

**1 Chronicles 29:1-2, 10-18.**

***Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the LORD God. <sup>2</sup> With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities <sup>10</sup> David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. <sup>11</sup> Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. <sup>12</sup> Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. <sup>13</sup> Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. <sup>14</sup> "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. <sup>15</sup> We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. <sup>16</sup> O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. <sup>17</sup> I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. <sup>18</sup> O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.***

**Supporting the work God has placed before us...**

- 1. We give of that which God gave us.**
- 2. Together we serve God willingly**
- 3. We give him the glory.**

It was roughly 1000 years before the birth of Christ. The people of God gathered their wealth and supported the work that God had placed before them. They followed the example of their King and brought their personal wealth to help build a holy house for the almighty God. They publicly recognized that all they had was from God and they thanked God for all that He had given them. They contributed to his temple and to the work of his kingdom. They displayed their love for God and their trust in him, and because of their efforts and their gifts, because they pooled their resources together and willingly gave to build this temple, one of the most amazing structures of the ancient world was built. Hundreds of tons of gold and silver were collected and used for the building of this magnificent edifice, not to mention all the other building materials such as iron and wood and ornate decorative materials such as various different kinds of precious stones.

Obviously, no one man could ever take on such a massive project by himself. It was not just David's strength and influence that would get this done. It was not just David's great wealth that was going to construct this magnificent temple. After all, it was not David's temple. It was not just Solomon's either, even though many throughout history would call it that. Yes, Solomon would add his own wealth to the project. The work would be completed under Solomon's watch and during his

reign, but it was not Solomon's temple. It was God's temple and King David understood this and made sure he addressed this in this prayer of thanksgiving that is before us today.

The task of building the temple would have to be entrusted to all the people; for it was too great for his son Solomon to accomplish alone. This palatial structure would be special, would be unique, because this was the place that God had ordained to be his special dwelling place for many years. ***Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the LORD God.*** Now it is again important to note that David did not say this to belittle his son, nor did David do this to complain that even though he had such a passion for this project he would not see this structure completed. Instead he said this knowing how tremendous the task was. God's people would have to be united in their efforts. They would have to bring together their resources, their time, their gifts, in order that this work would be done; and they did and this magnificent temple was built. The resources were collected. The gifts that God gave to his people were used in service to his kingdom and the temple was built to God's eternal glory.

Reading over this portion of scripture a person may simply marvel at the temple and all its glory and majesty. The gold and silver that would overlay the very walls of the temple would certainly have been a sight to see. Or when we consider this portion of the Bible a person might simply marvel at the generosity of the Israelites. How do they ever give so much? How did they have so much in the first place? These are certainly interesting aspects of the account to think about; but we are much better served if our focus is on the source of all these blessings: Our Almighty Lord and God. For without him none of those Israelites would have had a coin to give, but because of his blessings and love they were able to do great things. His is the power; all good things come from our God, and all this abundance that these people were able to provide for building a temple, it came from our God's hand. The love and the faithfulness of the Lord are the key factors that led God's people to give with a generous and willing heart.

100 and some odd years ago God's people gathered their wealth and supported the work that God placed before them. They took their gathered resources and built a church. In faith they knew this was God pleasing. They trusted that God would take care of them even though they would have to give so much of their own resources. In faith they knew that God would bless their efforts, for they built a church in this town not to their own glory, but to His. It may not have been a structure layered with gold and adorned with precious gems, but it was impressive in its own right. It was an expression of their faith. It was a gift given to God's glory and a church built to honor the name of the LORD. Grateful for the blessings of God they gathered the wealth and the resources that God himself had given them and they supported the work that God had placed before them.

What about now? It is 2000 and some odd years since Christ was born. This current worship structure has been standing for many years now and we don't have any major building projects on the horizons. A major expansion to the current building is not planned, nor is there an expensive renovation project in the works. So then what does this section of Scripture mean for us today?

Well, God wants us to support the work that God has placed before us. He placed before the Israelites the work of building him a temple. He placed before your forefathers the work of building a church in this town. Today he has placed before you opportunities to contribute to his kingdom. He has brought you to faith and joined you to the group of believers so that you and I may worship God, encourage each other, and together take on the task of reaching out with the message of forgiveness through Jesus to others.

Today we praise God that he has put such a faith in your hearts that you willingly give of your time and your efforts to participate in worship. We praise God that there are those among us who give of their time to sing in the choir, to play the music in worship. We praise God that there are

those among us who give of their time to clean and care for this house of worship. In this place you are reminded of your sin, but you also hear about God's grace. In this place you are able to learn more and more about your LORD who gives you all things and has bought you with Christ's blood for eternity. Therefore, out of thanks to God for this spiritual food, you willingly tend to this place of worship. Addressing needs as they come up, making plans to preserve and add to its beauty, you give of your talents and your time, your resources and your treasures to care for this house of God. But let's make this much clear: We don't care for this church building just for the sake of the building itself. We don't give of our time and money and effort to maintain this building so that others commend us on our beautiful church. But rather we maintain this building; we give of ourselves as volunteers; we offering our monetary support so that God may be glorified, his name is hallowed, and his kingdom come.

That happens when God's Word is proclaimed in its truth and purity and his ministry is carried out. God has placed in front of us the opportunity to proclaim his word of truth and due to your support that ministry continues to happen. In this place and in your midst babies are being baptized and weddings are being conducted. Both children and adults are learning more about their God and Savior. God's people are being shepherded through this world of sin and ushered into the eternal peace of heaven, and then funerals are being held in which God's word is proclaimed and explained so that we might give real comfort to those who mourn. This is possible because of your resources and your efforts. God has given you gifts to support this ministry and in faith you have used these gifts; to God be the glory!

So much like it was for the building of the temple, it is more than just one man who has been entrusted with this task. Yes, your pastor carries out the duties of his office, but God gives us all a chance to contribute to his kingdom and serve him faithfully. Your weekly offerings given from a willing heart serve the Lord as you maintain this church and its ministry. Your gifts also have an impact throughout the world as we work together as a synod to proclaim God's Word across the globe. Your time and energy given in support of this church are vital to maintaining the gospel ministry here at St. Matthew's and throughout the world.

God has also placed in front of us some unique opportunities to serve him and his kingdom. And because of his generosity and grace we have this opportunity to proclaim his saving message to the people of our community. In faith God has led us to stand together and present to our community a thorough presentation of God's will for marriage to the people in our community as this institution that God has established has been put under attack. In faith God has led us to gather together the resources that he has given us to start and run a very successful (89 children this year) bible soccer camp the last six years and now we are planning to support the work of a preschool and childcare center in Danube. These are just a few of the amazing things that God has been doing through you and through your contributions. Glory be to God that he has opened your hearts. God be praised that he has led you to willingly serve him and do the work that he has placed before you. For it is only because God has opened up his hand and blessed you with an abundance of goods that you and I can freely give to support the work of his church. It is only because he has touched your heart with the forgiving gospel of Jesus that we are so willing to do this and continue to do this. Knowing the forgiveness and the promise that Christ brings changes how we see everything. It leads us to live our faith and put that faith into action.

You may not have noticed it, but King David ends his prayer with a genuine thankfulness and a confidence that is based on the promises of God which are fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Let's look again at the final words of our reading. ***And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. <sup>18</sup> O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.*** By referencing the name

of the covenant God, the LORD, and by referring to the LORD as the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, David is making a connection with the ultimate promise made through these forefathers and that would continue through him. This promise of the Savior and his undeserved and saving love, that is what would keep this desire to serve the Lord in the hearts of God's people. That is what leads us to thankfully serve the Lord Jesus and do the great things that he has in store for us.

When our Lord Jesus speaks of some of the amazing things a believer does in faith he includes forgiving sins. This is not included as an afterthought in serving the Lord, but this is an amazing opportunity to serve that not only happens in this church building, nor is it done by just one man, but it is awesome opportunity for each one of you to serve your God in your life. Forgiving sins is the amazing work of God's Kingdom to which you readily contribute. Your words of forgiveness, your kind deeds of love, and your willingness to let go of a grudge and patiently forgive; these are precious reflections of Christ's love. Like a precious jewel in the royal setting of God's temple you shine with your Savior's strength and power and power and love. You are servants of the King. You are ministers of the gospel of Jesus and his forgiveness. We are so blessed that we may serve the Lord in this way.

But then that same question that David asked kicks me in the gut. *Who am I?* Who am I that God should allow me to participate in his kingdom? Who am I that God should allow me to participate in his saving work? Who am I that I can take the forgiveness that Jesus won and share it with others? After all, for every act of love and forgiveness there are so many more thoughts and words and deeds of favoritism and hate. For every act of devotion there are so many more thoughts and actions of betrayal and unfaithfulness. For every gift given with a willing and generous heart there are so many examples of how I carelessly forgot to support his work, begrudgingly gave, or selfishly wasted or withheld the treasures that I had received from God. Who am I that God should allow me to contribute to his kingdom? Each one of us can ask ourselves these same types of questions.

God gives us his gracious answer in his Word. He tells us clearly, he tells us repeatedly: *You are forgiven sinners.* You and I are his treasured saints. We are children of God made holy by the perfect sacrifice of Christ Jesus. By his grace you have been brought to faith. You stand in his grace. You have been credited with Christ's righteousness. You know his forgiveness. You have been set free from the slave master of sin and you have been linked to your Lord Jesus. You have been set free to serve him. You have been set free to proclaim and live his love. You have been forgiven so that you may forgive others. This is the work that God has placed before you.

In the community, in your homes, in your church you are able to serve the Lord. God has touched your life with his generosity and grace. He has given you all the blessings that you enjoy and he has given you a heart filled with the love of Christ. And in his wisdom he has given us all an opportunity to contribute to the work of his kingdom. May the LORD lead us all to gladly serve him. May we forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. May we willingly work together contributing our time and talents and treasures in order that we may do the work that God has placed before us. And in all things may we always give God the glory.

I think David summed it all up very well when he prayed. ***And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. <sup>18</sup> O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.*** Amen.