

Radiant Church, October 4, 2020
Mike Rydman

The Church We Can Be Part 6

Like it or not, we're a generous church. We've "given away" a lot of people in our history. Anchorage, Wasilla, Palmer, Bozeman MT, Lake Chelan WA, Mesa AZ, Duluth MN, and sometimes to other churches here in town

Our church is made up of 3 kinds of people

Those who have always been here, and will never leave

Those who came here from somewhere else, and never want to leave

Those who came here, but did not, or do not intend to stay

How the first two kinds of people treat the third kind of person is telling of what kind of church we can be

We've had people come and hang with us for a bit, 6 months, maybe a year

Usually because they followed someone else

Or we were the first church they tried out after moving to Juneau

Or they were exhausted and looking for repair from a former church

Someone could ask me the question, "Are you afraid the day will come when there won't be anyone left?" (Only every Sunday!)

Giving people away is just one way God expresses His generosity

When it comes to how we manage what God has given us, there are really two kinds of people: Spenders and Savers

Friend Matt Kruse describes it this way:

Spender: Just got paid. Friday night. Party's happening. Money's gone by Saturday

Saver: Just got paid. Friday night. Party's happening. Tell me how it goes. I'll be at the bank

Spender: Hour at Sportsman's Warehouse, back to the car carrying multiple bags

Saver: Hour at Sportsman's Warehouse. You come out with nothing but an attitude because nothing was on sale

Spender: 20 minutes on Amazon, and your finger's cramping from clicking "add to cart"

Saver: 20 minutes on Amazon, and your cart is empty

Spender: UPS driver is invited to your house for Thanksgiving

Saver: UPS driver has never stopped in front of your house

Spender: Credit card statement is only 19 pages long this month. (But look! My Alaska Airlines reward miles are growing, rapidly!)

Saver: Credit card statement: Inactive account

These seem like polar opposites, but they're just 2 sides to the same coin

In both cases, we're grasping everything for ourselves
If it's Halloween candy, whether you eat it all that night, or stash it away for months,
you're still keeping it all for yourselves

There's a third way to manage what God gives us, and gives our church
Not the default action of any human heart or hands
Counter-intuitive, unusual, selfless, gospel-driven
We're all natural consumers and hoarders
Our idea is: It's more blessed to receive than to give

The apostle Paul, on the other hand, managed what God gave him differently
Acts 20:32 *And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able
to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

Inheritance is getting something you don't deserve. It's not an entitlement

Acts 20:33 *I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.*

This can be true of one person toward another person's wealth
And it can be true of our church when we look at other church's budget and building

Acts 20:34 *You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to
those who were with me.*

Paul saying this meant that he had sacrificed in order to fulfill his ministry to them
We all want to know our spiritual gifts, and almost all of us want to use those gifts in
a way that will result in good, positive, successful gospel things
But only a few of us realize that we will have to sacrifice some other things in order
to see our efforts result in good, positive, successful gospel things

Acts 20:35 *In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must
help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is
more blessed to give than to receive.'*

The purpose, Paul says, in his working hard...was to help "the weak"
To give it away, to someone else, or somewhere else

This is all rooted in the character of God

God gives his first man a garden
God gives his first man a woman, and the man to the woman. Marriage is a gift
When they sinned, God still gave them clothes, better than leaves
God gives Adam and Eve three sons (one a partial fulfillment of the gospel promise)
God gives Sarah a son
God gives Isaac a wife
God gives Moses a staff

God gives His people a way out of Egypt, through an ocean, through a desert
God gives them food, for 40 years
God gives His people a land to live in, already built up and farms that produce
God gives Samson strength
God gives Jonathan a friend, and his friend David a kingdom to rule over
God gives Solomon wisdom
God gave some people their physical life back
God gave some others full and complete physical healing
And God, openhanded with His greatest and treasured possession, gave us Jesus

Romans 8:32 *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Answer: No way He wouldn't!*

Think of what those “all things” could be
Time, Talent, Treasures

Most of us are pretty generous giving one, even two of those, but we want to keep the 3rd for ourselves. It may be different for each of us what we want to keep for ourselves

Now since you think this sermon is all about giving money, let's go down that path for a moment...

Here are some “tests” you can take on yourselves, to see if you are generous, if you reflect our generous God:

The Hesitation Test - is there hesitation in giving or giving any more to our church and mission? When I do give, do I find myself wishing I hadn't? Is it because I don't trust God to provide for what I need? Is it because I'm more in love with this world and the fun things and experiences I can have? Do I have an underlying heart issue I refuse to identify and deal with?

The Duty Test - Giving is much an act of obedience as is worship. Is my level of generosity keeping pace with how I worship? What if my worship is lame?

The Leftovers Test - When I look at my bank statement, what does it reveal about my priorities? Does God only get my leftovers? Do I determine how much I'm going to give only after I've determined what I need to maintain my chosen lifestyle, my preferred standard of living? In other words, does God come last with me?

The “What The...” Test - If an unsaved person looked at your church giving statement, would he/she just shrug their shoulders, or would they respond with “What the...!” Would that same person connect the dots and assume your giving is related to how serious you are about knowing and serving Jesus and His Church?

The Island Test - Do you hope your giving (or lack of giving) is known only to you? Because you'd be embarrassed if anyone else knew? (I've got bad news for you. Someone else (besides God) does know. We call those "End of Year Giving Statements." Because everyone wants to know what they can write off at tax time.)

The Face-To-Face Test - We are going to face Jesus face-to-face someday. On that day do we each want to be able to say "Look! Look at how I stewarded what You gave me. I gave generously and sacrificially?" Or, are we just planning to hang our heads regretfully and count on God's grace in forgiveness again?

Now let's wrap this up with talking about the future...

We are looking for a place to meet on Sundays
Available times will likely not be at 10:00am

Deb and I will not be here forever. Our church cannot afford to replace me.
How can we together plan for that transition?

Survive or Thrive?

What will it require for us to point toward thriving as a family of servant missionaries learning to be and make disciples of Jesus?

In our responses to these and other questions, we will see the need for a faithful, expectant outlook, and a generous response to our very generous God