

Glad to Help

Hurricane Ian devastated much of Florida last week. Dozens of people died. Nearly 2 million homes were without electricity. Homes and cars and boats were swept away. Who can estimate how much the destruction will cost people? In the midst of such sad news, there is some good news. Two cousins name Lemi and Benny noticed an elderly man trapped in his car. The water was rising fast and he would soon drown. Lemi and Benny risked their lives to get to the car and pry the door open to rescue him. They saved his life. When reporters asked the cousins why they risked their lives to save someone they did not know, they simply replied, “We love God. We love people. And we love serving.” In other words, they were glad to help. This morning, we see that faith makes us glad to help others whenever we can.

King David lived about 3000 years ago. While he was king, the nation of Israel became the world’s first super power. All of their enemies were defeated and the people enjoyed peace and prosperity. David was far from perfect, but he trusted in the true God for salvation. He realized that the only reason things were going so well for the nation was because God was blessing them. David was living in a large palace but he felt bad that the Lord was only living in a tent. Remember that after Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt through the Red Sea, he built a tabernacle where the Israelites went to worship. It was a very fancy tent with the finest of fabrics, but it was still a tent. King David wanted to honor the Lord by building a temple that would demonstrate to people how awesome God was. The Lord was pleased with David’s wish, but he told David that his son, named Solomon, would have the honor of building the temple. David’s duty was to make the plans for the temple and procure the materials for building it. That brings us to 1 Chronicles 29.

King David allocated money from the federal budget as well as from his own bank accounts. He also encouraged the leaders of Israel to give special gifts. When they added it up, they had 3750 tons of gold and 37,500 tons of silver. They also collected a huge amount of bronze, cedar, iron and precious stones. King David was blown away when he saw how much was gathered. In verses one and two, he encouraged the people to work with his son, Solomon, who would soon be king after he died. David also reminded the people that the temple was not a self-glorification

project so they could boast about what a great building they made. The temple project was all about giving praise and thanks to the Lord God.

The Lord gives us the means to help

In verse 10 David offered a special prayer. He acknowledged that God owned (:11) “**everything in heaven and earth,**” and that (:12), “**wealth and honor**” came from the Lord. David reminded the people that everything they had was a gift from God. Our sinful nature does not like to hear that. Our sinful nature wants us to pat ourselves on our backs for earning money. WE are the ones who worked hard. WE are the ones who earned a promotion and raise. WE are the honest ones who faithfully paid our bills. WE are the ones who carefully managed our money and invested for the future. WE are the ones who give to keep this church going. And pretty soon, we can convince ourselves that all of our money is OURS to do with as we please.

The Apostle Paul was pretty blunt when he asked the people at First Christian Church of Corinth (1 Cor 4:7), “**What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?**” Not only did the Lord sacrifice his one and only Son to save us, but he also gave us the ability to work, the ability to study and apply ourselves, the energy and enthusiasm to work hard, the opportunities and skills we have, and on and on so we would be able to earn money. According to the law of the land, you own all the money that you have. But as Christians, we realize that everything we can legally call our own really belongs to God. It’s his house, his car, his money, etc. Without the Lord we would not exist, let alone have any money. And we know that we can’t take it with us when we die. As Christians, we realize that we are simply caretakers of the wealth God has loaned to us.

King David prayed (:14,16), “**Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. ... All this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.**” As we sing in that well-known hymn:

**We give thee but thine own, whate’er the gift may be
All that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.** (CW 750, st. 1)

A six-year-old boy once asked his daddy if he could please have \$5. He promised daddy that he was not going to spend it on himself. He wanted it so he could do something nice for someone else. The father was

touched by his sincerity and wanted to encourage such a caring attitude so, he gave his son \$5. Two weeks later, on Father's Day, daddy unwrapped a jar of honey roasted peanuts, his favorite snack. The price tag on the jar said, "\$4.69." The father gave his son some money and the son returned it to him as a gift of love. That is a good description of how a Christian receives gifts from God and returns it to him with loving service.

Part of the reason that God has provided us with blessings is so that we can help others. It is the Lord who gave those cousins the health and strength so that they could rescue that man from his flooding car. It is also the Lord who made sure that they were in the right place at the right time. It is also the Lord who gave them the motivation to help.

The Lord gives us the motivation to help

One thousand years after King David, on the same piece of real estate where he prayed this prayer in 1 Chronicles 29, God himself made an appearance cloaked in human flesh and blood and bones. Jesus came to rescue us from drowning in the guilt of all of our sins. Jesus let the Jews arrest him and the Romans execute him in order to save us from the reality of hell that we deserved. Because of Jesus, you do not need to fear the storms of life that come your way. You know that the Lord is guarding and guiding you and working all things for your eternal good. You know that the eternal perfection and glorious splendor of heaven is waiting for you. You know that Jesus loves you, that he forgave you, that he saved you. He filled your heart with his love, a love that overflows in your lives as you help others in whatever way you can.

King David pointed to the motivation that the Lord gives us as he prayed (:17), "**All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.**" If the world is supposed to live by survival of the fittest, then Lemi and Benny should have simply stolen the man's wallet and let him drown. Some people would probably have done that. Those cousins, however, had been touched by God's love. They did not help that guy so they could be called heroes and get on national TV. They explained their motivation, "We love God. We love people. And we love serving." It is the Lord who gave them the motivation to help even though it was difficult and dangerous. Faith in our hearts delights in duty.

King David's prayer 3000 years ago stretched out to include you and me today. He prayed (:18), "**LORD, ... keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.**" King David was praying that future generations like us would also be brought to faith and saved. How richly blessed we are to be called "God's people!" Alleluia! Who could ask for anything more?

The obvious application of 1 Chronicles 29 is about money used for God's kingdom work – our ministry here at St. Matthew and around the world through our Wisconsin Synod. But it's also a reminder that everything we do as Christians is an opportunity to use the gifts God gave us to honor him. The Apostle Paul explained (1 Cor 10:31), "**Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**" Wherever you are in life and whatever you have in life, God has given you so that you can do good things. God is honored when you use his gifts to take care of the body and family that he gave you, when you give an offering to be placed on his altar, when you help others in need. Faith does not grumble, "Do I have to help again? When am I going to get any help?" That's what our selfish sinful nature says. Take that attitude to the waters of your baptism and drown it again. Recognize that sinful attitude. Repent and then rejoice in your salvation through faith, faith that says, "I'm glad to help."

It is unlikely that you and I will have the opportunity to save someone who is about to drown while sitting in his car. But it is very likely that you will come upon someone who needs a friend to talk to when they are lonely or going through a difficult time, or someone who needs their leaves raked or gutters cleaned, or someone who needs their driveway shoveled, or someone who needs extra money, or a child who needs to eat, or someone who needs to borrow your car, or someone who needs a babysitter, or someone who simply needs to know that somebody in this cold and cruel world cares about them, or someone who needs to be pointed to the empty cross and empty tomb, and on and on. Faith delights in whatever duty the Lord places in front of us. And when the Lord gives you the means and the motivation to be his special agent to help someone in need and they say, "Thank you," with a sincere smile, you can say, "Glad to help." Amen.