

Kirby Lawrence Hill

Abington Presbyterian Church

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

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BLESSED TO SHARE ABUNDANTLY

It's a three-minute story in film which serves as an advertisement for a phone company in Thailand that it correctly hoped many would find and share on the internet. The action starts very quickly. A woman out in front of her shop has an eight or nine-year-old boy by the arm. "Come out here, thief. What did you steal?" She grabs and looks at some medicine he had under his arm. "What are you going to do with this?" Not looking up, the boy replies, "Give it to my Mom." An adjacent shopkeeper sees what is happening and comes over saying, "Wait a second." He asks the boy, "Is your Mom sick?" The boy, still looking down, nods. The man then pays for the medicine and takes it from the angry shopkeeper. The man then calls to his young daughter, "Sweetie! Veggie soup." She brings it in a bag, into which the man also puts the medicine, and hands it to the boy, who briefly looks up into the man's face before running off.

Then comes notice that the story has moved 30 years later. We are inside the male shopkeeper's small eatery where we watch him serving customers and see him once again giving food to someone in need. Suddenly there is a pained look on the man's face, he grabs his head and falls to the floor. His daughter, now a grown woman, comes running. The next scene shows the man seemingly unconscious in a hospital bed with a doctor standing beside him looking at films from a medical scan. Next shot is the daughter staring in dismay at a summary of medical expenses – 792,000 bahts which would be about \$22,000. Back to the eatery where we see a sign on the front door – "Urgent! For sale", with a phone number listed. The following scene shows the daughter once again at her father's side as he lies in bed. She picks up a note that has been left there - an updated summary of medical expenses. She stares in disbelief at the new total that would be owed: zero bahts. And then she reads the explanation. "All expenses paid 30 years ago with three packs of painkillers and a bag of veggie soup. Best regards,

Dr. Prajak Arunthong.” Then we see the tagline for the ad: “Giving is the best communication.” ¹

I dare say that none of us has a life story quite like Dr. Arunthong’s. If it is true that giving is the best communication, then God has been a very good communicator. God has given each one of us life itself. Every few seconds our lungs inhale the abundant oxygen we need to continue to live. Our hearts pump the life blood that supports our every cell. Given a night of rest in a warm abode, we woke up knowing who we are, able to remember meaningful events from our past. We could recognize that we are buoyed by supportive relationships around us. We ate and drank something for breakfast this morning, probably something that tasted and smelled very good, that provided sustenance and strength. We each have a stomach and organs that automatically do what is needed to keep us energized. We had the capacity to clean ourselves and to dress ourselves warmly on a cool morning. On the way to church we could see where we were going and could also notice the brilliant colors starting to show in the leaves on some trees. We look down and see our feet and legs that enable us to move about. We look down at our hands and should marvel that we can just think about picking up something and it happens. We have cars or bikes with which to go where we want on a great variety of roadways. There were traffic lights that helped us to travel safely this morning. As we arrived at church, we saw so many with whom we have positive relationships. We walk into a heated, lit building constructed by many who preceded us. We have at our availability a language with which to communicate. We have mouths with which to speak and ears with which we can hear. We have been given minds that can understand our experiences and try to understand the communication and situation of others. We have a belief system that can make some sense of our experiences. We have hymn books which enable us to sing together as a congregation. We have instruments that play and choirs that sing and ring with a beauty that inspires us. We have scripture that tells us that we are characters in a grand love story across the ages and that we are part of something so much bigger than ourselves. We’ve been given the opportunity to pour out our hearts unto God in prayer. We have been gathering baskets of blessings during this stewardship season to remind us of how blessed

this church is, but each one of us has an overflowing basket of God's blessings in our lives.

When the Apostle Paul was urging the church in Corinth to give to Christians in Jerusalem who were suffering from a famine, he said he did not want them giving reluctantly or out of compulsion. He wanted their giving to reflect something of God's own giving.

There are those who do give what they give out of obligation. It can be a bit like paying bills. What if God's motivation for giving us that great gift of our Lord Jesus was one of obligation? Can you imagine a grimace on God's face as Jesus is put into an envelope with postage on it and is then mailed to earth? God tells the angels, "I hate to do it, but it is my moral duty." Do you think that is what motivates God's giving?

Others give what they give as an opportunity for self-satisfaction, saying to themselves, "I will use this gift to feel better about myself and to show people how important I am." Think of God saying, "I have Jesus and everyone needs him. I'm going to make them grovel." That's not my understanding of God's character.

Some give in order to gain prestige. Was God seeking naming rights for the stable in Bethlehem or for Golgotha? Or was God trying to get into the Pacesetter's Club listing in an alumni magazine? God already has significant status without being lauded with such honors.

There is no other reason why God's own son was given to humanity than that divine love was being expressed. It is the kind of love that leads to the total giving of one's self, even cheerfully. You and I don't have the capacity to give like God has given, but we are called to be godly, to be loving, to be generous.

Let me share with you some reasons to refuse to give generously to Abington Presbyterian Church. If God has not done much for you and your loved ones; if you think God doesn't love you; if you think God does not use human partners anymore; if you think God is finished using APC; if you think what you give doesn't matter to God; if you don't want to be a part of something bigger than yourself; if you think nothing inspirational is going on here at APC; if you think

it would be o.k. for our church to use the money it receives to just focus on our own needs and not give to those who are in great need, so APC doesn't need as much money; if you don't want to be a generous or compassionate person; if you think giving of oneself is not an important part of being a follower of Jesus Christ. That's ten potential reasons to refuse to give as generously as you can to APC. If none of those are true for you, then perhaps you will realize there are many more reasons to give cheerfully to the life and ministry of Abington Presbyterian Church than I have time to list.

The short film that I talked about earlier was used as an ad for the True Move phone company. As much as Dr. Prajak Arunthong received from a kindly shopkeeper 30 years ago, we receive so much more from the loving world keeper each and every day. I hope, by God's grace, you recognize God's great blessings poured out for your lives, and that part of your response will be a 'true move' to cheerfully commit a generous portion of your financial resources to be used by God in this place. The capacity to give is in itself another great gift. We are blessed to be able to share abundantly. God's giving and ours is wonderful communication that passes those blessings along.

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLq_Vp5z9D4