

PROMISES WORTH KEEPING

The Gift of
Giving



SERMON NOTES
SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

19th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 and 9:6-15

II CORINTHIANS 8:1-7 (THE MESSAGE)

1-4 Now, friends, I want to report on the surprising and generous ways in which God is working in the churches in Macedonia province. Fierce troubles came down on the people of those churches, pushing them to the very limit. The trial exposed their true colors: They were incredibly happy, though desperately poor. The pressure triggered something totally unexpected: an outpouring of pure and generous gifts. I was there and saw it for myself. They gave offerings of whatever they could—far more than they could afford!—pleading for the privilege of helping in the relief of poor Christians.

5-7 This was totally spontaneous, entirely their own idea, and caught us completely off guard. What explains it was that they had first given themselves unreservedly to God and to us. The other giving simply flowed out of the purposes of God working in their lives. That's what prompted us to ask Titus to bring the relief offering to your attention, so that what was so well begun could be finished up. You do so well in so many things—you trust God, you're articulate, you're insightful, you're passionate, you love us—now, do your best in this, too.

II CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

6-7 Remember: A stingy planter gets a stingy crop; a lavish planter gets a lavish crop. I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving.

8-11 God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done. As one psalmist puts it, He throws caution to the winds, giving to the needy in reckless abandon. His right-living, right-giving ways never run out, never wear out. This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. He gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God.

12-15 Carrying out this social relief work involves far more than helping meet the bare needs of poor Christians. It also produces abundant and bountiful thanksgivings to God. This relief offering is a prod to live at your very best, showing your gratitude to God by being openly obedient to the plain meaning of the Message of Christ. You show your gratitude through your generous offerings to your needy brothers and sisters, and really toward everyone. Meanwhile, moved by the extravagance of God in your lives, they'll respond by praying for you in passionate intercession for whatever you need. Thank God for this gift, his gift. No language can praise it enough!

**How are you/we responding and giving in response to God's
generosity and abundance given to you?**

Are you/we being intentional in deciding how you/we give?

"Grace comes to us as a gift from God and prompts us to be generous with others, and that gives glory to God!"

I. RADICAL GENEROSITY!

- A. Paul is not so subtly reminding the Corinthian church of their promised collection for the saints in Jerusalem who were suffering because of their faith. He has lifted the Corinthian's generosity to the Macedonians to encourage their giving, and here lifts the Macedonian's response to further "encourage" the Corinthians!
- B. At the heart of Paul's intentions is to make clear that it is by God's gracious gift of Jesus Christ, and God's continued provision, that the Corinthian themselves have been given what they have, and he now encourages them to give accordingly.
- C. Using the imagery of the "sower of seeds" he wants them to truly understand why and how they should give, not out of obligation, or coercion, but freely and abundantly in response to God's love! "Remember, a stingy planter gets a stingy crop; a lavish planter gets a lavish crop (The Message!)"
- D. Paul offers three guidelines to help them with their response:
 - 1. "Each must give as they decide in their hearts."
 - 2. "Not reluctantly or under compulsion."
 - 3. "And considering that "God loves a willing/gracious giver (Proverbs 22:8)" and is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance so that by having enough, you may share in every good work!"

II. PUTTING ON THE NEW!

- A. Quoting Psalm 111, Paul stays with the image of the sower and reminds the Corinthians that God is the "supplier of the seed" and will bless and multiply their "seed for sowing" and supply the harvest!
- B. Paul is passionately confident that God is able not only to provide, but to multiply and increase every grace in the believer...abundance grounded in grace!
- C. And having received the abundance of God, each believer is prompted to respond by giving generously as God has given, that God might be further glorified.
- D. Paul says that he is "testing" the Corinthians to see how responsive to God they really are by how they respond to this offering..." the genuineness of your own love (II Cor. 8:8)."
- E. Paul uses the word, diakonia, (i.e.. Ministry/service) to describe the Jerusalem collection and urges them to make this diakonia their very own as they come to see and understand themselves to be part of the larger body of Christ as they participate in this offering.
- F. Their obedience to God's Word and their faithful, generous response is part of their confession of faith and will witness to the love of God in their midst and will reach beyond the bounds of their community to glorify God!
- G. Paul concludes by lifting up the mutual prayers and love of the Jerusalem witnesses for them as they each experience the "surpassing grace of God", and he gives thanks for God's "incredible gift".