

Your giving is who you are
 Harringay United Church-Baptist
 Sunday 18th October 2009.

This topic is one of the most sensitive one that faces the Church today and the reactions of people varies to both extremes. Some believe that talking about giving is an individual thing hence it must not be spoken about from the pulpit. While others believe that if you do not teach people how to give they will not know how and why they should give hence they over flog it.

Because of these variations, pastors have fallen into those camps, they are either abandon talking about it or flogging it that every Sunday and every opportunity, the sermon is about giving and they link the giving with material possessions and affluence.

Whist I recognise these issues, I believe that giving is a command from God and is individualistic in nature and must be taught to the Church otherwise I will be failing in my duty as a pastor to teach, admonish and correct. Therefore I will teach it but never flog it.

A colleague of mine left a big Church for a smaller one near her house a couple of years ago. Later she told me it is nice to hear the gospel in an undiluted way as opposed to what she knew that 'if you miss your tithe, you miss heaven'. This is a far right approach of teaching giving and it is not Biblical.

Giving is God's nature and since creation God has taught people to give. Abel and Cain's giving was the first account we had from the scripture. Abraham was a hilarious giver, so was Isaac, Jacob, David and Solomon to mention but few. Therefore not to talk about giving in the Church is an aberration and failing in our duty as the people who are entrusted with God's truth. I can say that God is giving.

There is so much from the passage we read earlier, however, I am going to concentrate on verse 6-10.

Paul wrote the Corinthians in his second letter encouraging them to be generous in their giving which they have promised. He reminded them not to disappoint him and themselves. I can say that Paul gave them a 'pep talk'.

In His talk there are few things he mentioned and which we must grasp very well if we want to obey God and experience his grace and blessing.

1. The input determines the outcome v6:

The law of sowing and reaping was in Paul's mind when he wrote this letter. A farmer who plants quality seed over two acres of land will reap more than the one who plant on one acre with the same condition. If one scatters few seeds over a large piece of land he is not going to reap as much as the one that sow systematically in rows because he has sown sparingly, meagrely and slenderly. The one who sow low quality seed will not reap bountiful harvest as low quality or immature seed will not grow.

The quality and quantity of the seed a farmer sow determines the harvest but he has to wait and patiently too for the harvest. His motive has nothing to do with the Harvest because God is gracious to bring rain and sunshine on all believers and non-believers alike.

But in sowing spiritual seed, it is not how much you have given but how much is left. A person who gives a thousand out of a million has not given up to the

one who gives ten out of hundred for the latter has given a hundred times more than the former. In other words, the former has sown sparingly and the former has sown bountifully and both of them cannot expect the same result. Remember what Jesus said about the offering in the Temple when He went to sit opposite the treasury about the widow, we too must act like the widow and not the others.

2. Your motive determines the acceptability v7

Contrary to the sowing of the farmer, the motive of sowing seed in Spiritual field (which is giving for the gospel) is very important.

First you must determine how much you want to give. Some people leaves home without thinking about their giving, it is only when they get to Church they now take what they can find in their wallet. This is not right. You must decide how much, with sincerity of heart, not reluctantly, or as a compulsion but willingly and cheerfully.

Sowing with wrong motives is as wrong as not sowing at all. If you sow with reluctance it is unacceptable to God. If you sow because you felt compelled, it is not acceptable either.

It is easy to identify the motive with which one gives to God. The face of anyone who grudges is squeezed, tensed and unhappy. Whereas, a cheerful heart wears a happy and smiling face when he gives to the Lord.

Your giving must not be seen as a contract that if you give this, God is obliged to give you that. You must do it as an act of obedience not minding whether He will bless you or not, just do it willingly and gladly and you will be surprised at what God can and will do.

Your motive must not be commercial, what I mean by this is that you must not give with the expectation to become rich financially. God determines how and when He will reward you.

Motive is from your heart. A mean person will never give generously, neither a stingy person will give bountifully and since their hearts determine what their hands give, they give sparingly, with reluctance and as a result it is not acceptable to God.

This now leads me to my third point.

God is able to multiply your giving v8-10

When you sow a good seed, in sufficient quantity and with the right motive then God who is the source of all good things and all sufficient is able to bless you sufficiently enough to be able to give more and always.

The passage quoted from Psalm 112:9 is the testimony of a generous and cheerful giver and the results that follows his giving. Giving to the Lord is like giving abroad that is out of reach and like giving to the poor who has no means of repaying back, but his righteousness is everlasting.

Paul now seals the encouragement by saying that the God who supplies the seed to the sower and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality which caused thanksgiving through us to God.'

This result is unprecedented and is complementary to what Jesus said in Luke 6:38. He will supply and multiply the seed you have sown.

Let us look at the seed you sow to this Church, from every pound you give, the chancellor of ex chequer gives 25 pence back to the Church which is an increase of 25%

There is no legitimate business or any investment that will yield you 25% interest. If an earthly government can recognise giving to a loving (charitable) course, how much more your heavenly Father who is much more generous and whose resource is never exhausted bless you and multiply what you have given in an immeasurable way.

You will then have more to sow and more to eat so that you will never lack in your life again.

Why people don't give?

Lack of teaching: when the pastor refuses to teach and equip the saints to give and sow to the work of God, people will not give and the Church will be impoverished. And it is possible that pastor himself may not be a giver. There was a story about a church who was impoverished. The minister refuses to address the issue and later it was found that he himself was not giving at all. What example is that? No wonder he has not got the gut to confront the issue.

A pastor should and must set good example for the congregation to follow. Today I am reminding you that God loves a cheerful giver, are you a cheerful giver?

Lack of understanding: Some people are likened to the soil that is shallow, rocky and thorny the seed sown in their heart about giving never thrives, they do not understand. There could be two reasons for this. First, some people may block their mind deliberately because they hold on too much to their possession and are unwilling to part with it hence they block their minds to understanding God's teaching. Second, the teaching could be wrong and confusing. I have heard some pastors teach that Tithe is an Old Testament teaching and it is not relevant today. This is an error. Jesus cleared the point in Matthew 23:23. When the teaching is wrong its understanding will surely be wrong.

Unwillingness to surrender to God's teaching: it one thing to understand the teaching on giving, it is another thing to obey the teaching. Obedience is a choice we make and it is not easy. But when we choose to disobey we cannot expect the result obedience brings. A farmer who refuses to sow cannot expect a harvest.

Half obedience is complete disobedience. You cannot sow a low quality seed and expect a bounty harvest either. You cannot sow sparingly and expect a bountiful harvest, it is what you sow you reap. We cannot hold on to our possession and expect God's blessing. But if you cast your possession abroad you will find it in multiples later.

To conclude:

I want to remind you that giving is what you are because it is determined in your heart and it is a true reflection of who you are. Your heart determines your actions and words and God who sees the heart will reward not what you give but that which comes from your heart. Therefore I encourage you to determine firmly in your heart what you want to give, do it not as a compulsion or grudgingly but cheerfully because God loves a cheerful giver.

Next Sunday, I will talk about different kinds of giving and where to give.

Be a cheerful giver as your giving determines who you are.