

Sermon - November 13, 2016 - Pentecost 26

Healing Worship Prepare Our Hearts To Offer Thanks To You, O God!

Various Texts



Introduction:

Dear Friends,

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

For the past few weeks we have been meditating on our liturgical worship, on why we do what we do every Sunday as God gathers us in His name. We have meditated on the mayor elements of the Liturgy approaching the end of the series. But until then, we meditate today on another act of worship as we respond in gratitude for God’s provision in the way of our offerings.

Not only God gather’s in his name in worship, provides all his spiritual riches through word and Sacrament, but he also gives all kinds of blessing to sustain our bodies and life, everything you need for your life God gives you. Just picture for a moment all the blessings God gives you: food, clothing, home, land, money, goods, a devout spouse, devout children, good weather, peace, health, good friends, faithful neighbors, and more.

God is good, and from all those blessings you receive you give back to God in a way of offering, that you give to the church, in thanksgiving, yes even in an act of worship, for it is a response to God’s goodness.

Yes at times our own sinful nature can limit us from appreciating God’s goodness, especially when it comes worshiping God in the way of financial offering. It happens, doesn’t it, that sometimes what we bring as an offering is nothing else but leftovers. Packet change, sometimes. Yea, we put what we have left over in our packets, and sometimes it happens that we give what’s left over from our home budget if at all. However here is something that we need to consider what we receive from God are not his leftovers, but he gives abundantly, he gives all kinds of good things for our lives.

I. Satan shackles our hearts to stay in one place with our giving.

He provides everything you need to support this body and life. God gives you your food, your clothes, your home, your health. God even gives you your money—the ability to bring it in. And for what we need to be grateful!

But how are we to be grateful? How are we to offer our thanks to God for all that he gives us? A leftover offering at the church altar hardly seems a heartfelt way to offer your thanks.

Besides, God desires that we should be grateful. Hear from the book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 8:18) chapter 8 and verse 18: “You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”

“Remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth.” That should change our attitude, doesn’t it?

Now hear what the early Church did as we hear from second Corinthians chapter (2 Cor. 8:5) 8 verse 5: “and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”

“They gave themselves first to the Lord.” Now that sound like true worship, doesn’t it!? Then Second Corinthians (2 Cor. 9:12) chapter nine, verse twelve tells us: “For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.”

And lastly also from chapter 9 of Second (2 Cor. 9:7) Corinthians verse 7: “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Yes God loves a cheerful giver. Yet when it comes to preparing an appropriate offering to say “thank-you” to God, the cheerfulness tends to disappear, that is because Satan tries to shackle the hearts and thoughts of the cheerful giver, to make them stay in one place—to make them think that you don’t have to give if you don’t want to.

Besides, there are times when we don’t see God’s provisions coming together and sustaining us. God seems more absent than present. Life just gets harder and harder as time goes, giving an offering is not something we think about or are able to give. But has been there all along ever present with those who trust in him. Even when we’re tempted to despair, he is there assuring us of his promises and giving us his provisions, reminding us that it is he, the Lord, who “will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore.” (Psalm 121:8).

Still, we stick to our old ways. In fact it satan who carefully trains people to do things always the same way, as if they can stand only in one place. Because of Satan, people think they can never make any changes that includes worshiping God with our offerings as well.

James Belasco wrote a book about how difficult it is for people to make changes in their lives. Belasco uses the example of how to teach an elephant to dance. The first thing in teaching an elephant to dance is to train it to stand in one place. So the trainer, while the elephant is young, shackles one leg to a stake in the ground. Of course, the elephant stays shackled in that one place, never moving to another place. Later on, trainers find they can keep adult elephants in one place by putting a small metal bracelet on a leg and attaching it to . . . nothing! The elephant doesn’t move from that one place, as if it’s still shackled securely to that place.

That’s a picture of how Satan makes people think they always need to stand in one place when it comes to worshiping God even with our offerings. It’s as if a person’s heart and thoughts are shackled to stay in one place and can never move to doing something another way. It’s as if their heart has been set on stone and they can do things only one way, it doesn’t apply only to offerings by even by many things related to our spiritual life.

II. But God has given us new hearts, implanted with his Spirit in our Baptism.

But here is good news, that even when God provides everything we need for our daily living, he also does and provides us with something else that helps us to see the beauty of his provision but that we also become thankful people. He operates in us with a heart transplant; he gives us a new heart. Yes he does consults first with his people

about the transplant he'll do. He speaks through the prophet Ezekiel these words, from (Ezekiel 36:26): "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

Now, with new hearts, God's people would now be free from Satan's shackles, free to move around to make new decisions, to seek a deep relationship with God as he does with us.

Now, here is another good news, he not only replaces our heart but he also will give us an implant, he says "and a new spirit I will put within you," and later on he says it is his Spirit that he implants in us.

This act of a heart transplant and the implant of his Spirit, required the work and sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary, to cleanse the sins of every evil heart, and free us from the shackles Satan has put around our legs and minds.

But there is more, in verse 25 (Ezekiel 36:25) of the same chapter 36 in Ezekiel God says this: "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you."

God's word does certainly come true as you and I were baptized, as those who haven't been baptized yet receive the cleansing blessings of baptism, granting you a new life, that's what baptism is, a "life-giving water" gift from God, a life that is dynamic, not like the life shackled by Satan to stand in just one place. And more: your Baptism is "the new birth in the Holy Spirit." Ezekiel, speaking God's promise: "And I will put my Spirit within you."

III. Now God has prepared some steps by which the new heart offers thanks to him.

Now that God created a clean heart in you and renewed a right spirit within you. He prepares some steps you can follow as you offer your thanks to him. First, he gives you clear, straight thinking about your offering and more, that's what the apostle Peter tells us (1 Pet 1:13): "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Then, God gives you a basic guideline when it comes to present your offering, in 1 Corinthians 16:2, he says: "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come."

In other words, think of your thank-offering first, each week, each Lord's Day, each Sunday. Second, put your offering "aside and store it up." Prepare ahead of time—not on your way to church on Sunday morning. Third, prepare your thank offering in proportion to how God has blessed you—as the verse says: "as [you] may prosper." God recognizes that each family, each person, prospers differently. Some prosper more; some prosper less. But each does prosper. Prosper means the increase each person has earned or received each week and give out of your own grateful heart, in conversation with God, in prayer.

IV. This is the baptismal newness of life, including a new way to offer thanks to God.

Now, it is true each of each operates different when it comes to our thank offering, some of us give monthly or biweekly, whatever it works, as long as it is in prayer and between God and you. Some give 10% of their income following the Old

Testament standard, other give more as God has blessed them. It is what God puts in your heart to give.

All happens because you have given a new heart, you given a new Spirit. Through baptism you are now God's son and daughter, living in a new life just a Romans chapter 6, (Romans 6:4) verse 4 tells us: "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

Now in that newness of life you can be free to worship God unshackled and with grateful heart.

Conclusion:

God is good, not only he gather's you in his name in worship, to bless you with all kinds of spiritual riches through word and Sacrament, but he also gives you all kinds of blessing to sustain your bodies and life, everything you need for your life God gives you: food, clothing, home, land, money, goods, a devout spouse, devout children, good weather, peace, health, good friends, faithful neighbors, and more. For all of that we are gratefully thankful, and we show that thankfulness through the offerings we present and place on the altar at our worship services.

And even when satan, our sinful flesh tries to rob of the joy in giving, God renews our hearts, and gives us His spirit so we can be free, and in a strong intimate relationship with him, he will even guide us to worship him the best way possible even in our offerings.

Yes, God prepares your heart to thank him for all this he does for you. In Jesus' name. Amen.