

The Blueprint for Continued “Church Building”

1 Chronicles 22:1-16 (Bringing Mission into Focus - Give Back)

In 1967, our congregation began to make plans for a new church building as the Sunday School and other groups of the church needed more room. So land was purchased at the corner of Centralia and Devendorf Streets to be the site of a new church building. Financial building began. Designs were drawn. Plans were made wisely and within the abilities of the congregation. Materials were gathered. Construction started. From the moment ground was broken in 1973 until this building’s completion in 1974, the builders followed those plans, a blueprint you might say. Without that blueprint to follow, the builders would not have been able to complete this wonderful building that serves our congregation today.

This building is done. Over the years there have been additions to it such as the gymnasium and the narthex in 2000. There have been upgrades like the recent technology upgrades here in the sanctuary or the handicap accessible door. Yet “church building” continues to this day. I don’t mean building maintenance plans and future upgrades. Nor am I suggesting we start a building project. I’m talking about carrying out the mission of this visible church that its people are on so that God’s invisible Church is built up. As the builders of this church building had blueprints, so we as “church builders” have a blueprint for that continued church building.

We have already talked about three components of that blueprint - worshipping around Word and Sacrament, learning by growing in God’s grace, and reaching out with the good news of Christ’s love for the world. Yet that blueprint also involves the builders, every one of us, being involved in and supporting that mission by giving back some of what has already been given to us. Without that final component of God’s people giving back a portion of our time, our abilities, and our earthly possessions, it makes it hard for any church to function and carry out its mission well. Today as we think about that component in the blueprint for continued church building, we see that blueprint being carried out already through King David as he wanted to thankfully give back by literally planning a building project.

In our reading we hear David at the end of his life making preparations and plans to build a house for the Lord. He wanted to build a temple in Jerusalem which would serve as the permanent central point of Israel’s worship life. Years before David had looked at how richly the Lord had blessed him. Sitting in his beautiful palace he saw that God’s house was nothing more than a tent. So David had it in his heart to begin a building project - to build a house for the Lord his Savior. However it wouldn’t be for David to do the actual building. It was for his son Solomon to carry out that work. Yet that didn’t stop David from getting everything ready for Solomon. David gathered together all the necessary materials and supplies to build a beautiful temple for the Lord and to his glory.

The writer of Chronicles tells us of those preparations. David gathered massive quantities of building supplies. Stones were trimmed and made ready. Large amounts of cedar logs which came from the lands of Tyre and Sidon north of Israel were provided. There were 120,000 talents of gold and a million talents of silver. A talent was a unit of measurement that was equal to about 75 pounds. So do the math. If I did my math right there was about 9,000,000 pounds or 4,500 tons of gold. There was 75,000,000 pounds or 37,500 tons of silver. That’s a lot of gold and silver. Yet David provided more building supplies. There was so much bronze and iron that it was too much to be weighed. This temple would not be lacking in supplies as David set what he had accumulated aside and gave them back to God for his house.

It wasn’t just building materials David gathered, but it was also surrounding Solomon with plenty of skilled laborers who knew how to work with those materials. Stonecutters, masons, wood workers, and those capable in all

kinds of crafts were made ready to use their time and abilities for this building project. David made sure all that was needed to build a house for the Lord and to God's glory were in the hands of the project coordinator - Solomon. There was nothing Solomon had to do except start building.

We look at a list like 1 Chronicles gives us and we can't help but say, "Wow"! There was nothing held back from building a house for the Lord. Yet we aren't left "supply-less" as the desire also fills our hearts to give back to our gracious God who sent his Son to save us from our sins. As David provided all the supplies and the people with the abilities, the one to whom we give back a portion of our time, our abilities, and our earthly possessions in service to him is the same one who provides us with all those blessings. Having those blessings placed in our lives, God is laying before us opportunities to thankfully give back some of what we have been given to keep building his church by participating in and supporting its mission. What God has placed in our lives probably does not compare from an earthly standpoint to what David provided, but when we look at our lives we see the blessings of time, talents, and treasures God has placed in our hands given back with hearts of thankfulness and trust.

This whole project came about because David wanted to build out of thankfulness. His heart was set on building a house for the Lord, but the reason David couldn't do it himself had nothing to do with his heart. It was his blood stained hands from so many years of battle. Yet God made a promise to David. **"My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the name of the Lord my God. But this word of the Lord was laid upon me: 'You have shed much blood. You have waged great wars. You will not build a house for my name because of the great amount of blood you have shed on the earth in my presence. You see, a son has been born to you. He will be a man of peace. To him I will give peace from all the enemies around him. Solomon will be his name. I will bestow peace and quiet upon Israel in his days. He will build a house for my name. He will be my son. I will be his father. I will establish the throne of his kingdom in Israel forever.'" (vs. 7-10)** David believed that promise and he encouraged his son to do the same.

"Now, my son, the Lord will be with you. You will succeed. You will build the house for the Lord your God, as he has said about you. The Lord will give you discretion and understanding. He will give you orders about Israel and about how to keep the Law of the Lord your God. You will prosper if you will continue to carry out the statutes and the judgments that the Lord commanded Moses for Israel. Be strong and be courageous. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed." (vs. 11-13) This project would be a success because the Lord was going to bless it. God would be with Solomon as he built the temple. God would give wisdom and understanding in the building process to make wise use of all those materials and laborers. Placing God's promises on Solomon's heart, David is encouraging his son to go forward. Be strong and courageous. Rely on God and his grace for strength. Don't be afraid and don't doubt. Trust his faithful love to keep his promises.

What makes us hesitant or even keeps us from giving back just a portion of our time, our abilities, and our earthly possessions may have nothing to do with a lack of providing on God's part. Could it be a lack of trust on our part? Can you hear the doubting and fearful heart? "If I give back some of my time using my abilities to serve at church, I won't have time to spend with my family and do other things I need to do. Even if I did, I don't know what abilities I have which could be used in the church. If I give back a portion of the earthly possessions I have to support the work of the church I won't be able to use in my own life. Let's face it I don't have much or anything really at all I can give back without giving something up that I might need later."

My friends, we should never think of giving back as giving something up. Instead think of giving back as a way to express trust. Isn't trust the heart of the Christian faith? We trust that through Jesus God has already provided all that we truly need. We have life and salvation all through faith in Jesus. If we trust that we have all of this by the grace of God, unearned and undeserved, couldn't he also keep supplying us with more time to use our abilities as well as more our earthly possessions in some way? When Israel was struggling with their tithe, their giving back of

the firstfruits to God, God said to the people in Malachi 3, **“Bring the complete tithe to the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Just test me in this, says the Lord of Armies. See whether I do not open for you the windows of heaven and pour down blessings on you, until there is more than enough. (Malachi 3:10)** Our giving back is always done with trusting hearts knowing he is with us. He will give us the wisdom and understanding to give back within the context of our own life in this world. We trust that he will continue to provide for us even as we give back to him in whatever way we are able to support and participate in the continued building of his church.

How has God blessed you? How could you serve? How could you give back to God who has so richly blessed you? We heard the Apostle Paul speak about each one of us being brought together, and yet we are all builders in our own way. **“For we have many members in one body, and not all the members have the same function. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given us. If the gift is prophecy, do it in complete agreement with the faith. If it is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach. If it is encouraging, then encourage. If it is contributing, be generous. If it is leadership, be diligent. If it is showing mercy, do it cheerfully.” (Romans 12:4-8)**

Solomon had all the materials and the manpower needed to build the Lord’s house. David had provided it all for him. Solomon had God’s promise to trust. So David told him to start building. “Get up and do it. The Lord will be with you.” When it was all done what a beautiful and magnificent house it was, a house which glorified God!

This building has only been around since 1974, but for 150 years, the people of this church have followed the blueprint of continued “church building”. Worship, learn, reach out. and give back. As builders, they have participated in and supported the mission given to them building the Church together. They have given back of their time, their abilities, and their earthly possessions to serve. In the days and years to come, may we continue to follow that same blueprint of continued church building trusting he will be with us every day and bless the mission he has placed before all of us. May it continue to be done as the cornerstone by the front door of our church says. “To the glory of God”. Amen

