

Giving To The Needs Of Others

Hope Chapel Honolulu

Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-5:11

⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts. (Acts 2:44-46, ESV)

Introduction

The third pair of faith activities observed by Luke—the historian behind the Book of Acts—begins with “giving to the needs of others.” This faith practice builds upon the other “out” flow practice of prayer. It should not go unsaid that giving should be the result of prayer, and that “giving to the needs of others” should be an act of faith obedience to the correction, direction and encouragement of the Word and Spirit of God. Yes, the practice of tithing is part of this (see Malachi 3:1-18, Matthew 23:23), as is the offering of our time, talent and treasure as an expression of loving God with all of our strength. But because we rarely hear or talk about the observed practice here in Acts, I’m going to begin by addressing the paradigm shift regarding possession and stewardship.

1. A paradigm shift regarding possession and stewardship. (Acts 2:44-46)

a) A look at the First Century understanding of sharing relationship and resources.

b) The corporate witness of spiritual and material community.

2. Seeing God as owner and provider, ourselves as heirs and stewards. (Acts 4:32-37)

a) Because “they had everything in common” should you and I? (Ps50:7-15, Mt16:24-27)

b) The stewardship responsibilities of those who have or haven’t “enough” (2Th3:10).

3. Why were Ananias and Sapphira judged so severely? (Acts 5:1-11)

a) The attempted deception by Ananias and Sapphira.

b) The apostolic declaration regarding property, possession and personal prerogative.

Conclusion

Some of you may remember that when we spoke about prayer, we began with that Gospel passage where Jesus taught His disciples to pray (Mt6:5-15). If you’re familiar with that passage or read further you would have found these words, “*...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (6:21), “*No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money*” (6:24) and “*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you*” (6:33). Christ did not teach that it was wrong to own riches, He warned against being owned by riches.

For our prayerful study, discovery and application:

1) You may recall me saying, “If God gives us more than we need, we need to build a longer table rather than a higher fence.” How does that statement compare with today’s message?

2) How do the apostolic teachings (“elementary teachings of Christ” Hebrews 6:1-2) fit with “giving to the needs of others”?

3) What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about the graces of giving and gratitude?

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