

Serm. Series: “Sowing for the Future – the Art of Godly Giving”–Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN–8/17/08
Title: “Reflect, Respond, Recommit”
Text: 2 Chronicles 24: 1-14
Theme: As we come together to reflect and respond and recommit ourselves in a second effort to build our first Lord’s House, we have reason to celebrate in the goodness of our God who leads us forward in this effort.

Celebrating begins with a REFLECTION on God’s mercy (2 Chronicles 24: 1-2)

- Judah had endured a long winter (15 yrs.) of evil kings/rulers
- 1. After faithful Jehoshaphat there was Jehoram (“*he departed with no one’s regret*”); Ahaziah (“*did evil in the Lord’s sight to his destruction*”); Athaliah (“*she rose and destroyed all the royal offspring*”)
- 2. God remembered his promise to put a faithful ruler on the **throne of David** and showed mercy in darkest of times
 - a. **Ills.: The essence of mercy**
 - b. Joash was like a breath of fresh air for an evil-weary and spiritually starved nation of Judah
 - c. He wasn’t perfect but was declared righteous “*He did what was right (straight) in the eyes of the Lord.*” (Vs. 2)
 - d. *But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness. Romans 4:5*
- We have been through 8 ½ years of “ebb and flow” and yet God’s mercy has brought us to this point
- 1. We have reason to take courage because God has delivered and open doors that we thought were shut
- 2. “*Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.*” Rev. 3:7-8
- 3. When God delivers from a long siege of trials, it is good to remember and rejoice in God

Celebrating is drawn from a RESPONSE to God’s grace (2 Chronicles 24: 4-7)

- Hindrances that keep us from responding to God’s grace
- 1. Josh wants to respond to God’s goodness by cleaning house on the temple and restoring it for God’s glory
 - a. “*Upon his heart*”(**decided–vs. 4**) — matter of the will not of the mind — all sorts of reason not to do it
 - b. He calls the Levites to respond by reinstating the “temple tax” (1 shekel) to fund it but they are slow to respond
- 2. Like the Levite leaders, do we fail to respond to God’s grace because we make it a matter of the mind not the heart
 - a. Out of fear to ask (*You have not because you ask not. James 4: 4*)
 - b. Out of selfishness to use things for their own use
 - c. Out of laziness because did not want to work that hard
- 3. What keeps us from being used powerfully and effectively by God?
- Celebration springs to life from a “grace view” of God in our life
- 1. Temple tax (**Exodus 30: 12-16**) was a reminder of how God had bought them back from slavery(atonement)
- 2. Moving past a transactional relationship with God to one which is a transformational relationship
 - a. **Ills.: Grace’s bridge over fear**
 - b. *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2*

Celebrating appeals to a long-term RECOMMITMENT to God’s glory (2 Chronicles 24: 8-14)

- Celebrate God’s goodness by honoring his request to you to ask him for anything in Jesus’ name
- 1. Josh asked for temple contribution and God led the leaders and people to respond generously until it was finished
 - a. *all the people rejoiced . . .they did daily and collected much . . .they brought the left over money*
- 2. Celebrating and worship God is when we believe his promises and act according to them
 - a. *Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened unto you.*” Mat. 7: 7
 - b. *“Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” Luke 6: 38*
- Celebrating God’s goodness is committing to honor him over the long-haul of your life
- 1. God wants marathoners not sprinters
- 2. Sad commentary on Josh and Judah at the beginning and end of the passage: “*while the days of Jehoiada existed*”
- 3. We worship God when we recommit to finish well what we have begun in him
- 4. We can finish well because God’s promise is that he will do the same for us, “*He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ.*” *Philippians 1: 6*

Gratitude always remembers

It is gratitude that prompted an old man to visit an old broken pier on the eastern seacoast of Florida. Every Friday night, until his death in 1973, he would return, walking slowly and slightly stooped with a large bucket of shrimp. The sea gulls would flock to this old man, and he would feed them from his bucket. Many years before, in October, 1942, Captain **Eddie Rickenbacker** was on a mission in a B-17 to deliver an important message to General Douglas MacArthur in New Guinea. But there was an unexpected detour which would hurl Captain Eddie into the most harrowing adventure of his life. Somewhere over the South Pacific the Flying Fortress became lost beyond the reach of radio. Fuel ran dangerously low, so the men ditched their plane in the ocean... For nearly a month Captain Eddie and his companions would fight the water, and the weather, and the scorching sun. They spent many sleepless nights recoiling as giant sharks rammed their rafts. The largest raft was nine by five. The biggest shark...ten feet long. But of all their enemies at sea, one proved most formidable: starvation. Eight days out, their rations were long gone or destroyed by the salt water. It would take a miracle to sustain them. And a miracle occurred. In Captain Eddie's own words, "Cherry," that was the B-17 pilot, Captain William Cherry, "read the service that afternoon, and we finished with a prayer for deliverance and a hymn of praise. There was some talk, but it tapered off in the oppressive heat. With my hat pulled down over my eyes to keep out some of the glare, I dozed off." Now this is still Captain Rickenbacker talking..."Something landed on my head. I knew that it was a sea gull. I don't know how I knew, I just knew. Everyone else knew too. No one said a word, but peering out from under my hat brim without moving my head, I could see the expression on their faces. They were staring at that gull. The gull meant food...if I could catch it." And the rest, as they say, is history. Captain Eddie caught the gull. Its flesh was eaten. Its intestines were used for bait to catch fish. The survivors were sustained and their hopes renewed because a lone sea gull, uncharacteristically hundreds of miles from land, offered itself as a sacrifice. You know that Captain Eddie made it. And now you also know...that he never forgot. Because every Friday evening, about sunset...on a lonely stretch along the eastern Florida seacoast...you could see an old man walking...white-haired, bushy-eyebrowed, slightly bent. His bucket filled with shrimp was to feed the gulls...to remember that one which, on a day long past, gave itself without a struggle...like manna in the wilderness. **"The Old Man and the Gulls" from Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story by Paul Aurandt, 1977, p. 79-80.**

The essence of Mercy

A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death. **"But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy."** "But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied. **"Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for."** "Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." **Luis Palau, Experiencing God's Forgiveness, Multnomah Press, 1984.**

Grace's bridge over fear

During the building of the Golden Gate Bridge over San Francisco Bay, construction fell badly behind schedule because several workers had accidentally fallen from the scaffolding to their deaths. Engineers and administrators could find no solution to the costly delays. Finally, someone suggested a gigantic net be hung under the bridge to catch any who fell. Finally in spite of the enormous cost, the engineers opted for the net. After it was installed, progress was hardly interrupted. A worker or two fell into the net but were saved. Ultimately, all the time lost to fear was regained by replacing fear with faith in the net. As we paid nothing for God's eternal love and nothing for the Son of His love, and nothing for His Spirit and our grace and faith, and nothing for our eternal rest...What an astonishing thought it will be to think of the unmeasurable difference between our deservings and our receivings. O, how free was all this love, and how free is this enjoyed glory...So then let "Deserved" be written on the floor of hell but on the door of heaven and life.

2 Chron. 24:1-27

¹Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Zibiah from Beersheba. ²Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. ³Jehoiada took two wives for him, and he became the father of sons and daughters.

⁴Now it came about after this that Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD. ⁵He gathered the priests and Levites and said to them, "Go out to the cities of Judah and collect money from all Israel to repair the house of your God annually, and you shall do the matter quickly." But the Levites did not act quickly. ⁶So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief priest and said to him, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and from Jerusalem the levy fixed by Moses the servant of the LORD on the congregation of Israel for the tent of the testimony?" ⁷For the sons of the wicked Athaliah had broken into the house of God and even used the holy things of the house of the LORD for the Baals.

⁸So the king commanded, and they made a chest and set it outside by the gate of the house of the LORD. ⁹They made a proclamation in Judah and Jerusalem to bring to the LORD the levy fixed by Moses the servant of God on Israel in the wilderness. ¹⁰All the officers and all the people rejoiced and brought in their levies and dropped them into the chest until they had finished. ¹¹It came about whenever the chest was brought in to the king's officer by the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, then the king's scribe and the chief priest's officer would come, empty the chest, take it, and return it to its place. Thus they did daily and collected much money. ¹²The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who did the work of the service of the house of the LORD; and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the LORD,

and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the LORD. ¹³So the workmen labored, and the repair work progressed in their hands, and they restored the house of God according to its specifications and strengthened it. ¹⁴When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada; and it was made into utensils for the house of the LORD, utensils for the service and the burnt offering, and pans and utensils of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada.

Exodus 30:12-16

"When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. ¹³Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the LORD. ¹⁴All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the LORD. ¹⁵The rich are not to give more than a half shekel and the poor are not to give less when you make the offering to the LORD to atone for your lives. ¹⁶Receive the atonement money from the Israelites and use it for the service of the Tent of Meeting. It will be a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD, making atonement for your lives."