

The extraordinary in the Ordinary

You have no idea of the joy

Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others! *

Here's my version; Success in life is being able to say again and again and again "You have no idea of the joy it gives me to do this for you!" Read Hebrews 12.2 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning it's shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.' His cry as he hung on the cross was one of joy 'It is finished!' It is finished – and they have no idea of the joy it brings me to do this for them, the pain of this journey, the pain of leaving heaven and coming to earth; the pain of being misunderstood and mistreated; the pain of living among broken relationships and greedy people; the pain of the suffering all around; the pain of hatred, jealousy, envy and pride; the pain of betrayal and the agony of the garden; the pain of being wholly alone. THIS pain brings me great joy because I can give to them the abundant riches of my Father. Friends, do you have any idea of the joy it brought Jesus to die for you? Do you have any idea of the joy it brings the Father to see you here today? My best guess is that as he looks down on us today – he looks at each one of us and his heart beats faster and he is thinking it WAS worth it!

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that you, through his poverty might become rich. When God created us he gave us everything to enjoy, but everything is a generous and gracious gift from an extravagant heavenly Father, we own none of it – it all belongs to God. Read Psalm 24 v 1 "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." As he created God said "You have no idea of the joy it gives me to place you in such a fantastic and excellent creation. Now go – till it, work it, make it grow and share it with one another, be good stewards and bring joy to others." Read Mathew 10 v 8 "Freely you have received, freely give." The talk I am going to give today is about money.

To be able to say – "You have no idea of the joy it gives me to do this for you" is one of the most powerful and loving things one person can do for another, because it is one of the things closest to God's heart. "You have no idea of the joy it brings me to give this money to you – God has so blessed me and so it brings me great joy to be able to share that blessing with you. Some of us know what that's like – don't we? Some of us know what it's like to experience the joy of giving. Some of us know what it's like to find ourselves running away from the house where we've just put the envelope full of cash through the letterbox, and as we're running away we're saying to ourselves – they'll never know ... ha ha! They'll never know and we are full of joy that we could give away what God had generously given to us!

Friends, every book I read on community in preparation for this series had a chapter on giving – every book! Because when community is working right – people in that community share what they have with others, they don't consider what they have as their own, but as a gracious and generous gift from God and they find ways to share it. When community is working well, you will hear this said often “you have no idea of the joy it brings me to do this for you....”

Now today I am going to be very specific in my application of this talk. I am fully aware there are other ways to apply what I am about to read – but God has laid something on my heart for this community today.

2 Corinthians 8 v 1-15

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written, “He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little”.

I read this passage when I was preparing the fruit of the spirit talk on love and I have never before experienced what I experienced at that moment. The words – now finish the task – captured me in a rather frightening way. Could God be saying finish the task? My heart pounded as I began to think about the implications. Now finish the task ... pay off the outstanding debt on the redevelopment? My every fibre reacted at this thought – No, No, No, NO NO! I'm not going through all that again! Why do I have to ask for money again ... NO! But I have come to believe that that would be God's best for us, as a community in our 125th anniversary year of 2008.

Paul writes of the Corinthians that they had the desire to give and it was matched by their willingness to give (v 10,11). That certainly has been true here. Over the life of the redevelopment project, this community has raised in gifts and pledges £ 2m. Through an ordinary group of people – who would not describe themselves as rich – God has done an

extraordinary thing. This truly is the extraordinary in the ordinary. It is a modern working of the feeding of the 5000 – where Jesus takes 5 loaves and 2 fishes – all that there is – and feeds 5000 plus. He takes the ordinary and transforms it into the extraordinary. Here, God has taken our gifts – the gifts of ordinary people and he has transformed them into the extraordinary – this wonderful building, and this building brings us great joy. But there is another joy this redevelopment has brought us. It is the joy of being able to give away the tithe money.

Watch this and enjoy!

This is the list of people we have been able to give to:-

- Hunedoara Project
- Braemar Avenue Baptist Church
- Reach Out Trust
- Sally Avery
- St Catherine's Hospice
- Agape Trust
- St Mary's Church
- Aldwick Free Church
- Spurgeon's College
- Elim Church
- Brighton Road, Horsham Baptist Church
- Sandown IOW Baptist Church
- Reigate Baptist Church
- Greenfields Baptist Church
- Chiddingfold Baptist Church
- Aquila Care Trust
- The Church on the Heath
- Godstone Baptist Church
- North Kent Community Church
- St. Andrews Church

Doesn't that fill your heart with joy? Friends, now let's finish the task! God has laid on my heart to finish the task of the redevelopment in 2008 – our 125th anniversary year, it will again require a sacrifice, but also be another opportunity for this community to say "you have no idea of the joy it brings us to do this for you", and here's why. We have thought about how we should celebrate our 125th anniversary, we could come up with lots of things we could do but we are stretched now – and top up on events may be a step too far. We could invite our neighbours to events or our friends to things, but the truth is they won't come because this anniversary means nothing to them. BUT we could give something to the community – we could give away the outstanding tithe money – to the community! How about being able to go to Julie Dowling at West Green Primary School and being able to say – we have £ 50 000 to give to you in celebration of our 125th anniversary in Crawley Baptist Church, and Julie .. "You have no idea of the joy it brings to us to do this for you". Or to be able to say to the Easter Team – we'll buy you a portakabin to secure your future ... "and you have no idea of the joy it brings us to do this for you." Wouldn't that be a great way to celebrate the 125th anniversary of this church? But - we have to give. Now I am absolutely convinced we can do this – in cash! I have no evidence – it is a conviction.

In 2 Corinthians 8 v 2-5 it reads 'they gave as much as they were able.' You cannot give what you do not have, some of us have made our sacrifice and the truth is – we have very little, if anything left to give. As Minister the truth for me and Lisa is that we have nothing more to give. We have made the one big sacrifice we could in selling our house and giving to the redevelopment project, we cannot do that again. As it is we are struggling to pay the pledge we have subsequently made – But we will finish! Some of us cannot give big. But (v12) 'to those of you who have much – much is required', some of us have been greatly blessed by God in ways we would never have imagined, now you can store up for yourselves treasure on earth, or you can invest in the kingdom.

That's Paul's desire as he writes these words to the Corinthian church – that they would invest in the kingdom, you can put money and wealth to eternal use – but you have to give it away. To give to the redevelopment project is to do far more than pay off a debt for a building, it is to serve the community for the work of the Kingdom of God – and friends, God has not blessed you with financial resources so that you can keep it for yourself, he has blessed you so that you can have the privilege of giving to others. So you can have the opportunity to say "you have no idea of the joy it brings me to do this for you", because I have been lavishly blessed by a great and generous God, who though he was rich became poor, that I might be rich, and so I want to do the kind of thing he would – so here have this money and may you know the blessing of God through it.

So friends for 2008, our 125th anniversary, will it be "you have no idea of the joy it brings me", open hands and giving generously. Or closed hands and keeping for ourselves. On the cross Jesus freely gave up everything he had, he opened his hands and allowed them to be nailed to the cross and as he died he cried ...you have no idea of the joy it brings me to do this for you No idea!

*Taken from Living Below page 127