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Title: A Culture of Giving: Recognition

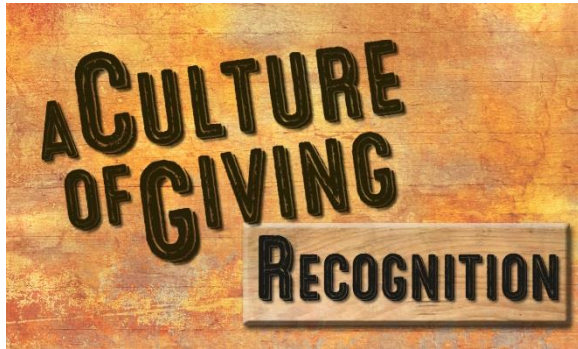
Date: November 12 & 13, 2016

Preaching: Senior Minister Randy Spleth

Scripture: [Matthew 5:13-16](#)

Text: [1 Corinthians 16:13-24](#)

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One of my mentors liked to tell a story about how people see things differently. He'd start the story in a familiar way with three people. He'd say, "A minister, a geologist and a cowboy together get their very first view of the Grand Canyon. As the minister approached the viewing rail he was heard to say, 'Whoa, this has to be

one of the most beautiful examples of the handiwork and glory of God!' The Geologist was equally as stunned and commented, 'Wow! What a wonderful example of the creative process of nature all outlined before your very eyes in the various strata.' The cowboy just shook his head and said, 'Can you imagine trying to find a lost steer in there?'" Depending on perspective, people see things differently.

Today, we continue our series titled a culture of giving with a fifth sermon which focuses on recognition. Recognition always requires vision to acknowledge importance and merit. This is one of the key cultures of the church. In a way, all of the previous cultures of giving are related to this culture, that is to say, require recognition.

If you were here a month ago when we began this series, we started by looking at **time**. Recognizing that time is a gift from God, we are to give time back to God in worship and prayer, both individually and as the Body of Christ.

The second culture of giving is **talent**. Like time, we are to recognize the talents and abilities that God has given us and give them back, use our talents for the mission and ministry of the church.

We have a third culture, a culture of giving **money**. All that we have, our lives, our possessions, our money are gifts from God. We are stewards or caretakers. Just as we need talents to do the ministry and mission of the church, we need financial gifts of money sustain the work of a congregation.

Last week we talked about a culture of giving honor. At first, it doesn't sound like a gift, but when you step back and think about it, it too is a gift. We present them with the gift of honor and because we have been honored to have them in our lives. We recognize their gifts to us.

One of the components giving honor is making lists, remembering people who have shaped our lives. With our list, we joined the apostle Paul in saying, "I thank my God every time I remember you." (Philippians 1:3) In a like manner, a culture of giving recognition is also list driven and again, Paul shows us the way.

Throughout his letters, Paul is always shining a light of recognition on those who he sees serving the Body of Christ. His lists are long and extensive and found throughout his letters.

He recognizes Phoebe as a deacon and a benefactor of many. He shines a light on Prisca and Aquila, who risked their necks to witness to Jesus. Urbanus, Titus, Epaphroditus, Mark, and Justus, he recognizes as co-workers and fellows soldiers for Christ. He recognizes the sincere faith of Timothy, his closest assistant and acknowledges that it was because of the training and nurture by Lois and Eunice.

In Paul's 13 letters, he recognizes dozens and dozens of people like Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus and when he names these three, he tells us why recognition is so important "...they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints...and "refreshed my spirit as well as yours. So give recognition to such persons." (1 Corinthians 16: 15b, 18)

Paul is clear that those who are working hard in ministry; those "who labor among us" should be given recognition and held in high esteem for their work. It is not to they are just getting the job done; it is that their voluntary spirit, their dedication to serving the Body of Christ, is inspiring. It is refreshing and encouraging to see their service and commitment.

We know that Paul was a late adopter to the cause of Christ. He wasn't one of the first followers. He didn't sit at the feet of Jesus and wasn't present at the famous Sermon on the Mount. But Paul understands Jesus' challenge to those who follow Jesus. "You are the light of the world...so let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14, 16) Paul shines the light of recognition on those who serve because the light of their good work and service shines on others. It refreshes our spirit.

The effectiveness of the church's mission depends on its ability to mobilize its people to do God's work. The largest army in the world, the largest army ever formed and the largest to ever be, are God's people engaged in the church's mission of bringing people to Christ, teaching the Word of God, guiding spiritual growth, inspiring praise and worship and caring for the greater needs of the hungry, poor, the naked, sick, imprisoned and estranged. When you volunteer in a ministry, however great or small, you shine the light of Christ into the darkness of the world and it is recognized and it should be recognized.

We are going to something a little different today. We are going to spend time shining the light of recognition. You can consider the sermon from this point on as a participatory experience. At the risk of leaving someone out, I want to live out a culture of giving recognition in an active way in our worship today.

There are many who should be lifted up, called by name and recognized in our community for the good work that shines among us. We need to do this not just because scripture challenges us to recognize you, we need to say thank you for your gift of service. So I'm going to ask some people to stand up and be recognized and as they do, I want you to join me in a litany of affirmation.

I'll introduce groups who we will recognize, the ministry that they are involved in ask them to stand. I want you to join me in recognizing them. When I say, "We recognize your gifts of service", you'll join me and say, "Thank you. You shine. You are the light of the world."

Let's practice that. We recognize your gift of service. "Thank you. You shine. You are the light of the world." Good. Let's get started.

Let's start with worship. Each week, worship requires a host of people for worship to happen. It begins at the door with members of the hospitality team who welcome and greet you as you enter the facility. It continues with deacons who prepare communion and distribute it to you. We have members of the media team who watch over sound, keep the slides running, and work the cameras. There are worship leaders, a praise team, the chancel choir, the bell choir who lift your spirit in music. There are elders who preside at the table.

If you are a greeter, a deacon, an elder, a media team member, a member of the praise team, a member of a choir, a worship leader, please stand.

Everyone look at these people. Recognize them for who they are. Each service requires a minimum of 24 volunteers and sometimes, we are as high as 68 serving. Without you, without you recognizing a need and choosing to give of yourself, worship wouldn't happen so, we recognize your gift of service. "Thank you. You shine. You are the light of the world."

We aren't just to worship and praise God. We are to understand God's word, share it with one another, nurture future generations in faith, and sponsor youth. This is no greater gift than teaching. If you work as a church school teacher, are a youth group sponsor, lead a Bible study or a small group, please stand.

Everyone look at these people. Recognize them for who they are. Each week we need a dozen volunteers just for children and we have sixty who serve during a month's time. A dozen men and women sponsor our youth. Some standing lead adult classes on Sunday and the many Bible studies we have through the week.

Without you, without you recognizing a need and choosing to give of yourself, growing in faith and understanding of God's word, wouldn't happen so, we recognize your gift of service. "Thank you. You shine. You are the light of the world."

We don't just worship and study, we provide care for one another. We provide support for one another, we pray for one another, in times of need and times of joy. If you are involved a prayer ministry team or Taking Flight ministry, if you are a Stephen minister or if you are an elder, please stand.

Everyone look at these people. Recognize them for who they are. Each week, hundreds of prayers are offered, phone and hospital calls made, one on one support given. We are a caring and compassionate congregation because you recognize a need and choose to give of yourself. We recognize your gift of service. "Thank you. You shine. You are the light of the world."

You don't just shine inside the walls of Geist Christian Church. You shine in our community and world. Some go to prison each month; others provide meals at Ronald McDonald House, Dayspring Homeless Shelter, and Wheeler Mission. Some of you have worked on building homes, a Habitat build last month in town and nine people were building a home in Guatemala last week. Some volunteer at the Come to Me and the Sharing Place food pantry. Some even grow produce on this very site. Add to all of this a team of 14 who coordinate our season of giving, providing food and gifts for 200 families and the 115 individuals and families drive, delivering our seasonal support and gifts.

If you go to prison, are on a shelter team, work at a shelter, are a builder, went on mission trip, are on the Season for Giving, or drive and deliver, please stand.

Everyone look at these people. Recognize them for who they are. Without you, without you recognizing a need and choosing to give of yourself, we would not be the hands and feet of Christ. You care for the greater needs of the hungry, poor, the naked, sick, imprisoned and estranged. We recognize your gift of service. "Thank you. You shine. You are the light of the world."

I'm sure I've left someone out like snow warriors and office angels, people who work on the property shoveling snow, changing light bulbs, and planting flowers. We have board members for our church and school. We have a bereavement team who works caring for funeral meals.

I suppose we could spend the rest of the afternoon identifying people who have gifts who freely given. Many recognize a need and respond.

We recognize your gift of service and say together, one more time, ""Thank you. You shine. You are the light of the world."

It really is an issue of seeing the light of the world all around us, recognizing it in the gifts and talents of those who labor among us and in doing so, refresh our spirit. When we realize this and we see it, we can truly say, "Whoa, this has to be one of the most beautiful examples of the handiwork and glory of God!"

A culture of giving recognition is a gift given because of a gift received. I hope and pray you will give it because you have receive it because it is after all, our identity and culture, a culture of giving recognition.