

THE GOD WHO GIVES

Psalm 67:5 *Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.*

Psalm 67:6 *Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.*

As the Psalm above declares, when we give to God praise, the earth will give increase her yield and bless us. God has established an eternal principle: we must give to him in order to receive from him. Amen! Look around you! Everything in creation is made to give – the Sun gives warmth and light, the waters quench our thirst and nourish trees and plants, the soil produces crops and animals either provide food or are part of the biodiversity and fill our senses with wonder at their beauty. Even deserts, which appear not give anything at all have been found to contain the largest oil reserves in the world, making several countries in the Middle East very wealthy. Deserts also contain medicinal plants such as aloe vera and lavender associated with many benefits such as skin and hair care and treating digestive problems. Not only did God create, but he also created abundantly. “And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven” (Gen 1:20). If nature were to open her mouth and testify, she would say: “God is a cheerful giver”.

Isaiah 45:18 *For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else”.*

We are made in the image of God. This means that we are made to give because God gives cheerfully and abundantly. Because God created everything in abundance, he also expects us to give back in abundance. “And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein” (Gen 9:27). Jesus expects us to give in abundance. Notice what he compares our giving to. “Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” (Luke 13:7). This is the standard of God: giving back to him in abundance. According to the Lord, the tree was burdening the ground. The Earth was generously providing, but the tree was holding back what it should contribute to the circle of giving. God always corrects the part of the system that’s not doing its job and disrupting the whole process. Let us pray that we will not be the one part of the system of divine giving that hinders the flow of God’s blessings.

So, what are we expected to give to God in abundance? First and foremost, our lives. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1,2). God gave us life. Every soul owes its existence to God. Hence, it is not asking for too much to dedicate our lives to him who allows us to live and move and have our being in him. “For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:28).

Next, we must give of our time abundantly to him. Abraham had no children and was no supposed to have a lineage after him. Later, through Jacob, God gave 12 sons who became the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. God chose just one of the 12 tribes to serve him continuously. That is not even 10% but 8.33% of the 12 tribes. Surely, we can all give more than that to the Lord Jesus Christ! Consider the amount of time Jesus gave for us. From his birth to his resurrection, and since then through the Holy Spirit, he has been serving and blessing us. “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt 10:45). There are several individuals in the pages of the time who exemplified the gift and grace of giving their time to the Lord. Hannah and Anna were two great examples.

***1Sam 1:11** And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.*

***Luke 2:37** And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*

When we give off our time to the Lord, this includes praying for others, praising, witnessing and also giving off our earthly wealth. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor 8:9). Once, there was a man known in his town for his extreme miserliness. He never contributed to church fundraisers, and he would pinch pennies until they screamed. One Sunday, the preacher decided to address the congregation about generosity He said, “My dear parishioners, the Lord loves a cheerful giver. Remember the story of the rich man who went to Heaven? He was so tightfisted that when he arrived at the pearly gates, Saint Peter

gave him a tour. As they walked, they passed by mansions of various sizes. When they approached a particularly grand mansion, the rich man asked, ‘Who lives there?’ Saint Peter replied, ‘Oh, that’s for the man who donated generously to our church’. Feeling rather pleased with himself, the rich man asked, ‘And where is my mansion?’ Saint Peter paused, then pointed to a tiny shack far off in the distance. ‘Yours,’ he said, ‘is over there.’ The rich man was taken aback. ‘Why is mine so small?’ he asked. Saint Peter shrugged and said, ‘Well, we did the best we could with what you gave us.’” The congregation burst into laughter, but the miserly man sat in his pew, feeling a bit uncomfortable. Later that day, he decided to change his ways and become more generous. From that day forward, he gave to those in need with a cheerful heart, knowing that his true treasure lay in the joy of giving, both on Earth and in Heaven.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

If you are struggling with giving, look to Jesus. Jesus gave of his great love, mercy, power – everything he had to make us what he intended us to be. See him teaching people, setting an example for them, feeding them with his miraculous power, healing them from diverse diseases and, above all, revealing to them his plan for salvation. The greatest gift Jesus gave is the knowledge that he is God manifested in the flesh (I Tim 3:16) and that through the death and resurrection of his body, we will be delivered from sin. Sin takes away everything that God has for us, which is why the word was made flesh to destroy sin. It is disastrous to reject this act of God’s greatest giving. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12,13). Then you and I must be baptized in Jesus name and be filled with his Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) after which we live a holy life, giving of our time and resources to obeying his will and expecting his return and rewards.

2Co 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

2Co 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: