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J. Daniel Gibson

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A Little Boy’s Gift

Dan Gibson
Pastor, First Baptist Church
Brantford, Ontario

Text: John 6:1-13 (NIV)

Once upon a time,
there was a little boy
who had just had his sixth birthday.
From his grandmother, he had received
a crisp new one dollar bill,
and was on his way, with his mother,
to the store downtown,
where he would use the dollar
to buy a special toy
that he had always wanted.

As they walked down main street,
they came upon a man begging in the street
The little boy had never seen this before
and asked his mother to explain.
She said “That man is blind; he can’t see;
and he hasn’t been able to work.
He’s hoping that people
will give him some money,
so he can buy food for dinner.”

When they reached the toy store,
the boy dawdled outside,
and his mother finally said
that they should go in
and make the purchase
and go home.
“I can’t buy it,” said the boy.
   “Why not?” asked the mother.
   “Because I gave my dollar to the man.”
I know that story is true,
   because I was the little boy.
   And I wish with all my heart,
       that my motives and attitudes
       were still that pure.

Sometimes children willingly and joyfully share,
   and it is delightful to see!
Sometimes children are forced to share,
   and they do it grudgingly,
   and with bitterness.

Today, through the miracle of the Scriptures,
   and our imaginations,
   we can peek into the story of another little boy,
       who lived 2000 year ago.
   Let’s call him David.

David was headed out for a day’s adventure –
   it must have been a ‘PD’ day at school,
   because he had the day free,
       and he was off to see the most exciting thing
       that had happened in his town all year.

That new prophet, Jesus, was here,
   “And he even does miracles and stuff!
   And I want to see him.”

His mother had made him a lunch:
   “Now, I’ve put all the fixings for
       your sardine sandwiches in here.
   Don’t lose it,
       and don’t wait all day before you eat,
       because the fish might go bad
           in the hot sun.

   And be sure you look both ways
       before you cross the highway!
       And don’t go too near the water!”

And little David skipped joyfully
   out of the yard,
and down the street,
clutching his Sesame Street lunch box!

We know the story, don’t we?
David arrived at the place where Jesus was teaching,
and he had never in his life
seen so many people
gathered in one place at one time.
Hundreds! Thousands!!

And as the day wore on,
it was obvious that Jesus had much more to say and do,
and David’s stomach began to tell him
in no uncertain terms that it was lunch time.
It would be impolite to eat in front of all these people,
so he was just about to slip away behind a tree
where he could eat his lunch,
but still hear what was going on.

But then, there was a buzz through the crowd.
Jesus’ disciples were trying
to arrange a lunch for everyone.
Sort of a ‘pot luck’ such as happened
on special days at the synagogue.

Instantly, David jumped to his feet,
and got the attention of the closest disciple.
The discipline was a friendly man, named Andrew,
and David eagerly offered his lunch.
“What have we here?” said Andrew.
“Fish and buns my Mom made,” said David.
It turns out that no one else had thought about lunch,
and David’s lunch box was carried back to Jesus.
We can almost hear the ripple of laughter
when Andrew jokingly said,
“Lord, my little friend David here
has invited us all to share his lunch!”
“And so we shall” said Jesus!

Later that day,
a very excited little boy ran all the way home.
(He was in such a hurry
he forgot to look both ways
when he crossed the highway,  
and almost got run over by a speeding camel.)

He dashed into the house,  
and tore into the kitchen,  
"Mom, MOM!  
You'll never guess what happened!  
With my lunch!  
He fed all the people!  
All of them!"

And from this little boy  
who had a generous heart,  
and was willing to share;  
we are allowed to see,  
and feel,  
and experience  
the secrets of God's heart  
and love,  
and economy.

The partnership between a child's willing spirit  
and our God's inexhaustible intent to care  
for His children,  
creates a miracle every time.

And I want to be that child again.  
And again.  
And again.

I want to have renewed within me  
the truth which says that no gift is too small  
for the Saviour to use.  
Whatever I sincerely dedicate to the Lord  
is accepted by Him,  
and treasured by Him.

My talents and abilities  
may not be the best in the world,  
but He treats them as if they are,  
when I offer them to Him.  
The story of the widow  
who gave the two cents at the Temple,  
because it was all she had,
rings very true right now. [Mark 12:42]
Her gift, because it was from the heart,
was more precious than an earthly fortune.
And went right from her heart to God’s.
Christina Rossetti, in her beautiful Christmas Carol,
‘In the Bleak Midwinter’,
places herself at the manger scene,
and says,
What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet, what I can, I give Him – Give my heart.

I want to have renewed within me
the truth that God blesses both the gift and the giver.
Actually, it goes far beyond that.
We always receive more back from God
than we give to Him.
The native Canadians of the West Coast
had a fascinating custom called the ‘potlatch’.
It was an attempt to gain prestige
through competitive giving.
I would invite all my neighbours in for a party
and give them everything I owned.
Then you would invite us all for a party,
and give us everything you had.
And so on.
The winner was the one who gave away the most!
God always wins.
Try as we might,
we cannot out-give God.
His gifts, and love, are boundless.
And by our willingness to give to Him,
we also show our joy in receiving from Him.
From His heart to ours.

I want to have renewed within me
the truth that it’s all His anyway!
I ‘own’ a beautiful piece of property
on the Bay of Fundy.
Or, at least, I think I own it.
In actual fact, my claim to ownership
is only as strong
as the paper the deed is written on!
Before I ‘owned’ it,
it was ‘owned’ by an old farmer,
who inherited it from his father and grandfather.
Before that it was a part of a vast area
‘owned’ by the French Acadians
who were expelled and deported
all over the East Coast of North America.
Before that, it was inhabited by the Mic Mac Indians,
who regarded the mountain
beside which our cottage is built
to be the sacred home of their god, Glooscap.
And they were likely closer to the truth.
Because a million years ago,
only the birds and porcupines
and clams lived there,
And a few billion years ago,
God, the creator of the universe,
looked out over that same shore
and said,
‘It’s beautiful!
And I made it to share
with many people over the ages.
And one day Dan Gibson
will think it’s his!”

Like the great hymn says,
We give Thee but thine own,
Whate’er the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from Thee. [William W. How 1823-1897]

I want to have renewed within me
the truth that the good of a gift
continues on, and on, and on....
When we present our gifts to God,
it starts a whole wonderful chain of events.
The little boy gave his lunch,
and 5000 people were fed;
   but it still continued –
   12 baskets of left-overs were collected.
What happened to them?
   (That will be another sermon on another day.)
The truth is that others, un-named,
   also benefitted from the gift of the boy
   and the subsequent miracle.

In his autobiography,
   Billy Graham speaks warmly
   of his Sunday School teacher
   who first explained the Gospel to him,
   and modelled God’s love.
   Because of her, Bill made his decision,
   and eventually answered God’s call
   to ministry and evangelism.
   Since then, Billy Graham has preached
   to more people than Jesus,
   and all the disciples,
   and apostles combined!

At the risk of sounding very worldly,
   who do you suppose gets the credit
   for every person who is led to the Lord
   during Billy’s preaching?
I would like to believe
   that somewhere in heaven,
   there is a little old Sunday School teacher
   who is given another star in her crown
   for every response to Billy’s preaching.
   She started the process.
   Or did she?
   Who told her about Jesus?!!!

A little gift of time or energy,
   of money or food,
   of love or caring,
   can travel from life to life to life.
What you do today,
   What you offer today,
may travel on to eternity.

I want to have renewed within me
what it is to be pure of heart
and open and honest,
and generous and kind-hearted.
And thanks to a little boy and his lunch,
I’m shown the way.
And the Saviour waits expectantly
for my little gift.