

Give More

Advent Conspiracy

Grace Christian Fellowship
Nov. 29, 2009 Pastor Rose Brewer

Ephesians 5:1-2

You are the children that God dearly loves. So be just like him. Lead a life of love, just as Christ did. He loved us. He gave himself up for us. He was a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God.

Lord Jesus, help us to follow your example and give more of ourselves.

Advent conspiracy:

- Worship fully
- Spend less
- Give more
- Love all

What do we do for Christmas?

We give presents.

Some of us go in to Fred Meyer to buy milk and get distracted by all the cool gifts we could get people. Shoot, some gifts are so cool, we buy them and then have to find someone to give them to!

Some of us don't like buying gifts, and we try to find one as quickly as we can and get out. As soon as we get out, we think, "Whew – that's done for another year."

Some of us like running around, shopping, never stopping between Thanksgiving and Dec. 27. But most of us don't really like the shopping frenzy.

To some of us, the idea of not buying any gifts at all might just sound wonderful to us.

Many of us have people in our lives who expect a gift, but we don't want to give them a gift. But they expect us to, so many of us run out to the store on Dec. 24 and get them some dumb little gift because at that point, that's all we can find because there's 24,765 people in the store besides us.

This year, let's try something different.

What did Jesus do?

Jesus gave his presence.

Jesus gave himself. Slowed down. Nine months in the womb; labor process; grew for 30 years before starting his public ministry.

Close your eyes.

Jesus is the God of the universe who...

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:1-5, 14

True worship/imitation of true God

Sara was praying a few weeks ago, and prayed, "God, be enthroned in our worship." I thought she prayed, "God, be enthralled in our worship."

And I wondered, what would it be like for God to be enthralled, amazed, fascinated with our worship?

And the picture of the widow came to my mind:



Mark 12:41-44

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Again, it hit me that our worship, our spending less, and our giving more, is not about how much (or even how little). It is about giving everything to the God who became flesh among us. And it's about following his example and giving ourselves to others.

Don't give any gifts? No, that's not it! Give more, differently, give better!

"When we give **RELATIONALLY** during the Advent season, this is what we remember: It's

an opportunity to worship as we remind each other of the Gift that was given for our sake.”

“If we can resist the trap of giving easy gifts, and if we can reject the assumption that giving expensive gifts or many gifts is the best way to express love, something else might begin to happen. We might experience moments of relational giving that our friends and family will care about and remember.”

- *Advent Conspiracy*

Go out and buy gifts, but buy gifts that have meaning for the people receiving them, gifts that have meaning for you, and gifts that have meaning in the kingdom of God.

We talk about giving our time, talents and money to God. What would it look like if we gave gifts of our time, talent, and money to our friends and family?

And maybe we might just save money. I'm hoping we do, so we can...

Give ourselves ...and give our money to better things

Something better? What could be a better use of our money than our family? our friends?

I'm not immune to all this. I've been in Fred Meyer 3 or 4 times in the past five weeks, and... oh! all the shiny, cool things on sale. Oh, wouldn't so-and-so like that? Y'know, I've got two beautiful sons that really enjoy new things, and I just know that cool LeapFrog toy would help Jakobi learn his alphabet.... Oh yes, and he needs to learn his alphabet, to get ahead and to get a scholarship to college, so maybe I should get this cool toy....

Yeah. In general, David and I don't buy too much for our kids. But y'know what's stopped me even more this year? I'm saving my money

to give more. I've got something worth trusting God that my kid will be okay without that shiny new toy. What's that something?

First, let me deal with anyone getting uncomfortable, and thinking...

Why are you talking about my money?

If you're wondering why we're talking about money in church, open your Bible. The New Testament alone has over 2000 verses about how we handle money, whether righteously or not.

And let me repeat, will talk about money during this Advent season leading up to Christmas, and we're going to encourage you to give more, BUT not to the church. We are taking our "Advent Conspiracy" giving and sending it to build a well in Malawi.

Well in Malawi

Do you know that Portlanders west of the Willamette are being advised by the Portland Water Bureau for 24 hours to boil their water?

The Water Department takes routine water quality samples, and the bacterial level of the Washington Park reservoir is high enough that they say the water **may** be contaminated enough to cause "short-term effects, such as diarrhea, rashes, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms." They've taken the reservoir out of service and they'll let people know when they don't have to boil water anymore. They think they'll resolve the problem within 24 hours.

That's not good. It is a little freaky, but there are people freaking out because they have to boil their water for a day. One day out of every twenty years. Many people in the world have to boil their water every single day.

First of all, I'd like to expel any remaining romantic notions we may still have about African women carrying water from the river. Picture yourself living here, going from here to the Willamette, dipping your bucket in, and carrying it back here. Whatever makes it back is what you and your family use for the day. Oh? you wouldn't use Willamette River water? For many people in Malawi, that may be safer drinking water than what they're used to. Since May 2007,

20 new wells in Malawi through Clear Blue Water Project
Why?

1/8 people lack clean drinking water

Katie Bartlett, missionary to Malawi:

"With access to clean, safe water, fewer people are getting sick and fewer children are dying of water-borne diseases.

"We still have many villages in Malawi which are in desperate need of wells. The cost of installing one well is \$7,500 and currently we do not have funds to dig any more wells..."

"... This seems like a large amount of money for any one of us to give, but perhaps we can re-evaluate what Christmas would be like for our own families if we gave even a small gift toward wells in Malawi."

I don't even like my kids drinking out of plastic bottles.



Their kids often die of water-borne diseases.

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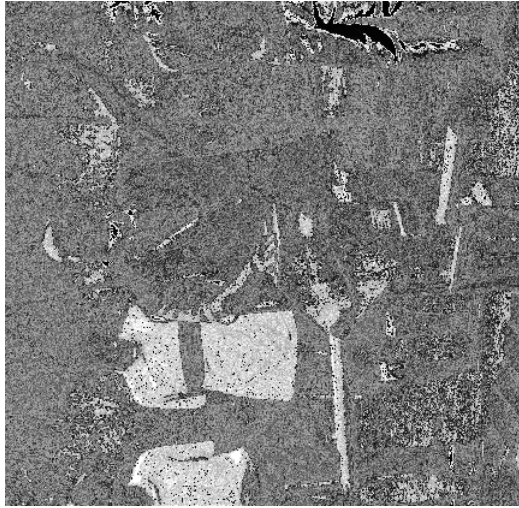
What's the difference between my kids and theirs?

It might seem like the difference is that I can make a difference in my children's lives.



The good news is that I can make a difference in the lives of kids in Malawi, too.

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Note from Katie Bartlett

Since the time Ryan and I arrived in Malawi in May 2007, the Free Methodist Mission in Malawi has put in 20 new wells thanks to funds raised by the Clear Blue Water Project. According to the Clear Blue Water Project, one in eight people lack access to clean water. As we traveled around Malawi and spent many nights sleeping in villages, we realized how vital these wells are to the health of the people. Many of our people are forced to use unsanitary sources of water. Often, to find any kind of water, they have to walk several kilometers or risk their lives fetching water from crocodile-riddled rivers.

When a well is installed in a village, it dramatically changes not only the lives of the people living in that village, but people in surrounding villages. With access to clean, safe water, fewer people are getting sick and fewer children are dying of water-borne diseases. We still have many villages in Malawi which are in desperate need of wells. The cost of installing one well is \$7,500 and currently we do not have funds to dig any more wells. This seems like a large amount of money for any one of us to give, but perhaps we can re-evaluate what Christmas would be like for our own families if we gave even a small gift toward wells in Malawi. If you are interested in this project you can visit <www.clearblueproject.com>.

TRADING MY SHOPPING

I'm trading my shopping, I'm trading my toys
I'm laying them down for a well in Malawi
I'm sick of fighting crowds, I'm sick of buying
I'm laying them down for a well in Malawi

No, world, no, world, no, no, world...
No, world, no, world, no, no, world, no, no!

I am pressed, but not rushed
Penny-pinching, not stingy
Laid off, but not destitute
I am blessed beyond my purse
For His promise will endure
That His joy's gonna be my strength
All those gadgets just last for a day
But His joy comes in the morning

I have clean water, I can drink it safely
I want to help others with a well in Malawi
I shower when I want, I even take baths too
I want to help others with a well in Malawi

Yes, Lord, yes, Lord, yes, yes, Lord
Yes, Lord, yes, Lord, yes, yes, Lord
Yes, Lord, yes, Lord, yes, yes, Lord, amen

Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la, amen!

*With apologies to Darrell Evans, 1998, Integrity's Hosanna Music
CCLI #1479634*

Options for giving alternative gifts:

- Well in Malawi.....give during church in offerings through January 3 (or go to www.clearblueproject.com) and **mark it for "Malawi well."**
- Gifts to families throughout the world <www.mcc.org/Christmas>
- Bibles to persecuted Christians <<https://give.americanbible.org/>>