

This is BIG!

- I. We have a BIG God
- II. Who creates BIG hearts
- III. Which offer BIG prayers

(1 Chronicles 29:10-18) David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. {11} Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. {12} Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. {13} Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. {14} "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. {15} We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. {16} O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. {17} I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. {18} O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.

Every so often, sometimes once or twice in a lifetime, a person gets to be a part of something really big. Something that kind of lifts our sights above the ordinary routine of life. Something that allows us to somehow serve a greater good. Something that we could not do by ourselves, but with others accomplishes a greater goal which has an impact on future generations.

My friends, I believe that one of those big things in life is what we are here to celebrate today. Today we will dedicate to the glory of God Mount Olive's new building expansion. We are not here to take credit for what we have done, but rather give glory to God for what he has done—what he has done for us, what he has done in us, allowing us to build something that will benefit future generation. In his infinite love and mercy, God allows us to be part of something big. In fact, let's let that be our theme today:

This is BIG!

Today, as we look to God's Word, we're going to see that some of the same things that we are celebrating today are exactly what King David celebrated as he anticipated the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem some 3000 years ago. Today we turn to the pages of First Chronicles chapter 29, where the Holy Spirit records for us the prayer that King David offered to God as he looked forward to the construction of the Lord's Temple. In his prayer, King David made three key points which still apply to you and me today.

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Now, for us to fully appreciate the content of David's prayer, we need to understand the events that led up to his prayer. You might remember that David had long wanted to build a permanent house for the Lord. He didn't think it was right that the Ark of the Covenant was being housed in a tent, or Tabernacle as it was called, while King David was living in a palace. And so David prepared to build a beautiful house for the Lord. In fact, by this time in history, David had already drawn up the plans for a temple made of cedar and stone, silver and gold. But that's when God came to David and said, in effect, "Sorry, David. You're not going to be the one to build my temple. Instead, your son Solomon will build my temple."

Now, rather than being discouraged by that news, rather than setting aside the plans all together, what did David do? You might say that he kicked off a capital stewardship campaign. He started raising funds for the construction of the Temple. And where does David's fund drive begin? It begins with David himself. He comes before the assembly of Israel and says, in 1 Chronicles 29:3, "*In my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God.*" And then he records how much he's going to give: 3000 talents of gold and 7000 talents of silver. In other words, 110 tons of gold and 260 tons of silver. And then, David extends this invitation/challenge to the leaders of his nation. He says, "*Now who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?*" In other words, David says, in effect, "Who's with me? Are you willing to give yourself to support this building project?" Scripture records their answer. *Then the leaders of the families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of the hundreds, and the officials in charge of the King's work, gave willingly.* In fact, together, they gave more than David did. And in the end, it was the generosity of those leaders that had a tremendous impact on the rest of the nation. Scripture tells us, *The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.* (1 Chron. 29:9).

My friends, this is the backdrop for David's prayer. It was David's overwhelming desire to build a temple to God's glory and the people's commitment to join him in that goal that, in turn, prompted David to break out into this song of praise to God. David begins by saying in effect, I. We have a BIG God. David puts it this way, "*Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.*" (1 Chron. 29:10-11)

Isn't that the truth? As David looked ahead to the dedication of the Temple, as we look ahead to the dedication of our expansion, the focus must remain on God. God is the owner of everything. He is the Lord of the universe. Do you realize what that means? It means that when we dedicate our building to God a little later in our service today, we're basically publicly acknowledging, "This building does not belong to us. It belongs to God. God is going to simply let us use it. Therefore, we want to use it in the same way we built it, not to our glory, but to his glory."

In fact, doesn't that fact play at least a partial role in how we design churches and schools and maybe even gymnasiums? I mean, if you think about it, Mount Olive could have built a pole barn for our worship space. (Granted, we would have had to put some heat in it.) But that's not what we built. We could have squeezed children into mobile homes for classrooms or had them play basketball on dirt floors. But we didn't do that. Instead we built an elegant house of worship, fully equipped classrooms and a spacious gymnasium. Why? Because what we build says something about what we think of our God. If we truly believe that our God is great and glorious, then it's not wrong to build buildings that reflect God's glory. Certainly that's what

King David and his son did, didn't they? They designed and built a temple that clearly reflected the glory and majesty of God. You might say that they built a big house for a big God.

Maybe that's not such a bad thing to remember when you walk into our new gym and think, "Wow, this is really BIG!" Yes, it is. Just like our God. Because in the end, that gym is not our gym. It's God's.

Now, in his dedication prayer, David began by glorifying and praising that big God, the God of the universe, the God of free and faithful grace. But from there on, David goes on to speak about how that God has impacted the hearts and lives of David and his people. You might say that David rejoices in the fact that I. We have a BIG God

II. Who creates BIG hearts

You see, after David witnesses this huge outpouring of financial gifts from the leaders of his nation, what does he say? "*But who am I, and who are my people, then we should be able to give as generously as this?*" David asks a good question, doesn't he? He knows that the human heart, by nature, is self-centered. By nature, we all think in terms of "what I own, what I earned. I don't like the idea of giving away my possessions."

And yet, that's exactly what David and his leaders did. They gave their possessions away. They gave them back to God. You might say they did what was completely unnatural. And what really blew the people away was that their leaders gave so willingly. They were not forced to give. This huge amount of money was not raised by means of a tax on those leaders. These people gave because they wanted to give.

The question is, "What would create such overwhelming generosity? What would cause human hearts to open up with the desire to give, to share, to return to the Lord their earthly treasures?" The answer to all those questions is...the grace of God. When human beings like you and I come to the realization that all we deserve from a just and holy God is eternal punishment, when we realize that in his grace and mercy, for the sake of his son, God has given us exactly what we don't deserve, namely, life forever with God in heaven, when we realize that all the good things we have in life on this side of the grave are all undeserved gifts from a loving Father—that's what truly changes our hearts. That's what leads people to do what the leaders in Israel did. They gave more than anyone could have imagined. More importantly, they gave willingly, freely. They gave because their hearts moved them to give. Or maybe I should say, because God moved their hearts to give.

My friends, isn't that something that you and I have witnessed over this past year? When you realize that the members of Mount Olive have pledged over \$3,000,000 to the Forward in Faith campaign and have already given over 1.8 million dollars toward that 3-year commitment, and when you realize that all these gifts were given willingly, freely, in gratitude to God—man, who gets the credit for that kind of response? Do we get the credit? Or our church leaders, or the capital stewardship company? No, God gets the credit. In the words of the Apostle Paul, *It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)* As you and I think about all the people whom God has moved to step forward in faith with their gifts of love, we can say with King David of old, "*Now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.*" (1 Chronicles 29:17)

As you look at King David's dedication prayer, you see that he first glorifies God as the Lord of the universe. He then thanks God for the response that God has worked in the hearts of his people. In the last section of this prayer, David makes a request of God. On this dedication date you and I can do the very same thing. Or, to put it another way, because we have a BIG God who creates BIG hearts,

III. We can offer BIG prayers

Isn't that what King David did? After the king witnessed this tremendous outpouring of gifts for the Lord's Temple, he offers this prayer to God. *"O Lord, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you."* (1 Chronicles 29:18)

You can see why David felt compelled to offer a prayer like that, don't you? The people had just brought forward this major financial offering. They would soon dedicate a beautiful new building to the glory of God. There was undoubtedly a lot of excitement surrounding both those events. (We can maybe relate to what they were feeling.) The question that was weighing on David's heart was simply this. Would the people of Israel maintain their commitment to the Lord? Would they remain loyal to the God who poured out such blessings on them? Or, after the building was constructed, would they kind of lose interest? Would they allow other things to become more important in their lives? Maybe turn away from the worship of the true God all together? Certainly that was a very real possibility. The danger of falling away from God was very real—which is why their spiritual shepherd, King David, offered this prayer on their behalf, and not just for them, but for himself too. David, in effect, prayed, "Lord, keep us focused on what you would have us do with and in this new building we are about to dedicate to your glory."

My friends, if you think about it, that prayer is just as appropriate today as it was 3,000 years ago. And let's face it, that's a BIG prayer. When you think about how easily we could become distracted from our core mission as a congregation, to bring the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost and hurting souls, both young and old alike. When you think about how hard Satan is going to work to divide our hearts and leave us chasing after things that are of no eternal value. When you realize that the finest facilities in the world are good for nothing if we become disconnected from God and his Word, then you realize is good and right that on our dedication day we offer to God a big prayer. "O Lord, God of our fathers, keep our hearts loyal to you. O Lord, you are a great and glorious God. For Jesus' sake, you love us more than we ever deserve. By your grace you have opened our hearts to support and expand the kingdom work you given us to do in this place. Continue to bless the gospel ministry we do as a congregation. Keep us faithful to you and your word for this and future generations, not to our glory, but to yours, in Jesus' name. Amen.