

## **2 Corinthians 9:11**

***You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.***

For those of you who looked at today's sermon theme, it wouldn't surprise me if you had to think about it a little bit. I mean, at first glance, it sounds like were going to talk today about being generous occasionally, you know, like generous...from time to time. For example, someone might say, "I don't do it all of the time, but occasionally, I'll give some money to those people that beg for help at intersections and off-ramps." Quite frankly, we're all good at being generous from time to time, occasionally.

But when God talks about "occasional generosity" he isn't talking about being generous from time to time. He's talking about being generous whenever the occasion calls for it. And as you well know, the occasion to be generous is not from time to time. It is now and it is always. And as we contemplate today our occasional generosity, please, join me in prayer...

Dear Christian friends,

We've spent the last few weeks talking about stewardship: managing the blessings with which God has blessed us. We've talked about the grace that is ours in Christ. We've talked about the opportunity to support one another here at New Life as well as our brothers and sisters in faith throughout the world. The need is great. The opportunities are greater. And quite frankly, the resources are even greater still.

Now, I know what some may be thinking. Come on, pastor. I know you're new around here, but surely you understand that we have a lot of people on fixed incomes, and we have lot of young families with kids, some kids in college, and some job losses, on and on. And I'll admit, few of

us have as much money as we'd like. We'd like to have more to give, especially on those occasions when there seems to be a special need.

But maybe that's the problem. We think about giving to a need when the occasion calls for it, as if simply God wants us to step up to an occasional situation, rather than what he truly wants from us. What he wants is an on-going sense of occasion, that each and every day is an occasion to be generous.

But Pastor, you've got to understand: As much as I agree with you, I can't afford to be generous all the time. My answer to you, redeemed child of God, is that you can afford to be generous all of the time. In fact, the only thing you can't afford is to NOT be generous all of the time. And if that sounds a bit to you like Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*, then I'll let the Lord explain it to you through the Apostle Paul, ***Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.***<sup>7</sup> ***Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***<sup>8</sup> ***And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.***<sup>9</sup> ***As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."***<sup>10</sup> ***Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.***

Lord willing you are all able to stay for today's potluck and family forum. We'll be talking about a number of things, including the strategic planning process we are looking to launch within the next month and the support needed to carry New Life's congregational ministry forward into the future.

But I want you to think about the potluck for just a moment. Imagine that you brought your favorite dish to pass,

something that you really enjoy yourself. But you get talking to some friends and by the time you get up to the serving table, your dish is gone. Now, you might be a little disappointed, but with all of the great food everyone else brought, you'd still have a delicious meal, especially if the desert section is still loaded.

But now imagine that you brought that same dish, only this time, you were the only one who brought something to pass. Again, you get talking, only to find that your dish is all gone by the time you get a chance to eat. You didn't get anything. You might be a bit disappointed. You might be a bit frustrated. You might even be a bit angry at how much everyone else took. Consider for a moment, this video about an apple pie...of sorts...[video]

Amusing, but hits kind of close to home, too, doesn't it? Even after all that he has done for us – rescued us, redeemed us, forgiven our sins, washed us clean, blessed us with new life, guaranteed eternal life, filled each new day of grace with abundant blessings and then provided every opportunity to be generous with them – even after he has made us who we are and given us all that we have, somehow, our giving back to God still seems an obligation, something we *have* to do, something that, sadly, is often an afterthought, or given from whatever crumbs are left.

But the ability to use God's gifts in gratitude and joy is a **grace**. Earlier in this same letter to the Corinthians, Paul calls generosity a **grace of giving**. Grace, that's the key word. Again from our text: ***because of the surpassing grace God has given you. [Give] Thanks... to God for his indescribable gift!***

When you start with realizing that all that you are and all that you have is a direct result of God's grace, you understand why he did it all for you in the first place. We are so in awe at the gift, so, blown away by its magnitude, so humbled by his generosity to us, that we can't help but give thanks by being generous ourselves! In fact, God's

generosity is so complete to us, that he tells us to be as generous as good stewardship allows in the confidence that we can't out-give the giver. Here is his promise: ***You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.***

You see, when God talks about occasional giving, he is creating in you a sense of occasion that is ready to be generous each and every day in the confidence that God's uses our generosity to further his kingdom. ***This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.***<sup>13</sup>

And in case you need a little more encouragement to give generously back to God, here's an idea of how God uses our gifts to further his kingdom...[video]

Yes, ***Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.***<sup>14</sup> ***And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.***

So then recognize the abundance of his blessings in every facet of your life. ***Give thanks for his indescribable gift*** to you through your generosity on every occasion. And then, in your home, in this congregation, and in God's Kingdom at large, be amazed at what he will do. Amen.