submission becomes the NT's most common word for worship
- ❖ With this picture of the Magi as a starting point, the NT has much to say to us about how giving and worship go hand in hand

A Severe Test of Affliction

- ❖ Christians are not immune from affliction
- ❖ The Macedonian Christians are undergoing a severe test of affliction AND extreme poverty
 - under immense pressure, crushed (like crushing grapes)
 - in the midst of all this difficulty, they GIVE!!

- ❖ The Macedonians have an abundance of joy as a result of their giving
 - poor in things, but rich in soul
 - the Bible often draws a connecting line between joy and generosity
- ❖ The Macedonians give *according to their means* and even *beyond their means*
 - they give of their own accord (freewill giving)
 - they give *themselves first to the Lord*
 - their generous giving is a response to God

An Act of Grace

- ❖ Paul uses the Macedonian example of giving to urge the Corinthians (and us!) to step up and get involved in this *act of grace*
 - Paul does not command giving or try to "guilt" people into giving
 - our giving is meant to express our love for God and our love for others
- ❖ Jesus is the highest example/model of giving
 - Jesus was rich, but He became poor
 - let Jesus' example and love for you be your guide in giving

OT and NT Models for Giving

- ❖ The OT is filled with references to tithes, special offerings for special occasions and freewill offerings that were meant to be given over and above the tithe
- ❖ There are no NT passages that specifically call us to set aside and offer God 10% of our income
 - the NT assumption is that as recipients of God's lavish grace, there is no way we would ever want to be less generous than people who lived under the Old Covenant
 - "I don't think it would ever cross Paul's mind that we would want to do less." (D. A. Carson)
 - the generosity that prompts our giving is rooted in the example of Christ
- ❖ Giving and generosity are about attitudes, not assets
 - God desires that we demonstrate certain heart attitudes in our giving (faith, compassion, generosity)
 - we do not give to "meet a budget" but rather to be on board with the vision and ministry God sets before us
- ❖ If there is anything for which Christians should be known, it should be their love, care, and compassion for others
 - we should be known for a compassion that cannot help but express itself through joyful generosity

- a generosity that seeks to meet needs "at home" and within the "church around the world"

- ❖ There is a time to give and a time to receive

- the example of manna

- God always provides what His children need, when they need it (always right on time)

- when God gives us a surplus, it is an invitation for us to partner with Him by sharing that extra portion with others who are enduring a season of need or deprivation

- ❖ Keep looking to the example of Christ as the model of joyful generosity

Personal Reflection

1. Does your attitude toward giving change with changing circumstances? Why or why not?
2. Think of the great gift you have been given in Christ. How does thinking about the magnitude of that gift influence your attitude toward giving to Jesus' work "at home" and "around the world"?
3. Is there anything you would like to change in either your attitude or practice of giving to the Lord?
4. Spend time praising and thanking God for His gifts to you and asking Him in prayer to enable you to experience the joy of generosity as you worship Him with giving in 2019.