

The People God Has Given Us

Series: Render to God

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Text: Luke 20:19-26

19 The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

20 Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. 21 So the spies questioned him: "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. 22 Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" 23 He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 24 "Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?" "Caesar's," they replied. 25 He said to them, "Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." 26 They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

Most "giving" sermons are weak because they assume that things belong to us and that we actually have a decision on how to use these things. When God gives us something or entrusts something into our hands, He expects us to use whatever it is to His glory and for His service. We become stewards. Paul applies this truth in 1 Cor.4:1-7, 1

This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. 2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God. 6 Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. 7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

In this series I have researched six NT books, Romans-Philippians to see what belongs to God. I have put His possessions into four categories including 1) The People God Has Given Us; 2) The Nature God Has Given Us; 3) The Message God Has Given Us; 4) Various Other Things God Has Given Us. These belong to God and bear His image. We are to render or give Him what is His.

The People God Has Given Us:

Romans:

- 8:14, Those led by the Spirit of God are sons of God
- 8:21, The children of God will be brought into a glorious freedom
- 12:13, Share with God's people who are in need

1 Corinthians

- 1:2, The church of God
- 16:1, collection for God's people
- 3:9, God's fellow workers, God's field, God's building
- 3:16, 17 God's temple (church)

2 Corinthians

- 1:1, God's church
- 6:1, God's fellow-workers

Galatians

- 1:13, Paul persecuted God's church
- 4:5, sons

Ephesians

- 2:19, God's people
- 2:19, God's family/household
- 4:12, God's people

So how do we give back to God the people He has given us in our lives?

- 1) In better shape than when we were given them
- 2) With a greater sense of purpose than when we were given them
- 3) If lost when we were given them, then saved
- 4) If discouraged when we were given them, then encouraged
- 5) If ignorant of God's ways when we were given them, then more knowledgeable
- 6) If trapped in some sin when we were given them, then free and growing
- 7) If weak when we received them, then stronger
- 8) If worried when we were given them, then at peace
- 9) If weary when we were given them, then strengthened
- 10) If confused when we were given them, then redirected

Each person who comes into our lives is a gift from God. The gift is in various conditions. We take the gift "as is" and begin our stewardship. The people of God are

called God's building. When one buys a house, unless it is brand new and in perfect condition, they begin to assess what needs to be done to repair this or that, to upgrade, to add, or take away. They have a vision for their new home of how they want it to look. They scrub, and clean, and dig up, and plant, and replace, and repair, and rearrange so the home is clean, beautiful and functional. This is good stewardship. We must do them same with the people God places in our lives.

After Paul and Barnabas had shared the gospel in certain towns, planting churches, they knew they needed to return to see what was needed. Acts 14:21-23, 21 ***They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.***

In fact all the letters written to churches and church leaders were written because God's people had to be taught, strengthened, and corrected. It takes a lot to maintain the people of God, and to one day give them back to God who gave them. 1 Cor.15:23-24, In speaking of the resurrection Paul wrote: ***23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.***

Look around this morning you are responsible for taking care of these folks, and one day giving an account of your stewardship in their lives. Will they be better off for having known you?