

Sunday, May 2nd, 2010

Living Hope EFC

Art Smith

The Grace of Giving: God's Design to Finance Priest & Pastor

JOKE: A man called the church and asked if he could speak to the Head Hog at the Trough. The secretary said, "Who?"

"I want to speak to the **Head Hog at the Trough!**"

Sure now that she had heard correctly, the secretary said, "Sir, if you mean our pastor, you will have to treat him with more respect- and ask for 'The Reverend' or 'The Pastor.' But certainly you cannot refer to him as the Head Hog at the Trough!"

At this the man said, "Oh, I see. Well, I have \$10,000 I was thinking of donating to the Building Fund."

Secretary: "Hold the line – I think the **Big Pig** just walked in the door."

-Swindoll, *Tale of Tardy Oxcart*, 534

- It is certainly true that when it comes to the matter of Christian Giving money affects how we see ourselves, the pastor & the reason we give

Last Week:

Q: Jesus said: "I will build my church & the gates of Hell will not prevail against it." What has been the reason for His success?

- Humanly speaking, what is required to plant & establish a church?
- What will determine whether of not Living Hope Church succeeds?
- What kinds of things must happen? What must WE do? ...YOU do?

The question is not whether Christ will build His Church.

The question is whether of not we are willing to play on His Team?

FIRST PRIORITY = Rom.12:1-2 **1- Live lives fully committed to Him.**

- WE are asked to live by faith in God's reality! (Rom.5:1,6:6, 8:1,17)

NEXT PAUL SAYS: We must Play as a Team, Christ IS the Coach!

- Principles of playing on Christ's Team with our varied gifts, 12:3-8.

TODAY

The Grace of Giving: God's Design to Finance Priest & Pastor

THE PATTERN OF GIVING IN THE OT

Q: Why look at the OT? - Rom.15:4. It was written to teach us.

- It gives us God's example of how He established His faith community

FIRST: WHAT WAS GOD DOING IN THE OT, BEFORE CHRIST CAME?

His Objective: Because sin had entered the human race, and the wages of sin was death (judgment), God was bringing salvation to the world.

Basic Message of Historical Books:

- **The record of God's redemptive activities by choosing Israel and bringing salvation to the whole world through the Jews.**
- **GENESIS** introduces the foundation of God's relationship with Israel, through His choice of and cov't with Abraham.
- **EXODUS**: God delivers them from Egyptian bondage & **forms a Cov't** with them - **providing for His personal presence in the midst of them.**
- **Exodus 19:3-6, 25:22**; 40:34-38. – **1 Kings 8:10-11**,29,52-53.

PURPOSE: **Deut: 4:5-8, 7:2-6**; 1 Kings 8:41-43. Nations may know God!

HIS METHOD: Establish His people **in his Land**, with **His system** of worship, to reveal Himself among the nations. –Deut.12-13

- The **LAW** contained God's regulations for political, economic, moral, marital, military & religious procedures. **Result=peculiar people.**

RELIGIOUS SYSTEM: Was the heart of everything. - **Deut.12:4-7**,11-15.

- Three times a year all the men went to Jerusalem: Deut.16:16
- Men were the leaders of the home: Deut.6:5-12. "*Don't forget God!*"

Q: So did the men only hear God's Word 3 times a year?

PRIESTS & LEVITES: God's workers in the Tabernacle & Temple

Numbers 3-4: Original assignments for the Levites

Num. 3

⁶ "Bring the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him. ⁷ They are to perform duties for him and for the whole community at the Tent of Meeting by doing the work of the tabernacle...⁹ **Give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to him.**

¹⁰ Appoint Aaron and his sons to serve as priests

- **3:5-17 – Levi had 3 sons**: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. They did all the Tabernacle service. The initial total number was **8,580** (4:48).
- **Priests**, Aaron & his descendants, are from Levi's line through **Kohath**
- All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.

God's special plan for them.

- **Joshua 21**: They were **dispersed** throughout all the tribes in Israel.
- **Their job: Lev.10:11, Mal. 2:7**. They **taught** the people God's Word. Lev.10:11 "You must teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses."

- **Their pay?**

1- **Lev.27:30, a tenth** of everything belongs to God.

Lev.27:30 "A *tithe* of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

Num.18:21 "I give to the Levites *all the tithes* in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.

2—**Num.18:20-31**, Levites received the **tithe**, & tithed to priests.

3- The Israelites gave two other tithes. A tithe brought to Jerusalem

(Dt.14:22-23) and one for the poor every 3rd year (Dt.14:28).

ILLUS: Initial Numbering of the People, Levites & Priests.

- All the Levites 30-50 years old = 8,580 (Num.4:48).
- Number of all the men 20 years & older = 603,550 (Num.1:46).
- 603,550 divided by 8580 = **70 men / every Levite.**
- 70 men X \$45,000 / yr = \$3,150,000; X 10% = \$315,000 / Levite.
- 10% of \$315,000 = \$31,500; X 8580 Levites = \$270,270,000
- \$270,270,000 divided by 5 priests (Num.3:2) = \$54,054,000/ priest.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE SYSTEM BROKE DOWN?

Nehemiah 10:35-39, after the captivity Nehemiah re-instituted the tithes.

- He returned to the King's service, came back and: 13:4-14. (444BC)

Malachi (430BC): 3:6-10. 10-15 years after Nehemiah = no tithes...

⁶ "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?' ⁸ **"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.**

"But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'

"In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

- **Q:** Does it sound like kind of a strong accusation?
- Consider? **WHO – in the universe would want to keep God from getting what is His?**
And WHY? - So God would be dishonored, His Word would not be taught, His people would not know Him, His purposes would fail!
- To get us to spend \$ on ourselves & not give God His 10%=rob God

POINT: God chose Israel to make HIM known to the nations. Central to making HIM known, was knowing God personally. The people knew God through His Word, the Feasts, and the Law. The Temple, Priests & Levites were essential to God's program/ objective to save all men.

- When the people ceased financing the Levites & the Temple, God's means of making Israel distinct among the nations faded, Israel turned to other gods –& became just like the nations. God kicked them out!

PRINCIPLE: God instituted the tithe to sustain the livelihood of the Priests & Levites, **because of the value of His Word** to transform His chosen people, and to draw the nations to His salvation.

- **Q: Is America losing the value of God's Word? Is the Church? R we?**

THE PATTERN OF GIVING IN THE NT

FIRST: WHAT IS GOD'S OBJECTIVE FOR THE CHURCH?

His Objective: Romans 1:5. Matt.16:18 **"I will build"** (Same as the OT)
Matthew 16:18 **"I will build my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Romans 1:5 “Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship **to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.**”

HIS METHOD: Matt.28:20; Acts 14:21-23 –To establish local churches.

Acts 14:21-23 ²¹They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples...²³Paul and Barnabas **appointed elders** for them in each church

- First, missionaries went to new areas to share the Good News.
- Then, elders and pastors were appointed for long-term leadership.
- Titus 1:5, 1 Tim.3:14-15.

THE CHURCH: Is the heart of everything.

- The majority of the early church were Jews. They knew the OT Law. They were used to meeting weekly in synagogues.
- When converted, they met on the **first day of the week** to celebrate Christ's resurrection. In the early days of Acts they met daily!
- **The church is the “pillar & foundation of the truth,” 1 Tim.3:15.**
- Eph.1:22; 2:19-22, **3:7-12**, 20, 5:25-32 – The Church is His Bride!

Ephesians 3 ⁸Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to make plain to everyone **the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God**, who created all things. ¹⁰His intent was that **now, through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. **¹²In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.**

PASTOR-TEACHER: Pastors are to the church what Levites were in OT

Their Job: **Eph.4:11-13, 2 Tim.2:15, 3:14-17**, 4:1-5; 2:1-2; 1Tim.4:13

Ephesians 4

¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be **pastors and teachers**,

¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach **unity in the faith** and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of **the fullness of Christ**.

- God's people are to grow in knowing God, and being shaped by the HS into Christ's character likeness. The pastor it to teach God's Word

Their Pay: While missionaries raised finances to reach new people (Phil.4:15), **pastor-teachers** were to receive their income from church.

- **1 Cor.9:11,13-14**—Paul draws his analogy straight from the OT system

1 Cor. 9 ¹¹If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?...¹³Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴In the same way, **the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.**

- **“The Lord has commanded”** pastors receive living from their ministry.
- Matt.22:21 – Jesus: Give to Caesars what is his, and to God – His.
- **1 Tim.5:17-18** “Double honor:” = refers to financial support.

1 Timothy 5 ¹⁷The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are *worthy of double honor*, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "*The worker deserves his wages.*"

- (Paul here quotes Jesus words: Luke 10:7, when he sent out the 72.)
- This principle is restated in Gal.6:6 & Rom.16:27

GIVING IN THE NT? Does God want Christians to give a tithe?

(1) The early church was made up of mostly Jews, who would have understood the support system of tithing & additional offerings.

- The natural likelihood was that the church would give as much to God to propagate His purposes after the Messiah came, as before.
- Paul uses **OT examples** and analogies to instruct on NT giving.
- Nowhere are we told that we should not give at least a tenth of our income to sustain God's pastors and teachers.

PRINCIPLE: God instituted the tithe to sustain the livelihood of the Priests & Levites, because of the value of His Word in His salvation of mankind.

- **Has anything changed in God's evaluation of His Word or Church?**

(2) The NT everywhere encourages generous giving, not the opposite.

- 1 Cor.16:1-2: Giving was regular & proportionate.
- 2 Cor.8:7-9, 9:6-8. Jesus: Luke 6:38, Matt.10:42.

ILLUS: How would this look - at Living Hope Church?

- 5 families - average of \$3,000/mo income = \$45,000 = \$4,500/ mo.

POINT: As small as we are, if everyone gave 10% we have enough!

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE SYSTEM BREAKS DOWN?

WePlantChurches.com

Great Lakes Church Planting In North America **3 out of 5** new churchs planted are out of business in 5 years, 40% of new churches survive.

Ed Stetzer: Church Planting Survivability Study, 2007

We were able to determine the survivability of **2,080** church plants.

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE: The mean attendance figures

1: 42 2: 57 3: 73 4: 84

FUNDING: The mean annual funding from all outside sources (i.e., denomination, sponsoring church, individual support).

Year 1 - \$34,000 Year 2 - \$27,500 Year 3 - \$20,000 Year 4 - \$20,000

CHURCH PLANT INCOME: The mean annual church receipts (income).

Year 1 - \$39,000 Year 2 - \$53,000 Year 3 - \$75,000 Year 4 - \$90,000

STEWARDSHIP PLAN

The church plant having a proactive stewardship development plan enabling the church to be financially self-sufficient *increases* the odds of survivability by over 178 percent. Of those church plants who had a stewardship development plan, 81 percent of churches survived whereas only 68 percent of church plants survived among those who did not have a stewardship plan.

CONCLUSION:

Why is the church in the US struggling? Do Christians not have enough \$? I think not. It is rather that we are not giving God His portion. And **we are not giving because we do not understand the value of His Word.**

Brian Kluth

Only 5% of Americans give 10% or more of their income to Christian/charitable causes. Most Christians only donate 2-3% of their income (which is less than people gave during the Great Depression when giving average 3.3%). - *George Barna and Empty Tomb*

- In the USA there is a **40 year decline** in the % of income that Christians donate. Empty Tomb
- In many churches, 1/3 of attendees give \$0, 1/3 give under \$500, and 1/3 give over \$500/year in recordable donations. In larger churches, the % that give \$0 dollars can reach 50%CSA

The answer to financing pastors/ churches is Biblical giving.

Do you think God will not take care of you, if you honor Him with your wealth? Matt.6:33.

God says that the tithe is His. And that tithe goes to pay the priest & now the pastor – so the Word of God can be continually taught, the Christian can Know God and change to be like Christ, and disciples can be made.

That's why we give.

We give to God, because it is God who first gave to us, and we want to be part of His team – building His kingdom.