

3-17-24 The Greatest Month of Generosity

2 Corinthians 9:1-12; Acts 4:32-35.

Big Idea of the Message: Paul tells the church in Corinth to be generous in giving to others. God will take care of them.

Application Point: We will be generous in our financial giving, wherever God calls us to give.

How many weeks until Easter? (2 weeks)

The early church was known for being very generous and giving of their money, resources, and possessions. **Acts 4:32–35** describes the early Christian community: “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.”

Read Acts 4:32-35.

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

This relationship of money, giving, and generosity has been a part of the church since the beginning. Though there have been charlatans in the church, that doesn't mean the challenge to give monetarily is necessarily driven by greed.

How are you with your offerings to God? Are you a hitchhiker? Maybe a tipper? A giver that displays your obedience to God?

According to Barna Research the number of Christian's that consistently give a minimum of 10% of their income to God's house is between 5-7%. That number has fluctuated since 2001.

When we do not understand the principle of giving, we not only hurt the operation of the kingdom of God, but we also cheat ourselves out of many blessings that God wants to give to us.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:5-15.

I. We are all planting seeds.

- **Read verse 6.**
- In **verse 6**, we find a very simple principle. If you want to reap a harvest, you need to plant some seeds.
- **Verse 6** tells us he who sows (plants) sparingly, will also reap (harvest) sparingly. This makes a lot of sense.
- Andrew Pryputniewicz is a farmer, he grows potatoes, cabbage, pumpkins, and other vegetables. I said he is a farmer, not a gardener. Andrew has 40 acres just for potatoes.
- What if when it came time to plant, he decided he was not going to purchase any seed to plant? What would happen when it was time for the harvest? NOTHING.
- What if he said, “Seed is expensive, so we are going to purchase only 25% of what we need to plant?” What would happen at harvest time? There would be a small harvest.
- What if he decided to dream about having a great harvest, but that is all he did? What would happen when it was time to harvest? NOTHING.
- In **verse 6**, we are told if we sow bountifully, we will also reap bountifully.

- When is the harvest? We reap benefits now and we will also reap benefits for eternity.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

- All of us are planting seeds. The question is where are we planting them? When you want to raise corn, you plant corn. When you want beans, you plant beans. What kind of harvest do you want?

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. Galatians 6:7-8

- Are you planting seeds to the flesh, so that you will reap a material harvest or are you planting seeds to the Spirit to reap a harvest for eternal life?
- Where would we be today if in 1976 the people of Bethel Baptist church decided not to plant the seeds necessary to make this building a reality? Think of all the people that have been won to Jesus over the years since. Would we have reached them with the status quo?
- Given the fact that according to the Barna study only 5-7% of Christian tithes is it no wonder why a lot of churches struggle.
- In our lives, we will reap the harvest for which we planted for. If you sow sparingly, you will not have much of a harvest.

II. How is our heart regarding the seeds we are planting?

- **Read verse 7.**
- According to **verse 7**, whatever seed we plant, water and sow is from a purposeful heart.
- Purpose, (deliberately) each is to make up their mind after serious thought. We are not to give on a vague wish or from a passing impulse nor for the outcome of an emotional rush, but we are to give with a deliberate resolve.
- This means that we are not called to answer EVERY single request for help. We are to plan what we are going to give and joyfully give it.
- **“Not grudgingly or of necessity”** or under compulsion (eagerly and voluntarily). We are not to be forced into giving. We are not to give out of guilt or out of just some emotional overflow that causes us regret later. We are not to be sorry that we parted with our money.
- Under compulsion means giving under pressure. We are to give because we love Jesus, and we know it is the right thing to do!
- **“God loves a cheerful giver”** (cheerfully) The word for “cheerful” is the word we translate hilarious. Giving should be a joyful experience.
- How many of you feel joyfully happy when you give a loved one a gift? This is the kind of giver God wants us to be. You feel joy over giving to people you love because you love them.
- The key to joy is love. If we love God, then giving back to Him is a joy.

- I have told people if they hate to give, God does not need their money, they can keep what they reluctantly hold on to and God can bless someone who has the right heart.
- Part of planning to give is making sure our heart is right about it.

III. God provides all the seeds we are to plant.

- **Read verses 8-11.**
- God has the power to provide for all our needs (v.8).
- I believe the thing that holds many of us back from giving as God wants us to is that we are afraid we will lose something because of giving.
- We think that when we give something away, it is gone.
- We need not worry about losing out because God will make sure we have all sufficiency in everything and not only that, but we will have enough of an abundance to do good deeds.
- Sufficiency means being independent of external circumstances, especially of the services of other people. The word "**sufficiency**" is the same word used in **1 Timothy 6:6** translated "**contentment**". It speaks of being able to do with a small number of the things of this world.

"Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." Luke 6:38

- There are some things this church is going to need to do in the very near future to enhance the ministry of the church.
- The money and resources for us to do it are all here. We must trust in God to provide it and be faithful where He directs each of us in it.
- God takes care of those who are found faithful (v.9).
- **Psalm 112:9** is the verse quoted by Paul. God takes care of those who respond to Him freely and joyfully. This Psalm describes the character of a righteous man. One characteristic of a righteous man is that he "**dispersed (scattered) abroad**". This denotes giving liberally to the poor. Scatter is the opposite of sowing sparingly. He is a generous giver.
- **"He has given to the poor."** Poor is a person with whom life and living has been a struggle. It does not include people who are lazy (**2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.**). A charitable person takes care to see that his benevolence is not just scattered thoughtlessly to anyone who will receive it. It is to go to those who are truly needy.
- **"His righteousness endures forever."** In the context, righteousness denotes doing what is right for another man. **Psalm 112:9** backs Paul's contention in this passage that God takes care of the generous person and bestows blessings upon him. Forever includes now and eternity.
- God will provide what is needed (verses 10-11).
- Generosity doesn't ruin those who practice it. God can and will reward a generous person.
- "Supplies" original word denoted a person who undertook defraying the expenses of the chorus of the Greek theater. The word was expanded in meaning to deal with any such lavish act. The fact the word is a present tense verb tells us that this is something that God is doing in the here and now.

- God will not only give us the means to be generous, but He will give us the means to sow again and will make sure we are taken care of.
- Generosity begets generosity.

IV. The purpose behind planting.

- **Read verses 11-15.**
- a. God will be thanked (v.11).
 - When we give, it is so that God will be thanked. We are to give in the name of Jesus. People should know we do what we do because of our thankful heart toward God for what He has done for us!
- b. To take care of the needs of others (v.12).
 - We have let the government take over something the church should be doing. We are to help take care of the needs of others. We are especially called to take care of those who are a part of the household of God.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

- c. God will be glorified through our obedience (v.13).
 - Jesus calls us to be benevolent and being that way is one way we show people we are being obedient to our calling.
- d. Prayers will be lifted, and unity will be promoted (v.14).
 - Have you had a person help you out? Did you thank God for them, were they a part of your prayer life, did you feel closer to them?
 - When we help others, it promotes unity.

Conclusion

God has called us to be cheerful givers. We are to plan our giving and examine where our benevolence goes to make sure it is being used wisely.

The way we handle and look at money says a lot about where we are spiritually.

When we give, we will receive in proportion to our gift and the heart behind our giving.

God loves a cheerful giver. What kind of giver are you? When it comes time to harvest, will your wagons be full?

When I decided to put God first in my finances, God blessed me more than I could believe. I challenge you to do the same.

Verse 15, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."