

“Being of One Mind”

Together We Can Do More, part 1

1st Chronicles 29:1-9

You are in the right place this morning. This is a place where you can hear from God, where you can experience Christ’s love, and where your life can be changed. I firmly believe that, or I wouldn’t be standing in front of you today. Whether you are here for the first time or the thousandth time, God is not done with you yet. I cannot tell you how to be perfect, but I can tell you how to love Jesus. And I can promise you that if you follow him, he will renew your life.

I invite you to pray with me by holding your hands out in front of you, as a sign that you are ready to receive and respond to God’s word this morning. Let’s pray together.

Holy God, we come before you this morning seeking your mercy. We don’t love you perfectly. We make mistakes. But we know that, through your Son Jesus Christ, we can experience forgiveness and healing, and using his strength, we can serve you with our whole heart. Help us to be your church, God. Teach us the way you would have us go, and help us not to stray from it. We need your help to be your church. And we ask all this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever played a team sport before? My high school sports were golf, track, and cross-country – technically, we had teams, but everyone pretty much did their own thing, unless you were running a relay.

However, in college, I played in the marching band for five years. This actually gave me a dual reinforcement of the importance of teamwork and being united. As a band, we wanted to give our audience the best show possible. We each had a job to do: memorize our music, stay in shape, march with precision,

and help each other when someone was out of formation and not doing their job. It was hard work.

Then we watched the football game itself. It is obvious when a football team is not working together. When someone misses an assignment, when someone fails to do their part, it doesn't lead to success. What is interesting to me, is that someone can actually be a good football player and, at the same time, a lousy teammate. They can take all the credit for themselves, like a running back saying, “I'm so fast,” forgetting that the other players were blocking for him. Or a quarterback saying, “I'm such a great passer,” forgetting that if no one caught his passes, he'd be no good at all.

Being united, “being of one mind” as the Bible puts it (Philippians 2:2), is not only advantageous in sports, it's great for life in general. Think about your family. When parents are united, they are an unstoppable force. Nothing, not even dirty diapers and sprained ankles can slow them down! Seriously. When my wife twisted her ankle, our family united to cook dinner, do the dishes, fold the laundry, and a whole bunch of other stuff. We were a great team.

Do you know that feeling? When you are at work, think of how great it is when your colleagues understand how to function as a team to accomplish goals and make the workplace a fun place to be. Or in school, when the teacher inevitably assigns that dreaded “group project,” how much better it is when your classmates work together with you to share the load and get an “A”.

Of course, in real life, not everyone is on the same page. Just look at our politic arguments in this country. Look at how families, businesses, and even churches fall apart because people can't learn to serve together, love each other, put others first, and swallow their own pride.

Which would you rather have? A team where everyone looks out for each other, or a cut-throat society where every person tries to get the best for themselves? I know what I would choose.

In the next three weeks, we are engaging in a stewardship series called, “Together We Can Do More.” The main focus of this series is to explain how the church, all of us, can do incredible things for God by being of one mind and using all our resources together. Yes, we will be talking about money. All the churches that I know need money to do ministry. But this is not just a series about giving more to the church. It’s much broader than that. It’s about our time, our talents, our willingness to serve, and our willingness to listen to each other, to think about what God wants to do in our lives. We are going to ask each other the big question: SO WHAT? We believe God wants to do great things through all of us, together. So what are we going to do about it?

This is not a new question. In 1st Chronicles 29, King David essentially asked the Israelites the same thing. King David was at the end of his reign. He had all these great plans that were going to be accomplished through his son, Solomon. David had a vision for a temple, a place where the Israelites could come and worship God together. But God had told him, “[David,] You are not the one to build the house for my Name.” (1st Chr. 28:3) So David called the entire country together, and he told them his vision. He introduced Solomon to them – “This is the one God has chosen to succeed me. But he’s young. He’s a green horn. He’s a freshman. The job he has before him is too great to accomplish alone.” (See 1st Chr. 29:1)

David’s vision was to build a house for God, not for people. I love how my NIV Bible puts it. This was a “palatial structure.” I’ve visited several palaces in

Europe. They are huge. Some of them took hundreds of years to finish. The new temple in Jerusalem would be even better.

I can imagine Solomon as a boy: One night, when King David comes into his bedroom to say prayers, Solomon says, “Dad, what do you think I’ll do one day when I’m king?” David answers, “Well, son, I think you’ll build a house for God.” Solomon gets huge eyes. “Won’t that be kind of big?” “Yes, son. God is big, so his house must be big. In fact, I think it will be palatial.” Solomon gulps and says, “Oh, OK.”

David cast the vision, but he didn’t stop there. He told his people first, “This is what I’m going to give.” From the scripture we just read, you can see it was a lot. And not just money, gold, silver, wood and stuff from the treasury. David pulled cash out of his own bank account to finance the temple. He says in 1st Chronicles 29:3, “Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures.”

This is the truth – King David did exactly what a good leader does. He set the vision, and then he set the example. He didn’t say, “Here are the plans for the palatial temple. Now, you go figure out how to build it and how to pay for it.” No, David took risks with his own personal resources to finance a project he would never see finished.

Think about that for a moment. Would you be willing to give to a cause that you would never see finished? Would you believe in the future, the future of this church, so that it would impact your giving and serving now?

David’s generosity was contagious. When he threw down the challenge, the people responded. Read verse 5 again. “Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves today to the Lord?” Note, David did not say, “Who will match this

gift?” “Who will give money to the temple? We’re auctioning off pavers – we’ll engrave your names on them for 1000 shekels.” No, he said, who will consecrate themselves, in other words, who will worship God, who make themselves holy in order to see the project through?

Who responded? They all did, starting with the leaders. Verse 6 says all the leaders stepped up and gave, following David’s example. And not just the leaders. Check out verse 9: “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.”

Do you see what happened? The leaders’ giving brought joy. It was contagious. Their gift was not forced, coerced, or demanded. It was freely given. And when the regular people saw it, they rejoiced. They were encouraged. They believed that anything was possible, even building this huge house for God.

Now, it is one thing to listen to your pastor preach on giving and joy. It is even more powerful when one of our own church families tells you about the blessing and joy they have found by being generous toward God. Today I have invited Kreg and Karen Kelley to share their testimony on why they give to God through Grace United Methodist Church.

[TESTIMONY – 4 minutes]

Does your giving bring joy to others? When you give your offering, does the money you put in the plate or give online bring encouragement to others? We are not giving to impress anyone. We are not competing in our giving. We are lifting up others by how we give. We do this together, because together we can do more.

Every single one of you is a leader in this church. Every single one of you has been called by Christ to make a difference. We all have a job to do together. No, we are not going to build a literal temple. But we are supporting a place, a “house” where God is worshipped. We give to projects that bring people joy, love, peace, and hope. We sponsor missions and outreach. We give to spread the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ through Vacation Bible School, summer camp, Sunday School, youth, college, men’s and women’s ministries. And, yes, we pay the utility bills and staff salaries because that is part of what it means to belong to a church.

Is Grace your church? If you answer “yes,” what does that mean? How much do you care about the ministry, what we are building here, together? If this is your church, that means we count on your promise to support the church with your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness. That, according to our hymnal, is what it means to belong to a church. This is not a club. We do not keep a list of names of who gets into heaven. Church membership is about loving Jesus Christ so much that you do anything possible to serve him, including supporting the “Bride of Christ”, the Church.

King David was doing more than giving money so that his son could complete a building project. King David was putting his resources and reputation on the line. He was using the gifts he had to encourage--not force--the people to consider how they would honor God. And we serve a Lord and Savior who has done even more. Jesus not only put his reputation on the line, he put his life on the line, for you and me. Jesus does not expect us to give of ourselves out of compulsion. He expects us to give out of gratitude. We can never match the gift of grace he has given us. However, we can show our gratitude by giving our

resources back to him, in a way that honors and glorifies God. We can do that, together.

Together we can do more. Together we can give more. Together we can serve more. Together we can love more. Together.

Please watch this short video as we each consider what our response to God’s word will be. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyqYB3Q8v78>

Memory verse: Acts 2:44-45 (NIV)

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”

Reflection questions

1. How is your giving a reflection of our gratitude for what Jesus has done for you?
2. How does your giving provide joy to others? How does it enable others to worship God?
3. What causes outside of the church do you support? Why do you support them?
4. If you were to increase your giving to the church, what would you hope would happen?