



Chronicles of Diversity

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Given Gifts

In Kathy Mattea's latest music release there is a song entitled "Give it Away." The essence of that song is to state that through the struggles of life we are all given gifts of various sorts to help others as they traverse life's pilgrimage. However, the only way for those gifts to be of any lasting value to self or others is to do your best to give them away, just as they were given to you.

Yes I've been given a gift

I'm passing on in some small way

Because the only way I keep it

is to give it away

That truth finds its greatest manifestation in the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Through all the politics, scandals, persecutions, the curses of material blessings, it is still the greatest gift a human being can receive in this life. No other gift can cause people to leave the security of home and family to give this gift to different cultures around the world. No other gift can cause someone to stay at home and

work through all the hassles of family and friends as we try to cope with a world of increasing insecurity that does not define or recognize gifts beyond material transactions.

True gifts don't fit within the economic concept of the time value of money. They also don't fit within the concept of the news cycle. Gifts really, as with the gospel, are given and received within the reality of the eternity of the human spirit, which is an undefined entity in western evolutionary culture.

Does a tree falling in the forest make a sound, even if no one is there to hear it? In just the same way can a gift be given away if there is no other person willing to receive it as such? The latter is much more profound than the former.

For the last few weeks as Seattle residents call it, I have been east of the mountains. In my mother's family, late March and early April are the



times when most of us were born. I had the opportunity to share my birthday, with my aunt who just turned 79. I also had the opportunity to share my mom's birthday with her brother, who just turned 83. Neither of these small gifts have I had the opportunity to receive in many decades. Through our choices, we all grow in wisdom, but no matter those choices, time still gives us a more significant view of true reality than any other opportunity.

Discussions during birthdays I suppose must take on some concept of the state of the world in which we today find ourselves. These discussions all in some way pointed to the fact that something, or a diverse potpourri of changes could this very day drastically change the world, into a place even the oldest of us alive have never experienced. All these pale the threat of the Cold War and seem not so much a possibility but an eventuality. But as I look out my window this early morning, the sunrise is still as magnificent as ever.

Human nature is such to look for God, or curse God in the stupendous. Stupendous change that the world is naturally experiencing now is such an opportunity. The same can be said for our human induced interactions such as Iraq, terrorism and even immigration reform. Furthermore, while we don't call it acts of God, our human desire to be god unto ourselves requires all of our personal and community actions to be as flamboyant as possible.

In the Bible in 1 Kings 19, Elijah found God not in the stupendousness of change, but in the still small voice asking, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" This also begs the question, can you truly hear the voice of God in the midst of all that we call present reality? Elijah heard from God in the wilderness, but in our modern arrogance we believe that God talks with us as we vainly follow our own selfish desires, and call it ministry or a living.

But in spite of all of this, God still blesses the whole of the universe and all of humanity with His grace. Through the redemption on the cross and the Resurrection of the Lord celebrated this week, Christians not only gain through faith eternal life, but a minute comprehension of that grace applied through His daily blessings.

Toward the end of my undergraduate college days, God's grace was such that on the south slope of Mt. Spokane, I was given a choice to choose a Biblical creation account of how the earth was formed, or the evolutionary approach I was being taught in my science classes, or the theistic evolutionary scheme I had been taught in my Lutheran catechism. It was probably at least a decade before I heard of anyone else sharing my beliefs, and probably another decade before I realized what a gift Biblical creation wisdom can bestow.

The whole of my outdoor experience has led me to believe that Bishop Ussher had probably spent too much time in his study when he stated that "the first day of Creation began at nightfall preceding Sunday October 23, 4004 BC in the proleptic Julian calendar, near the autumnal equinox." Furthermore, it also has me question some of the motivations of this date as the basis for much of the doctrinal security by many evangelicals. Seems to me a Christian's security that is based upon anything other than faith in Jesus Christ alone, is what the Reformation was all about, and that many of this modern class of Christians are more an anathema than most popes ever succumbed.

If we do live in a history of thousands, not millions, or billions of years however, humanity and all life, except for the unquantifiable curse of sin, is essentially as God made it, very good. Therefore, we have all been given a whole world of wonder to be explored. Not only for what we may learn of the nature of God and creation itself, but how that knowledge will be one day contrasted with a universe in which the death of sin will be removed. Again, it seems to me that such a gift greatly surpasses anything evolutionary materialism can provide.

Creation is built upon the concept of community. Ecology is the scientific field that studies these natural communities. Even though created by God in His image, mankind still is required to deal with these community eternal truths. Just as in the Garden of Eden, mankind as a group, and as each individual, continues to reject God's wisdom of the ages, in the fallacious hope of ascending to God's throne. However, as a result of thousands of years natural history, so called primitive societies, function much more in accord with natural creation and with each other, than does modern society.

Only God knows for sure, but there is definitely no one in the world's leadership that understands how much of the Iraq conflict has to do with a monopoly for natural energy. That of course also includes self righteous and self serving pundits whom we shall not bother to name. In that light is there also some connection to this albatross in the growing concern with Iran and its nuclear energy program?

Back to the subject, the goal of modern society is not to enjoy and propagate the gifts of God's creation, but to make you an isolated urban consumer of material, continually evolving stuff. You by definition cannot be part of a self sufficient community, because then you would not need your job, your big house, your hybrid car, and your home theater. Now there is nothing fundamentally wrong with any of this, other than the hybrid car, but that is a topic for another time.

Now for the test, are there any more than five people for individual safety, lets keep it outside your dwelling unit, that have a true knowledge of who you really are? Not selected snippets and sound bites of your personality, but what really makes you tick?

Primitive human cultures survive basically in a community of building blocks, of tens, fifties, hundreds. Behavioral science teaches us that one can lead about four others, a family. You need about five to ten families to have enough personal diversity of skill to have a self sustainable community. This includes not only internally developed leadership, but may also include some external training. Beyond about twenty five to thirty people, an externally trained leadership is a requirement. Western education to some degree developed to provide that externally trained leadership for the development and increasing the diversity of the growing community.

So stupendous change hits your city. Should you survive, there is not true community to rebuild in a timely manner. The easiest and perhaps the best is to move from New Orleans to Houston, Chicago, or even Seattle, but that does not change the fundamental problem. All you are doing is transferring Big Easy limitations and loneliness to another venue.

The church of course should be the alternative to big city, or even rural loneliness. The Bible illustrates excellent examples of a few well functioning communities, and many more not so successful, so that we may learn from the folly of others. The most successful of these of course is the Exodus of the children of Israel to the promise land. Therein you find a sound Biblical model, given to Moses by God through his father in law Jethro Exodus 18 .

Part or much of the development of modern non denominational evangelicalism is based upon the success, either directly or indirectly, of the Calvary Chapel Movement. Chuck Smith's "Calvary Chapel Distinctives" succinctly enumerates the movement's variations and is available in a number of ebook formats at: <http://www.calvarychapelcostamesa.org/high/index.php?/high/multimedia/ebooks/calvarychapeldistinctives.htm>

Over the last number of months, I have been involved with discussions, email exchanges and other conversations concerning Pastor Chuck's use of the non Jethro "Moses Model" in the section concerning church government. As presented and as now coming into fruit in an increasing number of Calvary Chapel affiliates, there is a growing problem with the abuse of pastoral power in the church's leadership model. Simply put, this is a problem of believing power and authority as being synonymous. This is a modern understanding of leadership, but truly is not supported by natural communities, nor the Bible. Contrary to this present erroneous knowledge, in all the Bible translations I am aware of, Jesus never claimed the right to power, but only God's authority. Leadership authority rights come from God and man's institutions but absolute power the right to follow and obey that leadership always comes from the bottom up, not from the top down. Leadership, no matter the structure, will eventually succumb to the power of the led, or the community will die in the process.

No matter how you may structure your personal or doctrinal arguments, this truth is the basis of what we call the human will and choice. We may debate whether the will is truly free in a wide continua of discussions, but the fundamental issue always comes down to some sort of informed choice.

Now, the Calvary Chapel Moses Model is one of a theocracy with Moses as the type of Jesus in His millennial reign. This too is a historical Christian error, because only Jesus Christ is the Prophet, Priest, and King. In Moses, you might see a prophet and a king, but the priestly duties, fell to Aaron. Carrying that concept forward, the pastor should function in the role of priest and possibly prophetically, but the role of king must Biblically rest upon the shoulders of another, with that God given calling and authority.

Thanks be to God however, that the Exodus was not a democracy, or followed a congregational model of church leadership. Therein, lies the wisdom that God brought to Moses through Jethro. Not just elders were appointed and trained to help the pastor, but lesser leadership as the means to handle problems and solutions at a level appropriate with the situation; tens, fifties, hundreds, thousands. Built into this structure, that has been bypassed through out most of church history is the ability to bring together the unity of God given authority and the power to change the world through individual people. The Reformation was just such a God birthed plan, when in God's timing and working through the established church to the extent possible, Luther was able to free us from the bondage of a wishfully theocratically designed institution.

This brings us to the concept of leadership succession. It took Moses forty years in the wilderness, to qualify to lead the Exodus in God's authority. Joshua learned under an apprenticeship to Moses, because Moses' kids didn't meet God's qualifications. The church reproduces, both in Roman Catholicism and in Protestant Denominations by an educational system of, for lack of a better description, indoctrination, not calling and gifting.

In tying this all together, what we really need is the church, both in Calvary Chapel, all of Protestantism, and even Roman Catholics to work within their diverse structures to give people actual power within a true community of twenty five to fifty others, that know you other than as a face and say, "Hi how's it going. Great, me too."

"What do you mean, I didn't wait or really listen to your response. I am way too busy to receive your gift into my life, and I am too busy to develop any of my own gifts."

We all have been given a world of gifts, as the song really points out, we really don't understand that until, we lose it all through some sort of wilderness experience, whether that be in a piece of music, a hospital, a family, or in the real woods vista. That is the essence of humanity, and what so much of our modernity tries to exclude and to ridicule. But in giving and receiving gifts, we present the image of God by who's image we are created.

This is the essence of my gift in less than 2500 words this week, in some small way this is my attempt to give it away. Because if I don't I shall lose it, and what little I have learned thus far, is that the community sharing of our personal gifts is the true goal and essence of life.

Our latest Chronicles:

Thesis One: No heavy lifting?; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/thesisone1-4-6.pdf>

Thesis Two: Movements; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/thesistwo1-11-6.pdf>

Thesis Three: Prophecy; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/thesisthree1-18-6.pdf>

Thesis Four: Moral Deists; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/thesisfour1-25-6.pdf>

Thesis Five: Justification; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/thesisfive2-1-6.pdf>

Thesis Six: Transcendence; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/thesisix2-8-6.pdf>

Plaid Hood, Tall and Strong, circa 2020; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/plaidhood2-22-6.pdf>

Thesis Seven: Indulgences; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/thesisseven3-1-6.pdf>

The Nature Deficit Divide; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/naturedeficit3-8-6.pdf>

Birds & Snakes; PDF link: <http://www.wondersprings.com/2006pdffiles/birdsandsnakes3-15-6.pdf>