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The Joyful Gift of God's Provision Deuteronomy 14:22-29

Introduction: Take your Bible and turn with me to Deuteronomy 14, Deuteronomy chapter 14.

By the Lord's providence we come this morning to a text about giving. I say it is by the Lord's providence, because it is! But also because I would probably not ever choose to preach on money and giving if the option were open to me. And I especially, just in my own fleshly perspective, would not choose to preach to you about giving. I say this because it is always uncomfortable to talk about money as the pastor of a church who is so very generous in their giving already. So many of you have shown me what it means to joyfully and generously give to the Lord as you bless others. But I also say this because money is a deeply personal and private matter, and so when you preach on it, you are meddling with deep heart-level issues. Good preaching from the Word always meddles with heart-level stuff, but this just seems more difficult to talk about money and giving. But alas, by the Lord's Providential design, here we are at the beginning of a New Year and we come to this text in Deuteronomy 14. So, let's trust that this is by God's design for some great transformational reason – that through the preaching of this text He intends to work some great work of sanctification in each of us. And with that humble expectation, let's read this text – starting in verse 22 of Deuteronomy 14.

The temptation for us is to compartmentalize our relationship with the Lord. To think of ourselves as good Christians if we are succeeding in this area or in that area, while simultaneously keeping some other area to ourselves. And this seems to be especially true in this area of our finances and our possessions. It is so easy to be deceived into thinking that I am walking before the Lord in a manner worthy of my calling while also limiting His lordship over my money. It is easy to keep that for myself, and to give him token offerings out of those finances, but to still think of it in terms of ownership rather than stewardship. But the Scriptures counter this with a constant call to a whole-life submission of all things to our Sovereign Lord. To be positionally right with God through the person and work of Christ by grace through faith, must then be worked out and practically applied in all areas. This holiness that we saw last week in the beginning of chapter 14 is now further applied to their finances – or more literally – to the yield of their fields. And this is the needed universality of obedience to the Lord. If these people were to be set apart to the Lord, then they needed to be set apart in every area of life – and especially in how they thought about and used their money and possessions.

But our text this morning is not a list of laws which are to regulate their finances. Rather, we must remember that this is a sermon by Pastor Moses as he prepares them for life in the Promised Land. He is instructing them in the areas of practical application of the Law they already know from Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. His concern here is not specifics of do's and

don't's when it comes to money, but rather he is addressing the what's and why's of their giving. In other words, he is aimed at their hearts more than at their practice. He will direct their actions, but his direction is aimed at their hearts being transformed by truth. He does that by addressing the rhythm of giving, the reason for giving, and the resulting joy of giving.

I. The Rhythm of Giving – vs. 22, 28

- a. The rhythm of giving is the needed antecedent to the rhythm of provision. That is what Moses calls them to in this section – to give to the Lord after the rhythm of his provision to them. This was to be the constant check upon their hearts to ever remind them that they do not have this great yield from their fields because of anything in them, but rather because the Lord has provided for them. That is not to minimize their responsibility as farmers of the land and vinedressers in their vineyards. It is also not to minimize their skill in those tasks. Certainly some of them would do better than others in this and would have better yields.
- b. With the role of human effort and stewardship in mind, Moses is reminding them that nothing they have is possible if God does not give it to them. And this is particularly true for them when they get into the promised land. God had designed that land to be dependent upon the rains that He alone would send. They could not irrigate their fields, like they did in Egypt. The land was completely dependent on God's provision. So, as God has promised to provide for them in the Promised Land, they are here commanded to follow the rhythm of yearly giving to the Lord. As the harvest came in, so the tithe was to be set aside and brought before the Lord for worship.
- c. The rhythm also included a third year tithe in verse 29. This offering was to be set aside in each town for the provision of the needs of those who didn't have land rites and couldn't farm their own crop. So, in year 3 and year 6 they were to give a second tithe of their crop to help meet the needs of those around them. There is another layer of responsibility here for those who are blessed by the Lord with a harvest. They are to give every year and they are to give an extra amount every third year. This rhythm, established by God, is a masterful design by the Lord to combat the human tendency to think in terms of ownership instead of stewardship. Ever since the Garden of Eden we have been struggling with taking what God has asked us to manage and oversee, and instead thinking of that as ours to do with as we please. And so, in God's great wisdom he creates this rhythm which follows after his provision in which they are to give back part of what He has given so that they will always be reminded of who it is who gave it to them and of whose it is that they are to manage well.
- d. You might also say that the rhythm includes a giving of a tenth of what they brought in. Specifically here it is a tenth of their grain, their wine and their oil – which would be their three main crops – grain, like wheat and barley – wine, the juice of their grape harvest – and their oil, the all-important olive oil squeezed out from their olive harvest. Also cited here is the firstborn of their herd or their flock. So, every year they were to give 10% of all of that to the Lord. And then every three years, as I understand the text, they are to give another 10% of the

remaining 90% to their local storehouses to continue feeding and caring for those who have no land rites. And while these are some specifics given to direct their giving, there is much more to say about when and how much they are to give from texts like Numbers 18 and Leviticus 27. Moses' focus here is not on the specifics, but on the necessary rhythm and reason and the resulting joy.

- e. And I know what question you want answered here – are we as New Testament Christians expected to give this same amount back to the Lord? Are we under the tithing command of this text? Well, before I answer the question I think the question itself reveals something about our hearts. The fact, that this is one of the first questions that comes up probably reveals how much we love money. We are looking for a loophole to giving this much. We want out from under the burden of this command. We want freedom to give as we desire rather than have to keep the legalistic requirement of giving 10% of all we make. But should that really be our first question here? If you actually do the math of all the Old Testament offerings they were to give it adds up to somewhere between 23% and 33% of what God gave to them. So, the question about tithing still being commanded for the Church today is actually an issue of much larger percentages than just 10%. But the issue in this text is not about the specifics of each gift but rather the necessary rhythm of giving.

II. The Reason for Giving – vs. 23-29

- a. The rhythm for giving is followed by the reason for giving in verses 23-29. Notice that the first piece of business to be dealt with in this giving is that it must be in the presence of the Lord in verse 23. As Moses looks ahead he tells them that where God's presence dwells in the city of his choosing, which would ultimately be Jerusalem and the Temple that would be built by Solomon, it is here that they must bring their gift. So, the primary concern here is not the gift but it is the acknowledgement of the one who provided. Instead of falling in with the pagan nations around them and feasting in the presence of the false gods as though they somehow provided the harvest, they are to make the effort to travel to God's place to eat in his presence with the abundance of his provision so that it might all be to his praise! This feasting and giving in the presence of the Lord is for a two-pronged reason. One reason relating to the Lord and another reason relating to others. So, notice how this two-pronged reason for giving is similar to the way Jesus talks about our duties in following him. We are to love God and to love others. So, this text shows us how to do that with our giving. This first part of this reason for giving is fearing the Lord.
- b. *Fearing the Lord*
 - i. That is at the end of verse 23 where it says they are to do this so “that they may learn to fear the Lord your God always.” So, the rhythm of giving prescribed was for the purpose of teaching them to fear the Lord always. This is an important idea in the book of Deuteronomy – to learn to fear the Lord. One cannot love God in every way if they do not fear God always. So, we must learn to fear God if we are to learn to love God. And Moses addressed this learning to fear God in chapter 4. As he reminded

them of their history at Mount Horeb he said that he called them before the Lord there so that they might hear God's voice and learn to fear Him. And they did, didn't they?! So much so that they said they didn't want to hear his voice again lest they die. And then again in chapter 17 Moses will instruct their future kings to make their own copy of the Law so that they personally might obey God's commands and in doing that they might learn to fear God.

- ii. So, in these other two specific instances of learning to fear the Lord the word of the Lord is central to that learning. But here, the rhythm of giving to the Lord is central in the learning. So, how was this regular giving to the Lord to teach them to fear the Lord?
 1. Well, it would exalt God in their thinking as the ultimate Provider of all things. This would minimize the natural human tendency to take pride in things which were merely given to us as though we had obtained them on our own.
 - a. What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? – 1 Cor. 4:7b
 2. It would tangibly express worship of the Lord in that some of what has been given is being given back to him out of a thankful heart.
 3. It would regularly force the giver to trust in the Lord for future provision as they rejoice in current provision. One of the strongest deterrents to faithfulness in giving is the conviction that I need that money now or might need it in the future for my own needs. But this rhythm of giving will force that thought to be abandoned as the giver puts full reliance on God to provide for me in spite of my giving up this amount back to the Lord. In other words, this rhythm of giving forces us to trust God's economic rules and not man's. It forces us to lean upon the Lord when giving doesn't make human sense. You could always find something else to spend that money on than to give to the Lord. So, we learn to fear the Lord as we trust the Lord in giving.
 4. And it would teach the giver to fear the Lord in that he would have great joy in the experience of giving as he rejoices in God's abundance. So, don't miss the fact that they take the tithe and they partake of it in the presence of the Lord. They eat in God's presence the offering they are bringing to him. God does not need the tithe to survive. But the Israelites needed the tithe to know great joy in their gracious God. This is also seen by the way in the provision given in verses 24-26. They are told that if the distance is too far to carry the tithe, then they can sell it and come to God's place and then purchase something they desire and feast on that before the Lord. And all of that is the case because of the great

blessing of God in verse 24. The abundance of their crop and the great distance they would have to travel to God's Temple are all evidence of God's great blessing. So, this provision to sell their tithe to make traveling easier shows us that this whole thing is about delighting in a God who has so abundantly supplied rather than it being specifically about the exact gift they bring. And in this they learn to fear God in their giving as they rejoice in God.

c. *Feeding others*

- i. So, the first prong of this reason for giving is fearing the Lord. And then the second prong of this reason is feeding others. The bringing of this tithe every year was not just so that they could consume it all in God's presence. A tenth of their harvest would be much more than they could consume in one meal. So, the insinuation in the text, which is made more clear in Numbers 18, is that this tithe of everyone's harvest is meant to supply the need of the Levites who were not given a land inheritance. Remember, the Lord was the inheritance of the tribe of Levi. So, the other tribes are instructed to care for them because they were serving them before the Lord in the Temple. These yearly tithe offerings then were to be partly consumed in a feast of thankful celebration before the Lord, but the majority of it was to be put into the storehouse for the Levites so that they might be well-supplied throughout the year.
- ii. This is expanded in verse 28-29 with this third-year tithe in which they are to give this extra gift of 10% to their local storehouses to supply the needs of the Levites in their local towns. But not just them. They are also to supply the needs for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow so that they might eat and be filled. These are all groups who would not have land rights. The sojourner in Israel is not just any random misplaced person who doesn't have a homeland, much like how people think of refugees in our time. That is not what a sojourner in the Old Testament is. Rather, they are proselytes – meaning they are not Jewish by birth, but they are believers in the Jew's God and are faithfully serving Him. This would be Ruth before she married Boaz. She was a God-fearer and had many rights within Jewish society. We will come across this sojourner several times in the next few chapters and you will see God's concern that they are treated justly and are provided for sacrificially.
- iii. Along with this sojourner the tithe is meant to supply the needs of the widow and fatherless. Those who have lost land rights through death of a loved one. They are to be cared for and well supplied by the community.
- iv. Notice how benevolent God's design in giving is, and not just in giving, but also in the society that would be established under His Law. So often we think of his law as being overbearing and life-inhibiting. But in reality, God's ways are always joy-filled and life-giving. If they will but trust God and follow His commands they will have a society which would be filled with love and mercy for one another. God's design is wise, thoughtful,

intentional, merciful, and abundant in its meeting of needs. If the Israelites would live in accordance with God's Law they would have the best society possible in a post-Eden world.

- v. And this should inform their giving. They are to give out of faith in God's system. The reason God has blessed them with a great harvest is in part because he intends for them to meet the needs of those who are hurting and hungry around them. So, the two-pronged reason for this giving is to fear the Lord and to feed others.

III. The Resulting Joy of Giving – vs. 26b, 29b

- a. And this leads to the resulting joy of giving. That is the compelling nature of giving for the people of God. Because it is His design it is filled with joy for his people. So, in verse 26 we see that the bringing of the tithe is all about rejoicing before the Lord in His presence as we learn to fear Him. The rhythm and the reason lead to this resulting joy. If God's people will bring their offering into God's presence in this rhythm of giving and be reminded of His provision and of His power to continue providing, then they will know the great joy of giving. If they will take their gift and use it to provide for the ongoing work of those tasked with spiritual ministry before the Lord, then they will know this joy in the Lord. If they will generously provide out of their own abundant harvest to meet the needs of those in their own community, then they will know this great joy in the Lord.
- b. Not only is there great joy in the heart of the giver in this text, but there is great joy in the ongoing result of this giving. So, in verse 29 there is the promise of God's ongoing provision and blessing on the work of their hands as they are faithful to give and meet the needs of others. This is not some seed-money promise like what the Prosperity Gospel preachers are proclaiming. This is not God saying – listen, give me a little and I will give you a lot. Go ahead – test me and see if I can bless you!
- c. No, this is God saying, be faithful to obey my word and my way and see how true I will be to my word. I will bless this faithfulness with the abundant provision of life in the Land, so that you can continue to be faithful. And there is great faith displayed in the giver as they obey and trust the Lord, which then results in great joy for the giver as they see God faithfully supply.
- d. This was essentially the charge of Malachi in chapter 3 of his prophecy.
 - i. For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. ⁷From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' ⁸Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰Bring 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. –
Mal. 3:6-10

- e. What was Malachi saying? He was saying they were struggling in the Land in those post-exile days because they were not being faithful to the Lord, and specifically because they were not giving to the Lord as they were commanded to. God says – go ahead and test my faithfulness. Obey what I tell you to do and see how it works out. So, this joy of God's great blessing is not about seed-money theology, but about faithful trust in God's way. And there is always resulting joy when we walk in faithful, trusting obedience.

Conclusion & Application:

So, how does this all apply to the church in Newton, KS?

Well, before I get to the tithing question I want to make a link to Christ. In other words, I want to ascend right to the top of the mountain and then work our way down from there. In Dt. 14 the children of Israel are told to regularly come together in God's presence and bring their gifts from their harvest so that they might rejoice in God's provision to them. They are to eat together in His presence in a feast of abounding joy. The church has a regular gathering like that every week in that we gather in God's presence and we bring our gifts to the Lord and we rejoice in His presence with His people as we remember His provision. Only the meal we observe together is no longer a meal in which we provide the bread and the wine. But now we gather as the Church to partake of the meal God has provided for us in Christ. He brings the bread, which is his broken body, and he brings the wine, which is his shed blood – and he calls us to joyfully partake by faith. And so every time we gather around the Lord's table, we are considering and remembering God's great provision for our greatest of needs. It is in this broken body and this shed blood that our life is eternally thriving. All our needs are met in Him! So, God's great gift of His Son is the great provision which we gather around at His Table. And this shapes how we think about our own lives. He who gave everything for us to rescue us from sin shows us the way to also give up everything in loving sacrifice to Him. And this then shapes how we view our money. In other words, we can't talk about whether or not we should tithe as Christians until we put our Gospel glasses on and look at it through the shed blood of Christ. And when we do this, our self-concern and our miserly attempts to protect our own interests fall away as we gaze at the one who "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9b)

I asked that question you were all wondering about under point 1, but then I never answered it. And that's because I wanted to end there with some application of these truths to our own hearts. Do these commands of a tithe apply to us today in the Church? The short answer is no. We are nowhere commanded by Christ, nor in the rest of the New Testament to give a tenth of our income to the Lord. Instead of a set amount, we are given principles that are to govern our giving as we seek to love the Lord in every way and love others too. What are those principles you ask? Well, in Matthew 6:19-20 Jesus tells us to lay up treasures in Heaven rather than treasures on Earth, and in the parable about the farmer who had the bountiful harvest and built more barns but then his life was required of him that night, Jesus makes the application to our hearts of using our possessions for eternally minded reasons rather than simply for personal

gain. And then in 1 Corinthians 16 we read of Paul's command to the church to set aside their gifts to the Lord on the first day of the week. And in 1 Timothy 5 and 1 Cor. 9 and Galatians 6 he encourages the church to financially support those who do the work of the ministry so that they can give themselves fully to that work and because a worker is worthy of his wages. And then in 2 Corinthians 9, probably the single most important text for Christians as they think about their giving we read this, starting in verse 6:

- The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. – 2 Cor. 9:6-8

There is so much carry over between the text in Dt. 14 and this one. There is the rhythm of giving and the sacrificial generosity of giving and the fear of the Lord as we delight in him in giving. So, let me close with some questions for reflection.

- Does your pattern of giving follow the pattern of God's supply? When you give to the Lord in that rhythm are you rightly reminded of your stewardship rather than your ownership?
- Does your reason for giving line up with this text? Do you give so that you might learn to fear the Lord in every area of your life, not the least of which is your wallet? In your giving are you reminded of your dependence upon God in place of your own ability to generate what you need? Do you give with intention of helping those who are in need? Do you look for ways to bless others with the abundance of God's supply in your life? In your giving are you regularly fighting off the human logic which would make you stingy in your giving so as to watch out for yourself?
- Does your giving result in the great joy which is described in this text? When you write the check or drop the cash in the plate are you doing that with great joy in the Lord for His abundant provision? And are you watching God continue to bless you as you faithfully follow His command to be generous with what he gives? Are you experiencing this God's all abounding grace so that you are sufficient in all things at all times so that you may abound in every good work with your money?