

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Senior Pastor Titus Green
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Re-Center: A Mission to Give
2 Corinthians 9:6-15

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This morning, we are wrapping up our series on Recentering our lives around the mission of Christ. Let me give you a quick recap of what we've seen so far.

Three weeks ago, we looked at the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus. We learned that Jesus came into this world to seek and save people who are lost in their sin and separated from God. He went to the cross bore our sin so any and all who will trust in Him can be forgiven and restored to God the Father. The mission of Jesus is to seek and save the lost. And every follower of Jesus is called to align their lives with that mission.

And there are at least three ways that takes shape – serving, sharing, and giving.

- Two weeks ago, we learned that following Jesus means following His example of serving others. Jesus says that's how this lost world will know we are His disciples.
- Last week, we learned that following Jesus on His mission means we live as ambassadors for Christ by sharing His gospel with people who are far from God but close to us.
- This morning, we will see that aligning our lives with the mission of Jesus means we give generously and joyfully to advance the cause of Christ throughout the world.

And that brings us to our study for this morning. Before we jump into our text, let me give you some context. Paul is writing the church in Corinth. In his first letter to this church (aka 1 Corinthians), he instructed them on how believers should give as part of their local church. Throughout his letters, Paul shares various ways a local church should use their collective resources to advance the cause of Christ.

And 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 comprise Paul's most comprehensive teaching on giving. And our text for this morning is the culmination of that teaching. He essentially summarizes how believers should approach giving through their local church. And let me go ahead and give you the big idea so you can be looking for it as we read our text.

Big idea: God's Grace Enables Generous Giving that Blesses Others and Glorifies God

2 Corinthians 9:6–15

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval

of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

This is one of the clearest pictures in all the Bible about what giving should look like for followers of Christ. Verse 8 says that God is able to make all grace abound in our lives. That's what enables our giving. It isn't our hard work or great financial planning that enables us to give generously. It's God's grace. And God's grace not only enables us to give, but it also empowers our giving to bless others and glorify God.

That's why the big idea of our text is that God's Grace Enables Generous Giving that Blesses Others and Glorifies God. With that framework in mind, let me show you Four Changes the Grace of God brings to our Giving.

CHANGE #1 – GRACE CHANGES HOW WE SEE WHAT WE HAVE

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:10

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing

The word grace means something given freely and generously, a gift. And verse 8 says that God is the One who makes grace abound to us. In other words, God is the Giver of every good thing we have. That's why verse 10 says God is the One who supplies the seed to the sower.

1 Corinthians 4:7

For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

The only reason we are what we are and have what we have is because God has graciously given everything to us. Even our work is the result of God's grace. We live and breathe because God graciously sustains our lives. He gives us our jobs and incomes. His grace is the foundation of everything in our lives, including our giving. Everything we have is given to us by God's grace. And that includes every dollar entrusted to our care.

When my kids were little, Em and I worked really hard to teach them how to say certain words. Mommy. Daddy. Please. Thank you. But there was one word all our kids somehow learned all on their own: mine. It didn't take my kids any time to learn the word "mine." Everything they could get their hands on seemed to fall into that category in their little brains. They'd grab food and say "mine." They'd grab a toy and say, "mine." They grabbed the remote control and I would say "mine." It's just engrained in us from the very beginning.

But that's not how we are called to live as followers of Christ. The truth is that nothing is "mine." Everything we have is a gracious gift from God. It's all His.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

...You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

We don't belong to us. We belong to Jesus. There is no such thing as "mine" for a follower of Christ because we belong to Him.

Before we move on, take a moment to examine your heart. Do you genuinely believe that you belong to Jesus? Does that extend to everything in your life?

What would it look like if you went through your life and crossed out the word "mine" and replaced it with "Christ's."

My house isn't mine; it's Christ's house. My bank account isn't mine; it's Christ's money. My time isn't mine; it's Christ's. My abilities aren't mine; they are Christ's abilities entrusted to me. Everything we have is a gracious gift from God. And understanding that changes the way we see what we have.

CHANGE #2 – GRACE CHANGES HOW WE GIVE WHAT WE HAVE

2 Corinthians 9:6

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Paul says we should see giving the way a farmer sees seeds. If a farmer wants to have a bountiful harvest, he doesn't sow a little seed, he's sows a lot. He reaches into that bag of seed and lets it fly and doesn't hold back because he knows that seed is going to turn into a harvest for his family and friends.

And Paul says that's how it is with our giving to the cause of Christ. Giving isn't supposed to be a guilt-driven part of the Christian life. It isn't a payment we make to God to get on His good side. We don't pay taxes as part of God's Kingdom. That's not it at all. Giving to the cause of Christ is an eternal investment that God graciously multiplies into a glorious harvest. Paul shares several specific ways that changes how we give.

We are to give Generously.

Verse 6 - whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

This becomes a no-brainer when you truly believe God will multiply your giving into an eternal harvest. When Bitcoin first came out, Emily suggested that we invest some money there. I laughed. Like, who would ever buy imaginary money? I'm pretty sure if we invested in what Emily wanted us to invest at the time, it would be worth over a million dollars today.

I didn't listen to Emily and held onto our money. What if I had believed her when she told me it was going to be big? I would have put everything we could reasonably afford into it.

So, what if we believe God's word when He tells us that a harvest is coming in which He will graciously multiply whatever we give to the cause of Christ? Paul says it causes you to give generously.

We are to give Intentionally.

7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart

Generous giving isn't thoughtless giving. Paul says it represents an intentional decision. The way he describes it, it sounds as if there was time to think and pray and plan before they actually gave. And this is consistent with how much of the bible talks about the way we should steward the resources God has entrusted to us. For instance, the book of Proverbs has a lot to say about the wisdom of planning and ordering your resources well.

And this is often a big part of being able to give generously. Many of us need to learn to live on a budget or to work toward getting out of consumer debt so that we can become more generous. We need to see how we are already spending money on Starbucks or Online Subscriptions to see what resources we might have available. For that reason, each semester we are offering a financial stewardship class through Crown Financial Ministries. Two of our church members have spent their lives as successful financial planners and they lead that class to help others. If you are interested, you can call our church office or talk with Pastor Mark at the end of the service.

Wise, prayerful planning is part of making the intentional decision to give generously to God's kingdom.

We are to give Freely.

7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion,

Followers of Jesus don't give because the Law demands it. That's how many of us learned to give. The Old Testament required God's people to give a tithe – or 10% of their income. So, many of us learned to give by simply being told we have to tithe. Period. Just do the math and write the check. But Paul says our giving should not be out of a sense of compulsion. Now, I still believe the tithe is a great starting point for giving. And as I read the New Testament, it seems like believers routinely gave far beyond 10%. But not because we are bound by the law. God's grace does something the Law could never do. God's grace transforms us to be more and more like Jesus. God frees us from all the things that would keep us from living generously for the cause of Christ. In Him, we are freed from selfishness and materialism and worldliness. And when you are freed from those things, you don't need a law to tell you that you have to give. You want to give. Like I would love to go back and put as much as I could into bitcoin, giving isn't something we have to do...it's something we want to do when we are changed by grace.

We are to give Cheerfully.

Verse 7...for God loves a cheerful giver.

When you truly believe that every dollar you give will be used by God for eternally significant purposes, it brings you joy to be part of that. It's like a kid at Christmas. Do you remember the feeling of anticipation you would get in the days leading up to Christmas? You knew a harvest of gifts was on its way. And that anticipation produces Christmas cheer. You looked forward to Christmas cheerfully.

And when you really believe that giving to the cause of Christ is used by God to bring incredible, eternal gifts – not just to you but to others – it brings joy to your giving. And that brings me to the third change grace brings to our giving...

CHANGE #3 – GRACE CHANGES WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE GIVE

2 Corinthians 9:11-12

You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

Paul is referring to the specific way the Corinthians' gifts were going to be used. This particular offering was going to be taken back to a group of Christians who were suffering persecution. Many of them had lost their sources of income and their homes. So, this gift would be supplying their needs. In other words, God was blessing others through the giving of His people.

And that's how it works when we give to the cause of Christ. God takes our gifts and uses them to bless others.

When you give through our church family, your gifts are used by God to bless others. You bless the people who come here every week to worship Jesus and learn His word. You bless the families of children who are learning about Jesus through our children's ministry. You bless people who are learning English as a Second language and are being told about Christ. You bless the people in other nations who are hearing about Christ through the work of our missionaries.

Last week, one of our Grief Share groups met for the first time. A lady from our community who is grieving the loss of a loved one attended. One of the ladies from our church was able to talk with her outside of class. As she listened to her story and the pain she is experiencing, she told her, "that's why we need Jesus. And we don't just need Him, we have Him because God so loved us that He gave His Son to save us." Then, she unpacked the gospel, and the lady gave her heart to Jesus. That group was able to meet because God's people give to provide space and time and resources for ministry like that. God used your gifts to bring the greatest blessing there is to someone who realized her need for Jesus.

That's the harvest that comes through our generous giving. Lives are transformed by God's grace. The deepest needs of people are met through the gospel of Jesus. The harvest we reap isn't primarily financial blessing in our lives; it's spiritual blessing in the lives of others.

What greater investment can we possibly make than giving to the cause of Christ? By His grace, God blesses others through our giving.

CHANGE #4 – GRACE CHANGES WHY WE GIVE

2 Corinthians 9:12-13

For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others,

As God takes our gifts and uses them to bless the lives of others, He's the One who receives the glory. He receives glory from people whose lives are transformed by His grace.

Ultimately, this is the deepest motive for our giving. We want to see God glorified. Guilt isn't the motive of grace enabled giving, glory is. We give because Jesus is worthy of glory.

Money is a really interesting thing as it relates to our desire to glorify God. What I mean is the very concept of money is something we came up with in order to express the worth or value of something.

For instance, I routinely spend \$12 for a meal at Chipotle...that chicken burrito is like culinary gold to me. So, I gladly give them \$12 and think it's worth it because of the value I see in a perfectly made burrito. But I wouldn't spend \$12,000 on that same burrito. Why? Because it isn't worth it.

How we use money is directly connected to what we believe things are worth. The way Jesus said it is that where our hearts are, our treasures will also be. We will invest our treasure into things we treasure.

That's why Paul says the motive in the heart of those who give is their desire to see God glorified as the most worthy and valuable thing in all existence. When Jesus transforms our hearts by His grace, we give as an expression of how worthy we believe Jesus is of glory. We give so that others will have an opportunity to see and hear about His glory in the gospel.

Guilt isn't the motive of giving, glory is.

Here's a great question for us to ask ourselves: if someone were to examine the way I spend money, would they believe I treasure God and His glory? What would they believe that I believe is most valuable?

And that brings us full circle. That desire to glorify Jesus only comes when we see Him as the greatest gift of all. Look at verse 15:

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

God's inexpressible gift is Jesus. All of us have sinned against God and our sin has separated us from Him. And there's nothing we could ever do to make ourselves right with God. No amount of good works could ever make up for our sin. That's why we need Jesus. And we don't just need Jesus; we have Him because God so loved us that He gave His one and only Son to live and die in our place so we could be forgiven and reconciled to God. In His great grace, Jesus saves us in every way we need to be saved. As we trust in Him, He saves us from the penalty of our sin. He saves us from the power of our sin. And one day, He will save us from the very presence of sin by taking us to live forever with Him in Heaven.

And when our hearts are transformed by the grace of Jesus, we believe there is no great gift than Him. Nothing is better or more glorious than Christ. And that's the foundation of our giving. We want to display the glory of Jesus. We want others to know the glory of Jesus. So, we give for the glory of Jesus.

So, as we close, let me give you 3 questions to ask in light of the truths we've just studied.

1. Have I received God's inexpressible gift? If you have never placed your faith and trust in Jesus, today is your day. Don't leave this place without knowing that your sin is forgiven, that God is your Father, and that Heaven is your eternal home. Salvation can't be earned. It's a gift of God's grace to any and all who will trust in Jesus.
2. Have I surrendered everything I am to the Giver? Do you see yourself and all that you are as Christ's?
3. How is God calling me toward greater generosity?
 - a. If you aren't giving regularly to your local church, let me encourage you to start there.
 - i. There are several ways to give.
 1. We have offering boxes placed throughout Main Street. You can give by placing your offering in one of those.

2. You can use the tap tag on the back of the seat in front of you or go to our website, fbcmi.com, to give online or set up a recurring gift.
- b. For those of you who are part of our church family and are regularly giving, I want to encourage you to pray about giving above and beyond your tithe to retire our mortgage.
 - i. 9 years ago, we began a process of aligning our life as a church with the mission of Christ in this community and around the world. We called it the First Initiative. Part of that initiative included renovating our facilities so that we could better serve the people of our community. After 5 years, that renovation project totaled \$6.5 million, including a \$3.5 million mortgage. In the last several years, God has used your giving to bring the total down to \$145,000. Under our current loan structure, that requires a \$20,000 a month mortgage payment from our church budget. When we pay that off, that will release \$20,000 a month that can be redirected toward other forms of ministry.
 - ii. Our leaders are praying the Lord will stir our hearts to retire that debt sometime this Fall. Will you join us in that pray and ask Him to impress on your heart how He would want you to give by His grace?