

I. Five Points 3: Gifts Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor May 3, 2009

A. At the very core of Christianity is a God who Gave.

B. *(John 3:16 NRSV) "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

C. *(Mat 7:9-11 NRSV) Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? {10} Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? {11} If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*

D. *(Luke 11:11-13 NRSV) Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? {12} Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? {13} If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

E. *(Luke 11:2-3 NRSV) He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. {3} Give us each day our daily bread.*

F. All four accounts of the ministry of Jesus Christ, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, record the feeding of the 5,000.

1. In John's account, he records that a young boy offered up his lunch of Five loaves of Bread and two fish.
2. Sandy and I did a tour of the Holy Land in 1985.
3. Our guide was a very knowledgeable Jewish woman.
4. She made a comment about the miracle.
 - a. She said that people would not leave home without packing some kind of provision for a meal.
 - b. Part of the miracle was when people saw the generosity of the boy, they responded with generosity.
 - c. She felt the greater miracle was that people who would normally be in survival mode were moved to be generous and thus at the end they were able to collect 12 baskets of bread.
 - d. I don't want to take away from the actual miracle, but I know human nature.
 - e. It is easier for God to send bread down from heaven than it is to change a selfish heart to a generous heart!

G. *(John 6:3-14 NRSV) Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. {4} Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. {5} When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" {6} He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. {7} Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." {8} One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, {9} "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" {10} Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. {11} Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. {12} When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." {13} So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. {14} When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."*

H. We have been looking at the birth of the Church in Acts 1, 2. We saw how it was empowered by *Prayer*, how the Holy Spirit drew them together for worship, for fellowship, for transformation and that we need to be *Present*, to show up with the same expectation they did in the early church.

I. *(Acts 2:41-47 NRSV) So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. {42} They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the*

breaking of bread and the prayers. {43} Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. {44} All who believed were together and had all things in common; {45} they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. {46} Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, {47} praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

J. Today we are looking at how the Holy Spirit was poured out and signs of Generosity and Giving occurred in the Church.

K. *Stand Against The Wind* Erwin Raphael McManus p 71 "Generosity in its primal essence is love. When we are broken, we become an emotional black hole. No matter how much is poured into us, its light is absorbed and never finds its way back out. When we are whole, we are nurtured by what is invested in us, and at the same time we freely give of ourselves to others."

II. Signs and Wonders: They Gave!

A. *(Acts 2:41-47 NRSV) So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. {42} They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. {43} Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.*

B. The Church that was birthed in Jerusalem right after the resurrection of Jesus witnessed *Signs and Wonders*.

C. The gospels tell of Jesus healing people and raising a few people from the dead. There are miracles of walking on water and calming storms. The resurrection in itself is the greatest of all Signs and Wonders.

D. Even the Book of Acts will record healings and miracles.

E. The church is birthed with 120 people speaking in languages that are not their own, so that the people who were in Jerusalem would hear the praises of God in their own language.

F. There is a promise that followers of Jesus can be empowered in similar ways with the Holy Spirit.

G. I think a great sign and wonder is what follows the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: *{44} All who believed were together and had all things in common; {45} they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.*

H. I think it is often overlooked that the disciples were so impacted by the love of Jesus that it changed them from selfish, survival mode people, to generous, rescuing heroes!

I. *Free Of Charge: Giving And Forgiving In A Culture Stripped Of Grace* Miroslav Volf p 59 "So why does giving become part of our new selves? The first and primary reason is because the God whom we worship and the Christ who dwells in us are neither takers nor getters but givers. The second and related reason is because God has given to us so that we would share with others."

III. They Shared

A. *{44} All who believed were together and had all things in common;*

B. Christianity as it was lived out by the Jerusalem church, which by the way was quite poor and oppressed by the Roman Government, could be mistaken for Communism or be equated as people living in a Commune.

C. It is better to be thought of as Commonism.

D. They shared. If one person was hungry, they shared food.

E. John the Baptist preached about the coming of the Messiah, Jesus, and he warned the people about their greed.

F. *(Luke 3:10-14 NRSV) And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" {11} In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." {12} Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" {13} He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." {14} Soldiers also asked him, "And*

we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

G.The happiest people I know are those who share.

IV. **They didn't retain ownership**

A.{45} *they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.*

B.What is amazing is there was no mandate to do this. The believers were just so filled with God's Spirit that they began to recognize that God truly owned it all.

C.I have witnessed this quite often in my life in the lives of people I need.

D.Believers start to learn to live on less. They downsize cars so they can give to building programs, to support missionaries, to provide for the welfare of the community.

E.Sandy will always take advantage of a two-for-one sale so she has food to give away.

F.Just the mention of starting a food pantry at Windy Hill has brought people out of the woodwork who want to be a part of that.

G.It wasn't mandatory, but it was contagious.

H.It did need to be genuine.

I.(Acts 5:1-11 NRSV) *But a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property; {2} with his wife's knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. {3} "Ananias," Peter asked, "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? {4} While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us but to God!" {5} Now when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard of it. {6} The young men came and wrapped up his body, then carried him out and buried him. {7} After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. {8} Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you and your husband sold the land for such and such a price." And she said, "Yes, that was the price." {9} Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." {10} Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. {11} And great fear seized the whole church and all who heard of these things.*

J.Ananias and Sapphira could have just given a portion of the proceeds if they wanted. They got a little carried away and lied about the amount and that got them in trouble.

V. **Generosity enlarges our Heart!**

A.{46} *Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, {47} praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

B.The Word for You Today June July August 2007 Pg. 32 "Isn't it interesting how you sometimes go to dinner at the home of somebody who doesn't have a lot, yet come away feeling like royalty because of the hospitality you experienced? That's because the essence of generosity is self-sacrifice. God entrusts financial increase to people who aren't controlled by the love of money! You'll be amazed what God will do in your life when you're open-handed with your finances."

VI. Giving Report

A.In the last 6 months, whenever I am out and about people always ask me how are finances at the church.

B.When we prepared our budget for 2009 we cut every area we could without having to shut down any ministry area.

C.Even doing that we were prepared to make whatever cuts we might have to after the 1st quarter.

D. In a down economy, I have got to say that there are a lot of people who are showing their faith and generosity at CrossRoad.

E. We ended up, for the quarter, \$28,700 under in income. Sounds bad, but the weekly average was \$38,651 vs. budgeted \$40,000. In this economy, I think God is definitely helping us through it. The really exciting part is that we were \$64,700 under in expenses. At least half of that is in the mortgage payment, with the interest rates down God again is helping us get by.

VII. Giving Challenge

A. Having shared that good news, let me share some sobering news.

B. 720 active families x 28%, 202 families show no record of any contribution. If 202 families began to give just \$10 per week = \$2,020 x 52 weeks per year = \$105,040 annually

C. Of the 720 families, 12%, 86 families give < \$100 annually 86 families x \$10 per week = \$864 per week x 52 weeks per year = \$44,928 annually OR added together: our yearly giving would increase \$149,968.

D. This alone would more than balance the budget. It would certainly give us the ability to expand our vision.

E. Here's a thought if the remaining 60% increased their giving by \$10 a week 432 families x \$10 per week = \$4,320 x 52 weeks per year = \$224,460.

F. First group could balance budget and second group could reduce debt by \$250,000 per year, saving interest cost and providing early pay-off, and we could begin to look at adding needed space for Youth and Children's Ministry as well as areas for recreation and fellowship.

G. Would like to hear a sobering statistics.

H. *an unStoppable force* Erwin Raphael McManus pp. 205 "When Paul spoke of generosity and giving, he could have never imagined that a Christian would give less than a religionist, Paul was a Pharisee. Ten percent was the law. It would have been inconceivable to him that any Christian who gave less than a tithe would ever be considered generous."

I. As a member, your first obligation is to give regularly. That is up to you. Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, occasionally some people give in a lump sum for the year.

1. We were in a place a few years ago where we knew we were facing a lot of beginning of the year expenses and publicized that if people were able to pay ahead it would help.
2. One family gave a lump sum of almost 30k that helped us greatly in the 1st quarter.

J. Systematic, Regular Giving is where we need to start.

K. That Honors God because it is first fruits. It is a priority.

L. People always get offended when the Church talks about giving, but when you see the impact of giving the cost of a movie and medium drink would do.

M. It would certainly show where your heart is.

VIII. Online Giving Explanation

A. Many of the 20 and 30 somethings have asked if we could make it easier to give online, and we have just now added that option.

B. For several years we have had the ability to do automatic debits, but we are finding that people want it easier to do than that.

C. We do live in a cashless society and basically checkless.

D. You can go to the Website and do this now.

IX. Communion: With Unity

A. The greatest thing that we all share in common is the gift of life abundant and life eternal that is given to us through the broken body and shed blood of Jesus.

B.I want to do something a little different here today.

C.I want us to all squeeze a little closer in the rows and fill up just the four middle sections.

D.When you pass the tray, I want you to look into the eye of the person and say, “the Body of Christ given for you,” then “the Blood of Christ given for you.”