

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 28 July 2024

Sermon Title : Not What But Where

Speaker : Rev Reuben Ng

Text : 1 Corinthians 13:3

INTRODUCTION

Pledge Sunday is when we are invited to make a commitment to give to the Lord. Superficially, it is about giving money, but it is really beyond that. We give to the Lord as a form of worship and it is also an important way to encourage and teach us about managing and stewarding God's finances which He has placed in our care.

Reasons for Giving

- A form of worship to the Lord
Just like how we worship God by singing and lifting out hands while attending Sunday service or serving in various ministries with our time, talents, gifts and skills, we also worship the Lord by giving to His Kingdom work.
- Acknowledging God
By giving, we acknowledge that God is the source of all that we have. Everything belongs to God, thus when we give, we are returning to Him a portion of all that He has blessed us with.
- Fixing our eyes on the Blesser and not the blessings
By giving to God, we are constantly reminded to not allow all the things that we have been blessed with to become our god. As we receive blessings from God, over time, it is easy for our eyes to be drawn away from the 'Blesser' and instead be focused on the blessings. If we are not careful, the blessings then start to take a higher priority over God and God becomes something of lower priority. Therefore, giving helps us not fall into the temptation where money becomes our god.

How 'Pledging' helps

- While the word 'pledging' is not found in the Bible, it means to commit, dedicate and make a decision to do something. Often times, after reading something or hearing a message or a song, we are convicted to do something for the Lord but unless we quickly tell someone about our decision to commit to it and that we will be accountable to them, for them to check in on whether we have kept

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to the commitment, it is easy for us to forget about it. Pledging helps us to be accountable to our commitment of giving to the Lord through the church.

- Knowing the total amount to be collected when the pledge cards are collated helps our church leadership manage and steward the finances better. We will not fall into a situation whereby we overspend or hoard due to uncertainty. Instead, we will be able to see what can be done with the money in accordance with God's will so that His work is done to reach more people and that we truly transform lives and change the world.

Not What But Where

And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good. (1 Cor 13:3)

There are 2 action words/verbs – 'give' and 'surrender' and 1 noun – 'love' in this verse.

1) Give

This verse shows that giving is a good thing, and it also addresses how much to give (all) and to whom (charity). We are to give to people whether deserving or undeserving to help them with all that we have.

2) Surrender

Another word for surrender is give. Giving our body here refers to martyrdom, meaning to give our lives and die for Jesus Christ.

3) Love

While all the giving mentioned are commendable in the verse and noble things to do, the above 2 points only cover the 'what' of giving. Love provides the answer about the 'where' of giving. Giving needs to come from a heart of 'love' in order to be beneficial.

- Paul is hence saying that God is not so much concerned with the amount of money or 'what' we are giving but rather with 'where' the giving is coming from.

How to Give – Where to Start

Malachi 3:8 speaks of robbing God through tithes and offerings. This is a reminder once again that everything that we have belongs to God as we can only rob something from someone when it belongs to them. The word 'tithes' also provides a point of reference on how much to give, as it means a tenth or 10 percent.

A tenth of what?

Gen 14:20 – Abraham had just won a mighty battle against several kings and when Melchizedek king of Salem and the priest of God Most High blessed him and said that

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God delivered his enemies into his hands, Abraham gave him a tenth of everything he had.

God is focuses on the 'Where' and not the 'What'

Mark 12:41-44

v41: Jesus sits opposite the treasury to watch how people gave money – We can be assured that whatever Jesus did in His earthly ministry, God surely does, as Jesus was the mirror of perfect ministry. Jesus was watching the attitude and posture of the people who were giving; if it was that of worship, gratitude and love.

v42: In contrast to the rich people giving large amounts of money, the poor widow mentioned gave two lepta – 'Poor widow' describes the state which this woman was in, she must have lost her husband who was her sole source of income and provision and he had left her no inheritance. 'Lepta' (smallest currency denomination) described the quantitative magnitude of her contribution, which was a small (probably equivalent to 1 cent today), insignificant and inconsequential amount.

v43: Upon watching this poor widow's contribution, Jesus's response was to call His disciples to Him and say that she had put in more than all the contributors to the treasury – Although this could mean that what she gave is more than what was given by each contributor, it is postulated by commentators and scholars that Jesus likely meant that the two lepta was more than the combined collection of the treasury.

v44: Jesus goes on to say that the reason is because the others put in out of their surplus, but the poor widow, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on – This explains why Jesus would make such a mathematically inaccurate statement. It exemplifies that God truly is concerned about 'where' our giving comes from. By giving all that she had, out of nothingness, she was walking into uncertainty so she must really have given from a heart of worship, gratitude and love.

CONCLUSION

We can only give all that we have from a heart of worship, gratitude and love. Although God is not looking for the 'what' (how much) but the 'where' our giving is coming from, He wants a 100 percent of our hearts. He wants us to fall in love with Him again and again, to recognise and respond to His love. God, as a Giver, does not just give a portion, but He gives generously, His whole, most precious and cherished Son out of love. Jesus gave Himself for us not out of convenience or duty but out of love, and He gave us His whole life. If our God and our Master can give us fully, it is also for us to love Him fully. Pledging is not to reach a monetary target for the church but for us as followers of Christ to take a step towards growing in this area of discipleship where we begin to give in worship, gratitude and love.

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A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Imagine that God was watching when you gave in tithe and offering last Sunday:

- (i) How do you feel?
- (ii) Is there anything you need to change the next time you give?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. Read 1 Corinthians 13:3 together. Why is it important to give from a heart of worship, gratitude and love instead of out of convenience/duty/other motivations?
- 3b. Pledging to tithe is making a commitment to be accountable to God in our giving. We also learnt that God is more concerned about the 'where' we are giving from than about the 'what' we are giving. Do you hesitate to pledge? Why or why not?
- 4a. In your own posture of giving, do you relate more closely with the rich people or the poor widow?
- 4b. (i) Why do you think the 'poor widow' was willing to give out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on?
- 4c. (ii) What does this say about her relationship with God?
- 4d. Have you been accountable in the giving of tithes and offerings? How can your group members encourage or help you to be accountable?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your testimony on a time where you were convicted by the magnitude of God's love and acted upon it to give to His Kingdom work generously. What was the effect of your giving?

OR

Give thanks to God for being our generous Giver who gave His whole, most precious and cherished Son out of love, not out of convenience or duty.

6. Take time to pray for each other that you will all take the step in making that commitment of giving and for the Holy Spirit to lead you to a place where you can give from a heart of worship, gratitude and love so you will never rob God of tithes and offerings (Micah 3:8).

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. A Thousand Hallelujahs – Brooke Ligertwood
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR_sl9lkowA&ab_channel=BrookeLigertwood
2. Alabaster Jar – Gateway Worship
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFhftNsHyds&ab_channel=316Music
3. Tabernacle – Awaken Generation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hvJiLXNqUQ&ab_channel=CindyNgo

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