



Among many things Christmas is remembered for is a time of giving. I am thankful for the generous giving of our community at Bardon Church. As I said last week I think God is calling us to a new level or new area or new way of thinking of giving. If we can give ourselves totally to God first, then all other aspects of giving that God calls us to will follow. For instance, I said that God says in Scripture that the 'cattle on a thousand hills are his' [Ps 50.10], but that they stay at our ranches. We are stewards of His kingdom resources. God is teaching me to let go not just of a few but all of them. That's not easy when you are used to thinking they are yours. I am now hearing the message in much more forthright tones.

Maybe I have been hanging around Craige too long, but I like his forthrightness and directness. There have been times when I know in myself I beat around the bush too much and don't get directly to the point, often for fear of offending. I don't always say what I think. You could say that is part of a pastor's heart. Then again a pastor must also point out things where it is appropriate and not be afraid of saying so. I think Jesus was probably like that, times when he was pastoral if you will and others times forthright and perhaps offensive, say to the Pharisees, but for the right reasons because he wanted to set them free and set others free from their influence.

The more forthright tones I am hearing and which I put to you as well is that God is saying the dollars on a thousand hills are mine, but they are in your bank accounts. In the same way that Jesus spoke to set people free, these tones are for our benefit, to set us free from the attachment to money. We are attached to it because it is our security. It is money that buys us things and provides a level of security to us, to have what we want, when we want it. But we are constantly told by the Word of God that he is our security, and not to rely on the things of the world. It may not be the love of money that is the issue, but attachment to it can be just as strong and limiting to God's work. To be set free from that is one of the greatest gifts God can give to us. In a world where money and the gain and keeping of it is pretty much everything, we are fighting against the tide, but fight we must. Because when we do we will be much happier and much freer, our life will be full as Jesus promised.

So I am going to refer in future to dollars as cattle to remind you and myself of what God is saying. We need 18,000 cattle to help fund the next stage of the BNTC rebuild. But listen to this, God is already providing! Someone came to me and said they will give \$10,000 to the BNTC project. I am not going to say anything about who that might have been nor should you even try to guess. I do not mention it to say anything about the person so much as what God is doing amongst us. When someone does that it spurs me on to 'put my money where my mouth is'. I see it as God saying to me 'now what about you, what are you doing?' I am reminded of the many things that God has before us that need our constant and continued support, either for the short or long term. I am reminded of the call to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse so that God may bless everyone to overflowing [Mal 3.10]. I am reminded that not only does our parish through regular and committed tithing need our offerings, or BNTC for its rebuild, but what about Harvest School of Ministry, and what about our local outreach with a new Parish sign? These are not mutually exclusive needs. We can give to all. Each of us just has to ask God for help to do it. As the psalmist often says, 'Lord, teach me your ways and help me to walk in them'. My prayer is: "God you have shown me what to do, now give me the courage and faith to do it". With the offerings we have been blessed by, I am greatly challenged, are you?

God bless you mightily this Christmas, your pastor in the Lord, *Colin.*