

# OFFERTORY MOMENTS

## 2014

### **JANUARY 1**

Today is not only New Year's Day, but it is Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany is the New Year's Day of the Christian Year. A new year brings many thoughts of new beginnings. We make resolutions about diet, or exercise, breaking a bad habit or forming some good practices.

A new year feels like a fresh start in many days. Fresh Starts are what God gives us every day, every week, every year.

We can start this day, this week and this year by a fresh commitment to give generously to God, trusting that God will continue to give generously to us. Let's resolve to be generous as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

### **JANUARY 8**

Have you ever heard a minister quote Psalm 19 when praying before a sermon? Of course you have. "Let the words of my mouth and meditations of my heart be ACCEPTABLE in your sight, O Lord my strength and my Redeemer."

We want our thoughts, our actions and our gifts to be ACCEPTABLE to God, do we not? And what does this mean? In a paraphrase by author Jeff Anderson, it may mean, "Let all that I say and all that I think about, as well as all that I do, bring a big, joyful smile to your face, and make you really proud of me."

That is a good prayer, and an even better way to live, to bring a smile to God's face, and give God reason to be proud of us.

We can do that, for certain in the way we express generosity to God in our gifts. Let us bring a smile to God's face as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

### **JANUARY 15**

An author named Jeff Anderson, in his book, *PLASTIC DONUTS*, says this. "Our gifts today can do a lot of good. They can feed the hungry, heal the sick, encourage the brokenhearted and spread the Good News. But most importantly, they can please the God in heaven, connecting His children to Him."

Then, the author adds, "Think about that. Wouldn't you like to know how your gifts can bring delight to your Father in heaven?"

Every time we participate in making an offering to God, we get a chance to know how our gifts can bring delight to God. Let's do that now, as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

### **JANUARY 22**

As we come to the time of offering, it is important to know that Jesus talked more about money than any other subject except the Kingdom of God, and he often tied the two subjects together. Jesus never condemned prosperity, but he consistently disapproved of stinginess and the selfish use of our money. He also praised generosity and compassion. Jesus was not trying to get money for God. Jesus was trying to help us see that we have a far greater need to give than God has need of our money. We grow spiritually and become mature in Discipleship when we give sacrificially and generously.

Let us do that as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **JANUARY 29**

A man had a ticket to a popular attraction, which he had visited many times. He saw a friend, and offered him the ticket. Was he generous? Another woman cleaned out her garage, took the unused items to a charity and gave it to them. Was she being generous?

Another man went regularly to his church, and gave the change from his pocket each week. Was he being generous?

Generosity has to do with our priorities. Do we give to God with a plan for sacrifice and generosity, or do we give what is left over? The difference is significant, not just in the amount, but in the level of intentional giving.

Let us give intentionally and sacrificially as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **FEBRUARY 5**

Do you believe in Saint Valentine? Many stories attempt to describe whether there was a real person from whose life Valentine's Day began. One such story says the Christian priest was executed for marrying Christian couples in the third century, and trying to spread Christianity. Today, Valentine's Day is all about flowers, cards, chocolates and other expressions of romantic love. The consistent theme in all these gifts...is the giving.

However the day was begun, and based on whomever's life, it is symbolic of sacrifice and generosity. In honor of that, we give sacrificially and courageously to God, as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **FEBRUARY 12**

John 3:16 is probably the best known verse in the Bible. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

So God GIVES. But, not just any gift. God gives the VERY BEST! And God keeps on giving, regardless of our lack of response. God gives us life, and breath and purpose.

We cannot out-give God. But we can give, generously and sacrificially, and we can choose to give our VERY BEST. Let us now give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **FEBRUARY 19**

Some students and teachers of the Bible believe that when Jesus fed those thousands of people with just five loaves and two fishes, there was another layer to the story. Perhaps there were many people there that day that had brought food, but kept it concealed for their own use. But when the boy offered up his little picnic to the Master, his gift caused the contagious sharing of everyone there. Whether the miracle was one of multiplication or one of a boy's gift of all he had, the real miracle was that of generosity. What miracles we could do in the world with our gifts of generosity! As it has been said, "Not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice," is what inspires more giving, and miracles of healing, feeding, caring and compassion.

Let's give sacrificially as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **FEBRUARY 26**

This week, Christians observe Ash Wednesday. This is the beginning of a six week journey to Holy Week, Good Friday, the Crucifixion and the celebration of Easter. Ashes were known to the Old Testament Jews and to the early Christians as a sign of repentance and sacrificial living. For Christians today it is a time of reflection, devotion and renewed commitment to the meaning of Christ's sacrifice for us. As we remember how much we have been given, it is a time to recommit ourselves to be givers to God.

Let us renew our sacrifice to God's work in the world, as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **MARCH 5**

In his book, *PLASTIC DONUTS*, Jeff Anderson says, “Singing a worship song is not necessarily worship, and neither is writing a check. But when the heart engages through a praise or hymn in a meaningful way, it becomes more than just a song. And when the heart engages through a gift that matters, it becomes more than just a check.”

Then, he adds, “What about you? Do your gifts engage your heart in worship? Do your gifts influence your lifestyle? Do your gift amounts matter to you? **From God’s perspective, the amount matters!**”

As we give gifts to God, the amount matters. Let us give a meaningful gift, as we present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **MARCH 12**

Do you have a “gift ceiling?” Have you established an amount that you cannot give above? If you are giving less than a tithe, is that your ceiling? If you are giving a true tithe, is that your ceiling? Should it be? Has your ceiling ever been raised?

We can be thankful that God’s love for us has no ceiling. The sky’s the limit, and there is no limit. Sometimes, we need to explore our heart and see if there is a higher calling for us as it relates to our generosity to God’s work.

Let’s raise our ceiling as we give God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **MARCH 19**

Two men who looked like “street people” ordered a take-out meal from a fast food restaurant. When the to-go bag was ready the clerk asked for the payment for the food. The two men argued about whose turn it was to pay. Their argument caused nervousness among the other customers and especially the clerk. Suddenly, from back in the waiting line, a stranger stepped forward, slapped down a twenty, and said, “I’ll pay for it!” The homeless men were surprised and grateful. The clerk was relieved, and some among the customers wondered to themselves, “Why didn’t I do that?” At least one thought, “Why didn’t I even THINK about doing that?”

It’s easy to “Not think” about being generous. Does God call us to think about it? Does God call us to do it?

Think about it. Pray about it. Then, act as God calls us to act, as we present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **MARCH 26**

The Apostle Paul praised the Macedonians, because they pleaded for the privilege of giving to God. Though they lived in poverty, and were in a “state of affliction,” they wanted to give to Paul’s ministry. They gave as much as they were able, and then gave beyond their ability. Their needs were great, but they found greater joy in giving to those even more in need.

Perhaps our world could use a dose of that. Perhaps our own lives could be enriched by the adoption of a generous and sacrificial spirit of giving. Let’s do that now as we present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **APRIL 2** (For the week prior to Palm Sunday)

Mike Slaughter, pastor of the famous Ginghamburg Church in Ohio says this: “Our giving, as an act of worship, should never be sporadic or unprepared. Don’t just toss your leftovers into God’s offering plate. Plan giving ahead of time and make it a priority in your life.”

And, isn’t that a good lesson for us? We plan our vacations, our medical appointments, our celebrations. But do we really plan ahead what we give? A failure to plan is a plan to fail.

May we prayerfully plan what we can give to God, who gives us life, as we now present God’s tithes and our offerings?

### **APRIL 9** (For Palm Sunday)

Jesus rides a donkey into Jerusalem to the loud praise and Hosannas of the crowds. Yet, less than a week later the crowd will be shouting for his Crucifixion. Though Jesus is consistent, we, his church, can be very trivial and inconsistent, can't we? As we try to be consistent in our devotion to Christ, who gives his life for us, let us consistently and devotedly give our money, that Christ's work can be accomplished and furthered, here in this place, and around the world.

Let us now offer God's tithes and our offerings.

### **APRIL 16** (For Easter Sunday)

We gather here today along with Christians around the world, to give thanks for God's greatest gift to us; the Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ! To truly offer thanksgiving, we honor God with our gifts, returned to him.

May we give a worthy gift, as we now present God's tithes and our offerings?

### **APRIL 23**

Many generous people have testified about their feeling that God has blessed them. (To my knowledge) None of them have ever testified that they are sorry for their generosity and that they wish they had NOT been generous. But we do not give in expectation of receiving a material return from God. God is not a giant vending machine or a lottery ticket. The Christian gives from a thankful heart for God's blessings, even when physical or economic life is difficult.

Let's give thanks by our gifts, as we return God's tithes and our offerings.

### **APRIL 30**

Do you remember the story of a well-to-do woman, shopping in a department store? She spied a child with ragged shoes, his toes hanging out. She took him by the hand, went to the shoe department and bought him a new pair of shoes and several pairs of socks. As the little boy started on his way, he came back and asked, "Are you God's wife?" She responded, "No, but I'm one of his children." The child said, "I knew you were some kind of kin." We are all God's children, and we are called to acts of kindness and generosity. We are called to compassion and concern for God's other children.

Let's be Kin to God, as we give generously of God's tithes and our offerings.

### **MAY 7**

A popular story is told about a young Robert Louis Stevenson. One evening he stood at a window looking out at the street. When he was called to dinner, he did not move. He was watching a lamplighter who was going from one gaslight post to the next, lighting the lights. Stevenson called out, "There's a man out there punching holes in the darkness." Our gifts to God help punch holes in the darkness of hunger, pain and need. We have an opportunity to punch holes in the darkness.

Let's make the world a little lighter by our giving of God's tithes and our offerings.

### **MAY 14**

A young theology student was encouraged and urged to become a tither, giving ten percent to God. The student said, "But now, we are Christians, people of the New Testament. We are not under the law, but we are under grace."

The older man responded, "Young man, if you can show me anywhere in the New Testament where it says that LESS is expected of a Christian under grace than of a Jew under the law, I will be glad to subscribe to your position."

We tithe because we believe God's promise to bring us to wholeness in faith...not because of a religious obligation. It is an act of love and faith. Let us now return to God, God's tithe and our offerings.

## **MAY 21**

A young man did very well in business and became a multi-millionaire. One of his friends noted, "Getting rich hasn't changed old George one bit!" His companion replied, "No it hasn't. He used to put one dollar in the offering plate, and he still does it today."

As time goes by, do we grow? Do we grow spiritually? Do we grow in our giving? Our spiritual growth and our giving go hand in hand.

As God blesses us, let us be a blessing to others, as we now give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **MAY 28**

John Claypool was a prominent preacher a couple of decades ago. He once said, "All your gifts will be given away at the end of your life. Why not get in on the joy of giving them away before that?"

Money is one of those ways that we leave something that makes a difference, and God rewards that with joy. Jesus was right. When we give something, we take joy away with us.

Let's have some joy, as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **JUNE 4**

Life is habit-forming. We all have habits. The way we brush our teeth, or shave, or put on makeup. The way we fold our arms or hands. Every day our lives are filled with habits. Some are good, and some are bad. Worship is a habit. Reading the Bible is a habit. Prayer is a habit. Those are good habits to develop. Most of us are pretty good at developing the good habits of Christian life. What about the habit of generosity? Giving generously to God is a good habit to develop, not for the sake of the church, or even for the sake of God, but for the wonderful miracle of spiritual growth it helps us to attain.

May we develop and strengthen the habit of generous giving, as we now give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **JUNE 11**

When we come here to worship, pray, study the scripture and support each other, we participate in the Kingdom of God. We witness to the work that our faith matters, the church matters, Jesus Christ makes a difference. We stand for Christ. When we give our money and other resources, we make a statement about whom we trust and who we're willing to make sacrifices to. A non-worshipping, non-serving non-giving Christian is a contradiction in terms.

We now have the opportunity to make a statement about whom we trust and to whom we are thankful, as we give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **JUNE 18**

Many years ago, an Italian man named Luigi Tarisio was a collector of violins. No one knew he collected violins because he never displayed them or talked about them. When Luigi died and his home was cleared out, they found 246 beautiful violins. Some were crammed into an attic. The best were stored in the bottom drawer of an old chest. In his devotion to violins, Luigi had robbed the world of all that music. Imagine how much joy he could have experienced and how much music his violins could have made if he had shared them.

Do we have treasure we store away for ourselves? Do we rob ourselves of the joy of giving? Do we rob the many causes and ministries we could be supporting? As we give God's tithes and our offerings, let's share the joy of generosity.

## **JUNE 25**

John Wesley, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Anglican priest who started this “Methodist” movement, was once torn by doubt. He went with hesitation to a Bible study on Aldersgate Street in London. While there, torn by his insecurity of doubt, he was struck by the life-changing revelation that Christ had died for HIM; that Christ had saved HIM from the law of sin and death. All that God had done was for HIM. That is the revelation we must all receive. God’s love and gift of salvation is for US. For YOU and for ME! When we realize this gift of God, aren’t our hearts filled with the desire to give back to God?

Let’s give gladly and generously to the God who first gives to us, as we present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **JULY 2**

A wonderful Baptist preacher, (who became an Episcopal priest) named John Claypool tells a wonderful story of two brothers. They were farmers, and worked their adjacent farms over the years. One brother had a large family. The other was a bachelor. The married brother thought about how his brother had no one to help him farm, and that limited his productivity. So, each night, he would take grain out of his supply and take it and add it to his brother’s. The bachelor brother thought about how his brother had so many mouths to feed and so much more responsibility. So, each night he would take grain from his supplies and go and add it to his brother’s.

One night they encountered each other, and each explained what they had been doing. The brothers embraced in the joy of their mutual sharing. Each had been so willing to give, and each had richly received.

That is what giving is about. The joy of unselfish, sacrificial sharing is always rewarded with grace. Let us now give generously as we present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **JULY 9**

Money in some form has been around for at least ten thousand years. No one denies that money is an essential part of our way of life. Along with family, faith, friends and health, it is one of the five most important aspects of life.

For the church, money is a Holy Tool, by which we provide a space for worship and learning, a “home base” from which to do outreach and mission, and a vision for making Disciples of Jesus Christ. Money is important! None of us neglect it in our personal lives. We take it seriously here, in Church, too, and use it as a spiritual fuel for God’s Kingdom.

Let us give generously as we present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **JULY 16**

Gordon MacDonald, in his book, *Generosity; Moving Toward Life That Is Truly Life*, writes in reference to I Timothy 6:10; which is, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil;” MacDonald says this; “In light of this verse, doesn’t it stand to reason that the love of GIVING money moves us AWAY from all kinds of evil, too? It certainly does, and freedom from evil is a beautiful thing!”

Maybe the evil about our love for money is that we come to trust it too much. Can we come to trust God even more? And trusting God, can we give more freely and move AWAY from all kinds of evil?

As we present God’s tithes and our offerings, let’s give it a try.

### **JULY 23**

Giving is all about letting go; releasing; sharing. When we give our money to God, we share it with God's vision for the church and for the world. We participate in the salvation and welfare of God's children everywhere. We let go and release our trust in things and place our trust in God's grace.

Let us now trust God as we freely give God's tithes and our offerings.

### **JULY 30**

Jesus had harsh warnings for a farmer who had reaped abundant crops, but selfishly decided to keep all he had gained by building his bigger barns. The farmer thought he had it made. It was all about him. But he had forgotten the possibility of generosity. Jesus never condemned prosperity, but he consistently criticized selfishness, stinginess and the lack of compassion.

We have the opportunity to avoid stinginess and selfishness and to be generous now, as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

### **AUGUST 6**

Most of us would agree that we have much for which to be thankful. In our faith, gratitude is our response to the Grace of God. Our true expression of gratitude is in giving back to God the tangible means at our disposal. For ancient Biblical people, this meant grains and livestock. For us, it means our financial support, our money.

This is our opportunity to say thanks to God by presenting God's tithes and our offerings.

### **AUGUST 13**

An ancient story tells about an Arab father who gave his 17 camels to his three sons at his death. He gave one-half to one son, one-third to the second son and one-ninth to the third. The person handling the estate couldn't figure out how to divide seventeen by those numbers. He consulted a wise old man who said, "Let me give you one of my camels, and bring the number to 18. Give the one receiving one-half his 9 camels, the one receiving one-third his 6 camels, and the last his one-ninth, which is 2 camels.  $9 + 6 + 2 = 17$ . Each son has his fair number. Then, return my camel to me to total the eighteen."

It seems that whenever we are willing to give something up, a good result can come. As we give generously to God, things seem to work out better for all. Let us demonstrate that as we now give God's tithes and our offerings.

### **AUGUST 20**

What has value? How much value does anything have? The true economic answer is that an object or service is worth whatever someone is willing to pay for it.

What is valuable to us? Is it gold? Is it our stock portfolios, or our bank accounts or our homes? All these are practical parts of life.

Or, instead is the most valuable thing our love for one another, our families, our friends, and our faith?

We are here because there is a deep need to be part of this faith-community, and to experience the love and grace of God. Because we receive, we are able to give.

May we now give generously and bountifully to God and the work of God's Kingdom, as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **AUGUST 27**

It is reported that the great Helen Keller was asked, "What could be worse than being born blind?" She replied, "To have sight without vision."

If we can see the vision of what God is calling us to do for The Kingdom, for our community and for the world, we can experience the vision of our gifts answering the call of prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.

We can open the eyes of our souls and see God's work being done, as we generously give God's tithes, and our offerings.

## **SEPTEMBER 3**

In 1916 a woman named Hetty Green died, and she was the richest woman in the world. She kept \$31 million in one bank, and left an estate of \$95 million. She lived on cold oatmeal so she wouldn't have to pay to heat it. When her son required an amputation she refused to pay for the surgery. She was very rich, but she was in poverty because of her attitude and lack of concern for others. We have the choice to be like Hetty Green, or to be compassionate, caring and generous people. There is a joy that comes from giving.

As we have abundantly prospered, let us abundantly give, as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **SEPTEMBER 10**

In the musical "Oklahoma," a cowboy goes to Kansas City and sings, "Everything's up to date in Kansas City; they've gone about as far as they can go!"

How far can we go? When we think we've gone as far as we can go, do we stop moving forward? As generous givers to God's kingdom and ministries, have we gone as far as we can go? Are we content to stay where we are, or is there another level to which God is calling us? Just when we think we've done everything and given enough, is there a better and higher vision and mission? Let us lift our vision and our generosity as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **SEPTEMBER 17**

Christian Church pastor and writer Herb Miller says this. "The Bible does not teach us that the primary reason for generous giving is to balance the church budget. The Bible tells us that we give our money because of our relationship with Jesus Christ. We give as an act of worship. We give as a signal that not only have we said 'yes' to Christ at our baptism; we are continuing to say 'yes' to Christ by seeking his kingdom first. We give to further God's work in response to the spiritual work God has done in our lives."

Let us now present our generosity to God with God's tithes and our offerings.

## **SEPTEMBER 24**

Hear this modern parable. A group of 100 were gathered in a church for worship. Just after their prayer time, a band of masked gunmen burst into the building, brandishing their weapons. They surrounded the people and one of them said, "If any of you do not truly believe in Christ, then you can get out now!" About half the people hastily made their way to the door and left.

The remaining congregation wondered what their fate would be. The intruders then took off their masks and said, "We are believers also. We want to worship with you. We just wanted to see who was true to their faith."

John Maxwell, the motivational speaker says, "One word describes the ones who stayed, and that is 'Lordship'". He points out that an authentic way our practice of Lordship shows is in our decision to give generously to God's work. Let us give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **OCTOBER 1**

In Philipians 4, the Apostle Paul talks about contentment. You will recognize the famous verse about his learning to be content whatever the circumstances. He goes on to express thanks for the gifts he has received, and says the gifts were “a fragrant offering, and acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

Do we believe that? That those things we really need will be the things coming from the riches of God?

If we believe, our response is our generous giving. Let us give accordingly, as we present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **OCTOBER 8**

Robert Louis Stevenson once said, “The man (person) who forgets to be grateful has fallen asleep in life.”

It has often been said that lots of people fall asleep in church. Could that be, (besides the sermon, of course,) that the reason is a lack of gratitude? To be truly grateful for all we have received from God, our freedom, our abundance, our blessings and our very lives, is to be sleeping through our spiritual heritage.

Let’s be awake to the generosity of God, and be grateful and generous as we present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **OCTOBER 15**

The great tennis player, Arthur Ashe once said, “True heroism...is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to SERVE others at whatever the cost.”

One of our vows when we join the church is to SERVE. There are many ways to serve God’s Kingdom in the church, in the community and in the world. Along with our service, we also vow to be generous with our money. Let us give generously and serve gratefully as we give God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **OCTOBER 22**

We have all been taught that whatever we do, we should do well. Sometimes it is difficult to do things as well as we would like, but we continue to strive for the best and live life to its fullest. How well do we do with our generosity and our giving to God? Are we doing our very best? Are we giving a worthy portion of our financial resources? That of course is between us and God. But, it IS between us and God.

Let’s give worthy gifts as we present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **OCTOBER 29**

A television script writer named Dan Harmon says, “People is more important than anything, even grammar.”

We often overlook the fact that our giving to God’s ministry through the church is not about bills and budgets, but it is about people. When we give, lives are impacted and people are helped, in so many ways.

May we envision the ministries that are accomplished through our gifts, and give generously that lives may be changed, as we give God’s tithes and our offerings.