

Giving to the God Who Has Everything

Psalm 50:1–23

We've heard or asked it again and again: "What do you give the person who has everything?" The very need to frame this question should alert us that something is wrong in our society. Psalm 50, though, teaches us how to give to the God who does indeed have everything.

As Christians, we have much to learn from God's judgment in Psalm 50:7–16 against the "religious" community. The Lord does not rebuke these people for failing to meet his minimal requirements for sacrifices and offerings (see v. 8). Instead, God reproaches them for blatant sin and ingratitude (see vv. 17–20).

So, how do we give to the God who has everything? By giving to those who have nothing (see Mt 25:44–45) and by praising him for his blessings to us (see 2Co 8:9).

Devotional writer Selwyn Hughes (1928–2006) makes an important point about the sacrifice of generosity prompted by gratitude:

If in reality we don't own our possessions, then the obvious thing is to acknowledge this in a prayer to God. Have the sense to say to God, "I am not the owner, I am the owner." A businessman said, "I've prospered in my business; now my task is to know how much I can keep for my own use." That's the right order. How much can I keep for myself? For everything I needlessly spend on myself is taken from some other person's need.

Management guru Ken Blanchard and CEO S. Truett Cathy contrast the ideas of success and significance:

The successful person has learned how to make money, but the significant person has learned how to give it away—how to be generous, to share the blessings of money with those who are in need or those who help meet a variety of social and humanitarian needs.

The successful person has achieved great things—sadly sometimes at the expense of others. He or she is proud of what has already been accomplished. The significant person understands that the greatest thing anyone can accomplish is to serve others and to help them achieve their goals.

Finally, successful people have attained a measure of status. Others look up to them and maybe even see them as role models. We often discover later that those who have become our role models let us down ... In direct contrast, the significant person is one who values relationships. They become trusted friends and invaluable mentors, and they invest their time in others rather than in striving to build status.

Think About It

The people in this psalm were offering sacrifices and giving to God, but God was displeased with their hearts. How might you ensure your attitudes and lifestyle are in keeping with God's desires for your life?

How does the knowledge that God owns everything prompt you to view what you "own"?

What do you feel is your obligation to others in light of God's censure to the people in Psalm 50?

Pray About It

God, I do not own anything. It is all yours. Show me how much I should keep for myself and what I should give back to you.