

January 16, 1987

It is more blessed to give than to receive. In the book of Acts we hear that our Lord Jesus himself spoke these words. More blessed to give than to receive.

Cider, candy, cookies at McDonalds. You and I and so many children were the recipients of Don's giving. Apples, Strawberries, the good fruit of God's creation gave delight to Don and through him to so many of us. Don knew the blessings of giving.

Neighbors ~~and~~ having seen for years Don always trying to talk with my children

And here. In this place, most every week it seems Don was here. working, fixing, watering, Doing what he did best, giving himself to make things better.

All along the way a smile, enthusiasm, a chuckle were also gifts which he gave. If he was blessed in his giving we were so much more so blessed in being those to whom he had been given.

The last words I remember him speaking to me were, Would you like a glass of cider? But of course, we were in the hospital and he had no cider there to give. I declined. The blessing of Don's being able to give was ended.

Now he could only receive. The love and help of his family, the love and forgiveness and help of his God.

In weakness he could only receive.

And now we trust and hope that Don has learned that it is truly more blessed to receive than to give. In our dying there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, nothing we can offer to God. But God sent his only Son, Jesus Christ to suffer and die for us so that he might hand us eternal life as a gift. Jesus Christ endured mockery and abuse and crucifixion, in order to know the blessing of giving us what we could never win for ourselves. life for all time and all eternity with God.

and was crucified for the world

St. Paul says it this way: For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed rarely will anyone die for a righteous person - though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Christ died for us to do what we are powerless to do, to make us right with God. Every sin forgiven, every doubt overcome, everything needed for our salvation the only Son of God has given.

It is truly more blessed to receive, than to give when it is Christ you are receiving, and all that he has done for you.

In baptism is our first blessing of receiving, often before there is even understanding in us. God washes us into Christ. In our dying is our last and fullest blessing in this life as Christ promises to take us to himself. And inbetween?

I think of one more memory of Don.

Week after week here, in this place Don received the word of God. That word entered his ears as the word was proclaimed, that word he ate and drank in the body and blood of Christ. He received.

After worship came coffee. Don Always made sure that I received a cup of coffee before it was all gone. While I was still greeting people following worship, or had gone to my office, wherever I was Don would find me, give the cup of coffee to me. HE had received from Christ, he gave to me, his neighbor.

So God would have us all do, receiving everything Christ has done, sharing with one another.

I want to conclude this sermon with a word from the last pages of the Bible, as I read it hear how much finally God is the giver, we the receivers:

John was given a glimpse of this receiving: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, See, the home of God is among mortal. He will dwell with them: they will be his people and God himself will be with them: he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more: mourning and crying and pain will be no more for the first things have passed away. And the one who was seated on the throne said, See, I am making all things new. Also he said, write this for these words are trustworthy and true. Then he said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

That is what God has prepared for you. He will be your God in these coming days & months & years and you will be his children, now ^{in this time of need} and for all eternity through Jesus Christ, Amen.