

Cast Your Bread Upon the Water

Ecclesiastes 11 v 1 “Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again”.

When God gives us gifts, He expects for us to use/share them.

Using our gifts often means giving them away.

Giving a gift away is a step of faith.

Our faith that God will be faithful, **is proved by His faithfulness in the past.**

Deuteronomy 8 v 1 – 11 “...tested you to see whether or not you continue to keep His commandments” **v 2** “...for the Lord your God is leading you into a good land...” **v 7**

God is reminding His people of all his gifts to them. Why?

- Because now He is going to give them the Promised Land.

If they couldn't appreciate his gifts in the wilderness, why would they in a good place?

He gave them:

- i) Commandments **v1** A moral code to **live by**
- ii) Food **v 3** Bodily sustenance to **live on**
- iii) Health **v 4** General wellbeing to **live life**
- iv) Discipline **v 5** Self-respect to **live together**
- All God's gifts were to enhance their **individual lives.**

Now God has a greater gift prepared for them:

v 7 “...a land where you will lack nothing”.

But God's warning is that they may soon forget:

v 14 “...**you** will become proud of what **you've** achieved, and **you will** forget the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery”.

God's challenge:

Ecclesiastes 11 v 1 – Go on, test your faith, **give** that God may **bless** you!

We honour God by –

- i) Caring for **one another** **Matthew 19 v 19, 22 v 39, Luke 10 v 27**
- ii) Loving **one another** **John 13 v 34 – 35**
- iii) Giving to **one another** **Matthew 10 v 8, Luke 6 v 38**

John 14 v 27 “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. But, not in the same way that the world gives...”

I Corinthians 14 v 12 “Since you are eager to receive spiritual gifts, desire more those gifts which will edify/encourage the Church/one another”.

...Should I Give?

Why Should I Give?

God's perfect example for GIVING is in **John 3 v 16** "...that He gave..."

John 15 v 13 "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends".

Romans 5 v 8 "God demonstrated His love to us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us".

So, therefore, it is clear that God was not expecting a favour in return. What He gave – He gave without conditions.

This Love-Gift is called **GRACE**

Romans 6 v 22 – 23 "Now that you have been set free from sin, and have become God's own, you will reap His benefits which lead to eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the **gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Why, then should we give?

- So that we might be rewarded?
- So that we might be re-imbursed?
- So that we might be favourably recognised?
- So that we might feel better about ourselves?

John 14 v 27 "...I do not give to you as the world gives..."

Ecclesiastes 11 v 1 "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again".

We give to please God, and expect nothing in return.

However, God's promise to us, is **Luke 6 v 3** "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap."

Jesus continues with this observation:

"Understand this, though, that with the measure by which you give, it will be by that same measure that you will be blessed."

What Should I Give?

Mary gave her body

Luke 1 v 38 "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said it will be."

Levi gave his livelihood

Luke 5 v 28 "So Levi got up from his booth, left everything, and followed Him."

Mary, Lazarus' sister, gave her full attention

Luke 10 v 42 "For Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Zacchaeus gave up his cheating ways

Luke 19 v 8 "Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and recompense any whom I have cheated."

The Widow gave all she had

Luke 21 v 3 "Truthfully, this poor woman has given more than any of these wealthy folk."

Jesus Christ gave Himself for us

Luke 22 v 19 "He broke the bread, saying, 'This is my body, given for you'..... And taking the cup, He said, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you'."

When Should I Give?

2 Kings 4 v 1 – 7 "...your servant has nothing left in the house, but a small jar of olive oil..."

John 6 v 9 "...here is a boy with five loaves and two small fish – but how far will they go among so many?..."

The "questions" have somewhat dovetailed and overlapped.

It is becoming apparent that the direct formats are not just dealing with the base question, but with emotional and deeper questions.

"When" should I give, is not necessarily asking a time structure or an event, but "When, in my heart, am I prepared to give to God?

God demands of me, at a time that it may be an inconvenience to me. Giving is not out of our abundance, but out of our all.

Giving to God demands:

i) a step out in faith;

often at a time when I don't want to put myself out!

James 2 v 24 "...for you see that a person is justified by what he does, and not just by his faith alone."

ii) a digging deep into my life;

often at a time when I think I've nothing to spare!

2 Corinthians 12 v 10, *Paul declares*, "...for in my weakness /emptiness, that is when I am strong..."

iii) a sacrifice of my comfort;

often at a time when my life is going along nicely!

Romans 12 v 1 "...but offer your bodies to God as living sacrifices..."

iv) a selfless attitude;

often at a time when I'm caught up in my own concerns!

Philippians 2 v 3 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vanity, but, in humility, consider others ahead of yourself."

To Whom Should I Give?

When we use the verb "Give" we could easily replace it with "Encourage". All the "?" would also acknowledge that "to give" is "to encourage".

Why/What/When/How much/Where/How should I encourage?

For that is what we do when we Give of ourselves fully before God.

Hebrews 10 v 19 – 25 "...so, therefore, let us continue in encouraging one another..."

Conversely: Let us continue in "Giving" to one another!

This Lenten period we have the opportunity (through the envelopes) to bless others.

Through letters, cuppas, tasks, money, or gifts.

As we bring our Easter Gift Day envelopes, before the Lord, let us, once again, bless others.

Proverbs 10 v 22 "The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and He adds no trouble to it."

God will be faithful to us and enrich our lives, letting no ill befall us.

Basically: if we give – God will bless us!

To Whom?

"I want to give, but I get bombarded with "needs" and "good causes".

"To whom should I give?"

The Apostle Paul expressed the value of giving in his letter to the

Philippians 4 v 10 – 20

v 13 "I can do all things through Christ, Who strengthens me."

Our gifts are in on top of God's wonderful provision, not just a "guilt" gift.

v 14 "You shared in my troubles."

Our gifts are from empathy, not just sympathy.

v 16 "You sent me aid again and again, when I was in need."

Our gifts are a pouring out of love, not just a token effort.

v 18 "They are fragrant offerings, acceptable sacrifices, pleasing to God."

Our gifts are pleasing to God, not boasting for us.

v 19 "Therefore, God will supply and meet all your needs, according to His glorious riches."

Our gifts are investments in eternity, not just in this life.

Five Stones

1 Samuel 17 v 40 "...so David selected five smooth stones from the brook..and with his sling in his hand, he approached the Philistine."

God has given us Gifts.

These gifts are often in the form of talents/skills/abilities.

Gifts from God are to be used for his glory.

What can we learn from the story of David & Goliath?

Stone One: *he was at the right place at the right time*

If God wants to use our talent, we have to be where He wants us.

Stone Two: *he saw the enemy and feared not*

If God wants to use our talent, we have to put our trust wholly in Him.

Stone Three: *he rejected the armour of a soldier*

If God wants to use our talent, we have to strip off human strength.

Stone Four: *he faced up to the challenge in front of him*

If God wants to use our talent, we have to stand firm in our faith.

Stone Five: *he used the skills that he had honed in his life*

If God wants to use our talent, we have to hand them over to him.

Ephesians 3 v 14 – 21 "...my prayer for you, is that you may be grounded in faith, and receive God's power to grasp the immeasurable knowledge of His love..."