

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL JESUS SAVES JESUS THE RISEN KING

The Risen King's Commission Includes Personal Giving

A body of believers who would eventually become known as First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Arkansas, has been meeting together since **May 4, 1872**, That amounts to 145 years of God's children worshipping and serving together through the good times and the bad times – generation after generation. During Old Testament times, the people were given a commission to follow so that the generations to come would not forget the works of the Lord .

Read Psalm 78:5-7 (ESV) ⁵ *He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children,* ⁶ *that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,* ⁷ *so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.*

It is the responsibility of our current generation of First Baptist Jacksonville Christ followers to ensure that the generation that comes after us will continue to know and share the good news of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we have entered a program entitled Envision 20/20 Growing the Future. During the month of November, our pastor and staff have asked us to prayerfully consider the question, "Lord, what do you want to do through me?"

When the Apostle Paul shared the story of his personal call to salvation and then to service with King Agrippa, he said in **Acts 26:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ *"Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.* The words of Paul to Agrippa echo through the centuries, *"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision* and the biblical record reflects his obedience. After Paul encountered Jesus, he spent the rest of his life working to do his Lord's will. Let's read how Jesus commissioned Paul.

Read Acts 26:16 (ESV) ¹⁶ *But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,*

Wiersbe explains that the word *servant* in this verse means "an under-rower" and refers to a lowly servant on a galley ship. Paul had been accustomed to being an honored leader, but after his conversion he became a subordinate worker; and Jesus Christ became his Master. The Lord had promised to be with Paul as he went about his mission. When we respond to the salvation call of Christ, like Paul our call does not stop at the point of our own salvation!

Read Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV) ¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* ²⁰ *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*”

Have you experienced your heavenly vision? When you have accepted Jesus’ call to salvation, your witness and your work for Him should follow. Oswald Chambers points out “that the only way to be obedient to the heavenly vision is to give our utmost for His Highest!”

Real servants of the Lord understand that ministry is an opportunity not an obligation. Sometimes we must search awhile to discover the specific ministry for which we are personally suited. However, scripture leaves no doubt that we are all called to give our financial resources no matter what our financial circumstances are.

Read Mark 12:42-43 (ESV) ⁴² *And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.* ⁴³ *And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.*

The giving heart of the poor widow was what pleased Jesus. It is not the *portion* but the *proportion* that is important: the rich gave out of their abundance, but the poor widow gave all that she had. For the rich, their gifts were a small contribution, but for the widow, her gift was true consecration of her whole life.

I must confess that I do not particularly like lessons or sermons on giving. I tend to ‘cringe’ at them since I do not want anyone to tell me what or how to give and I have no desire to tell others how much they should give but grace giving is a practice that must be taught and modeled for the generation to come after.

This month of prayer is about continuing the vision that specifically began for FBC in 1998 even though the vision of growing God’s church has always been the heart’s desire of this church family. In 1998, after a period of 40 days of prayer and fasting, it was discovered that the church’s mission which we then began to call “Bringing Our World to Jesus” was the same mission the church was founded upon 125 years earlier. Now, 20 years later, we call our mission “Know, Grow and Go” but the mission remains the same as the commission Jesus gave us over 2,000 years ago: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...*

God’s Word teaches that true ministry is about giving and not receiving. Paul said in **Acts 20:35 (ESV)** ³⁵ *In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

Over the years, John and I have discovered from personal experience that the formula is true – you cannot out give God. As crazy as it may sound, a large part of that learning experience for us has come through participating in our own church’s building programs.

Read Malachi 3:8-10 (ESV) ⁸ *Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰ Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*

Whenever we rob God, we are actually robbing ourselves. Most importantly, we rob ourselves of spiritual blessings that accompany obedience and faithful giving. On the practical side, however, most who have given to God **first** have experienced unexpected financial blessing from another source when needed. **Philippians 4:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* On the ‘flip side’ the money that rightfully belongs to God that we keep for ourselves never stays with us. It ends up going to something else – most likely unexpected such as car repair, a plumbing bill or maybe an electrician or heating and air man gets what we should have given to God! **Haggai 1:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.*

Solomon was the builder of the first Temple in Jerusalem and the first king of Israel to trade commercial goods profitably to other nations. Solomon was about 20 years old when he was crowned. He assumed leadership of Israel at a time of great material and spiritual prosperity. During his 40-year reign, he expanded his kingdom until it covered about 50,000 square miles. One of the first things Solomon did as king was to offer sacrifices to the Lord. God appeared to the new king at night and asked him, "What shall I give thee?" Solomon asked for an understanding heart to judge the people of Israel and the ability to tell good from evil. God not only granted Solomon's request, but He also promised him riches and honor if he would walk in the steps of his father (1Ki 3:4-15). Let’s take a look at how rich he became.

Read 1 Kings 10:14-27 (ESV) ¹⁴ *Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold,...* ¹⁸ *The king also made a great ivory throne and overlaid it with the finest gold....* ²¹ *All King Solomon’s drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.* ²² *For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.* ²³ *Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom....* ²⁷ *And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone,...*

According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, one talent would be about 75.6 pounds; therefore, 666 talents would amount to a huge amount of gold by the standards of any day! Consider how Solomon chose to use the wealth God had given him. He spent his wealth on an ivory throne overlaid with gold. His guests drank only from golden vessels. Physical things should never be more important to us than God and His desires for our life. **Matthew 6:20 (ESV)** ²⁰ *but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.* Solomon became a model of wealth and splendor but he warned Solomon's heart did not please the Lord.

Read 1 Kings 11:9-11 (ESV) ⁹ *And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice ¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. ¹¹ Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.*

The kingdom of Solomon's father David would be taken from the next generation except for the tribes of Benjamin and Judah because of Solomon's sinful ways. There is a verse that we often quote when it comes to building programs. **Psalm 127:1 (ESV)** ¹ *Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.* Until this lesson, I had not realized that these are words of Solomon. Solomon was a wise man when he spoke these words but he apparently had no 'common sense' and failed to build his life on devotion to God. In his later years, Solomon came to understand that the wealth of this world will never satisfy.

Read Ecclesiastes 5:10 (ESV) ¹⁰ *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.*

John D. Rockefeller is an example of a man whose life was almost ruined by wealth. At the age of 53, Rockefeller was the world's only billionaire, earning about a million dollars a week. But he was a sick man who lived on crackers and milk and could not sleep because of worry. When he started giving his money away, his health changed radically and he lived to celebrate his 98th birthday!

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 (ESV) ¹ *Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.*

Our giving should be regular and systematic because only then will it be biblical giving. It must be regular because giving is part of our worship to God.