

“Made to Give” by Rev. Peter Paige

Once again I am here to consecrate your estimates of financial giving to the church; to help celebrate your gifts to the church – which are a pleasing offering to the Lord.

Last year I shared that giving was about trusting God. That both giving and trust are not black and white, but about degrees or steps of faithfulness. I told you that I believed giving to the church takes dedication and humbleness, and most importantly, that we steward the trust of God like Hanna mother of Samuel, King David of Israel, and the Disciples of Jesus.

This year I'd like to remind you that we are created to give. God is a giver. He gave us this earth and the water we drink. He gave us light. He gave us plants to cultivate, and animals to watch over. God gave us everything we need: strength, wits, and will. God even gave us his very breath, his Spirit. God gave us his Word. God gave us Christ. God made us in the image of God. God made us in the image of a giver.

If we are to please God, we are to do what we were created to do. To bring joy to God, we must choose to be givers like our Heavenly Creator.

[Beaver slide] But first, let me tell you about beavers: A creature God created. A creature like us - A creature God gave a job.

Beavers are social animals, living in large family groups of monogamous parents, young kits, and the yearlings from the previous spring. Beavers don't mind the cold, even when their ponds are covered with a layer of ice. Beavers are also good house guests. Their lodges typically contain two dens, one for drying off after entering the lodge under water, and a second, dryer den where the family will live and socialize.

- [Beaver Dam slide - actual ones at http://www.geostrategis.com/p_beavers-longestdam.htm] The job God gave to beavers is to build dams. Beavers are second only to humans in their ability to manipulate their environment. The largest dam in existence was discovered by researchers using Google Earth in 2007. It is located in Wood Buffalo National Park, Alberta, Canada. It stretches for about ½ a mile, and is visible from space. Several generations of beavers have worked on the dam since 1975 and it's still growing. Average beaver dams are 30 to 300 feet long, and only rarely do they reach 1500 Feet. Rob Mark 44, of Maplewood, New Jersey was the first human to reach the 2,790-foot-long dam in Alberta, Canada on July 20, 2014!

A beaver will fell a particular tree for a particular reason; a larger mature tree will be felled to form the basis of a dam. A young, second growth tree will be felled for food. Beavers will fell broad-leaved trees to encourage shorter re-growth closer their reach.

American Indians called the beaver the "sacred center" of the land because they create such rich, watery habitat for other mammals, fish, turtles, frogs, birds and ducks – a biodiversity that rivals tropical rain forests. As well as wetland, beavers create standing dead wood which is inhabited by insects, and in turn attracts bird life. Almost half of endangered and threatened species in North America rely upon wetlands. Freshwater wetlands have been rated as the world's most valuable land-based ecosystem.

We now know that beaver damming provides essential natural services for people too. Beavers reliably and economically maintain wetlands that sponge up floodwaters, alleviate droughts and floods (because their dams keep water on the land longer). Dams lesson erosion, raise the water table and act as the "earth's kidneys" to purify water. The latter occurs because several feet of silt collect upstream of older beaver dams, and toxics, such as pesticides, are broken down by microbes in the wetlands that beavers create. Thus, water downstream of dams is cleaner and requires less treatment for human use.

<http://www.nhptv.org/natureworks/beaver.htm>

http://www.onekind.org/be_inspired/animals_a_z/beaver/

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/beaver/>

<http://www.beaversww.org/beavers-and-wetlands/about-beavers/>

[Slide: Happy Beaver] When beavers do what they were created to do, they please God; they're happy to help! For you and I to bring joy to God, we must do what we are created to do. Beavers were created to build dams, we were created to give. Giving...it's a little more complicated than a beaver dam, but just as fulfilling.

[Slide] So what is Giving? It is: Work produced by Faith. Labor prompted by Love. Endurance inspired by Hope.

I get this from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. Paul was only there for a little while – perhaps a month to give a minimal amount of teaching then was chased out by the Jews (Acts 17). Later Paul sent Timothy to check on them – Today's scripture is the beginning of Paul's letter that he wrote to them to clear up some confusion about Christ's 2nd coming and Christian Living: to live quiet, respectful, productive lives – to help each other and be patient and kind. To live a moral lifestyle once accepting Christ.

[Slide 1 Thess. 1]

...Grace and peace to you. We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father **your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Slide] For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also **with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction**. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

[Slide] 7 And so **you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia**. [That's current-day Greece and Bulgaria] [Let me keep reading a few more verses: 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Paul, Silas, & Timothy, thank and remember the Thessalonian work produced by faith, their labor prompted by love, and their endurance inspired by hope in Jesus Christ. Paul noticed that their response to the Gospel had the power of deep conviction, powerful action, and the presence of the Holy Spirit! The Thessalonians were a model to all believers in their part of the world!

[Slide] They modeled that **GIVING IS WORK PRODUCED BY FAITH.**

They loved one another and showed their entire region that their faith led them to be givers!

Paul too was a giver because of his faith. He gave of himself as he spread the gospel. First to the Jews in each place, then to bringing the light to the gentiles. [Map Slide] Paul gave to Silas and Timothy, Titus and Philemon to name a few. Paul was a giver because of his Faith in a risen Jesus Christ who blinded his eyes and revealed truth to him!

[Slide] **GIVING IS LABOR PROMPTED BY LOVE** – [Slide] Matthew 7:7-12

7 “**Ask** and it will be given to you; **seek** and you will find; **knock** and the door will be opened. 8 For everyone who asks **receives**; the one who seeks **finds**; and to the one who knocks, the door will be **opened**.

[Slide] 9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! [Slide] **12** So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

1st of all: It is a labor to ask and keep on asking, to seek and keep on seeking, to knock and keep on knocking! When we do, we will receive, we will find, the door will be opened for us!!

2nd. All of us would work, would labor at giving good things to our children. God gives like a parent! He gave us the life of his only Son...God gave us the only thing that would return a right relationship with us!

[Slide] **ENDURANCE INSPIRED BY HOPE** [Slide] 2 Cor 9:6-11

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and **whoever sows generously will also reap generously**. **7** Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver**. [Slide] **8** And God is able to bless you **abundantly, so that** in all things at all times, having all that you need, **you will abound in every good work**. **9** As it is written: “They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness **endures forever**.”

[Slide] **10** Now **he who supplies seed** to the sower and bread for food will also **supply you need** and **increase your store of seed** and **will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness**. **11** You will be **enriched in every way so that** you can be **generous on every occasion**, and through us your generosity will result in **thanksgiving to God**.

Sowing seed, reaping the harvest or scattering gifts to the poor – each of those take work!

Plus we are to do them abundantly!

God blesses us so that we may abound in every good WORK!

In case you don't feel like you are a sower or a scatterer – Paul adds – that even if what we do is considered supplying seeds to the sower or baking the bread for food – we will be enriched...why? So that you can be generous on every occasion.

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When beavers build dams, they please God and they're happy to help!

We were created to give. Giving is a little more complicated than a beaver dam, but just as fulfilling.

To bring joy to God, we must choose to be givers like our Heavenly Creator.

It will take work, labor and endurance – faith, hope, and love.