

# 2022.03.20 – March Gladness

## MOTIVATION FOR GENEROSITY

### 2 Corinthians 8:1–9 | Ben Deaver

**So what?** We need deeper motivation for generosity than law and guilt.

**Feel what?** Jesus has given so much for you to be rich AND to model generosity so you can be happy.

**Now what?** Follow the way of Jesus in gracious, sacrificial generosity.

## VISION CASTING

The purpose of Tallgrass at The Well is to create community together by inviting everyone into the Way of Jesus.

## INTRODUCTION

- We're talking about money all month. Yes!
- Last week, Pastor Josh talked about what Jesus said about giving. He made a compelling case that the tithe is still in effect today.
- Today we'll look at what Paul said about giving. As it turns out...after the cross happened, the Law was not utilized as the standard of giving...the cross was.
- Let's open the Scriptures to the Apostle Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth where he challenges a wealthy church to follow through with good intentions to give generously.
- In fact, he shames the Corinthian church by holding up an impoverished church who has become rockstar givers as a model they should aspire to.
- Paul shows us that the cross is the standard of giving, not Old Testament law.

- Grace takes us so much further than the Law ever can.
- The specific need at the time was a widespread famine that you can read about in Acts 11 (and Galatians 2:10).

## **2 Corinthians 8:1-6**

<sup>1</sup> And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. <sup>2</sup> In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

<sup>3a</sup> For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.

<sup>3b</sup> Entirely on their own, <sup>4</sup> they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. <sup>5</sup> And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. <sup>6</sup> So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

**Pray**

The Macedonian church's problem was that they gave too much. Crazy! What if that was our problem? Slow down with your crazy giving, y'all!

### **The Macedonian Formula:**

Very Severe Trial

Extreme Poverty

Grace of God

+Overflowing Joy

**Rich Generosity**

- 2021 numbers from a recent census. Median income for MHK is \$50,537.
- GivingWhatWeCan.org - How Rich Am I?
  - \$50,537 for a family of four puts you among the richest 10.4% of the global population.

*How does a community of believers become like the Macedonians with their zeal to give?*

### **2 Corinthians 8:7-9**

<sup>7</sup> But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness

and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

How will Paul motivate them to excel in rich generosity?!

***<sup>8</sup> I command you to tithe!***

*Remember the tithe? I command you to give 10%!*

<sup>8</sup> I am NOT commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

**The Cross is the Giving Standard:  
Grace takes us way further than Law ever can!**

Paul always links our behavior to the Gospel, not Old Testament law. We're under the law of Christ. Love excludes compulsion and takes us beyond the minimum requirement. Love always issues in action that is rooted in the Gospel.

## Gospel Circles—concentric circles

**2 Corinthians 8:7-9** <sup>7</sup> But since you excel in everything—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. <sup>8</sup> I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

**Gospel—Christ died for our sins! Where is it?  
"yet for your sake he became poor"**

- Jesus is insanely rich! He owns the whole universe. He created everything out of nothing. It's His! He owns all of the stuff!
- Yet... Yet... for your sake.
- **Philippians 2:6-8** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a

man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

- **Action Step:** Get gripped by grace! By the Gospel! Respond to the sacrificial generosity of Jesus on the cross.

**Gospel Truth—“so that you through his poverty might become rich”**

- The riches we possess in Christ are enough to bring us peace, joy, contentment. We are rich if we are in Christ.
- GRACE = God’s riches at Christ’s expense
- Are you more enamored with stuff or with the riches you have in Christ?

**Gospel Conduct—“see that you also excel in grace of giving”**

- Grace of giving = rich generosity
- Gospel Conduct = The Way of Jesus

*How far does grace take us?*

Gospel, Christ died for our sins, leads to Gospel Truth, we are rich, leads to Gospel Conduct, SACRIFICIAL GENEROSITY!

***Pop Quiz:** Would you expect that those on this side of the cross who live in the most affluent society in history would give a) less than b) the same as or c) more than the Israelites were commanded to give?*

Why doesn't Paul just give 'em a little law? Just get that gold standard of 10%! He doesn't want to sell them short of the joy they can have by basing their standard of giving on the cross rather than Old Testament law. We make a lot of money. There's a lot of money out there to be made. 10% is not the high bar that we want to someday jump over. If you give 10% to Tallgrass at The Well you are so far above where most people are at with their giving. Lean into the Gospel. Don't settle for comparative righteousness. Excel in this grace of sacrificial giving! Excel. Keep going!



## **Big Idea: Grace takes our generosity way further than the Law could ever dream of.**

We are under grace and it is powerful! Some are concerned that we won't be moved to action unless we continue to preach the Law. I assure you, for those who are gripped by grace they will go way further towards spiritual maturity than the Law could ever dream of taking them.

*How far does law take us?*

- Using the tithe as your motivator can easily result in compulsion and giving the minimum required...plus it's arbitrary. It's not the New Testament teaching.
  - *Is anyone planning to go way above and beyond when paying your taxes this spring?* Nope. Why? Because it's law motivated giving. We're trying to pay the minimum required under law.
  - The cross is the giving standard!

## **Law vs. Grace**

- Law gives a quick start. Quick scoring.

- Law makes you feel good if you're doing well...compared to the person right next to you and to your own made-up set of rules.
- Law leads to external showiness but cutting corners wherever and whenever you can.
- Law leads to the minimum given to get the monkey of guilt and shame off your back.
- Law is when I owe someone money I pay them back...no less, no more. E.g. phone bill, taxes...
- Grace is extravagant.
- Grace is looking for opportunities to bless.
- Grace is asking when is the baby shower because I want to give a gift.
- Grace is asking when is the meal train because I want to bless this family.
- Grace is the way some certain friends of ours bless us so much that we can only receive without hope of repayment.

**Tallgrass at The Well is hustling!**

- 2021 numbers from a recent census. Median income for MHK is \$50,537.
- GivingWhatWeCan.org - How Rich Am I?
  - \$50,537 for family of four puts you among the richest 10.4% of the global population. If you gave 10% of your income you'd still be among the richest 12%.
- Specific challenges we face as a church:
  - Transient demographic
  - Lots of young families with kids! Childcare is expensive.
  - Leasing space in Manhattan ain't cheap.
  - Oh yeah, the Covid thing continues.
  - Inflation.
- Committed to keeping our staff on board if staff want to stay on staff
- So estimated earning potential for Tallgrass at The Well Directory of 25 family units: \$1,263,425.
- IF our directory averaged out for MHK, which it likely does, our Directory group by itself could give \$126,342 at 10%! Not bad! And the 10% tithe is not the standard for New Testament giving as we'll discover this morning.

- If we include the 15 families that I know aren't in the Directory yet that brings the total to: \$2,012,480. 10% of that is \$202,148.
- We need \$16,766/month of average income to reach our 2022 budget of \$201,192.
- January was \$16,000.
- Start Strong EOY drive funds were \$7250.
- March Madness drive to replace carpet and update signage, etc. after our Revisioning process
  - Misti LeMoine and Lynn Salsbury are dreaming up and teaming up an online auction with yard sale to follow to raise funds to replace this carpet. More details coming but start gathering your stuff up!
- We are working towards \$50,000 this year from our Wesleyan District and a couple generous churches in our network.
  - That will give us some time to work through this Revisioning process and be in a solid place to head into fall ready to welcome those in need of spiritual community.
- Pastors Josh, Dave, and I have all gone from full-time to part-time, right above 30 hours a week.

- Meals for those with new babies and those who are sick.
- We fund our events with Thrivent Action Dollars.
- We are hustlin', church fam!
- We have a culture of generosity in our church and growing.
- This is all actually amazing, church fam, when compared to American church giving stats...

## ***Passing the Plate:***

*Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money* by Christian Smith, Michael Emerson, and Patricia Snell (2008)

- More than one out of four American Protestants give away no money at all—"not even a token \$5 per year,"
- The median annual giving for an American Christian is actually \$200, just over half a percent of after-tax income.
- About 5 percent of American Christians provide 60 percent of the money churches and religious groups use to operate.
  - (It's these people who skew the average.) "A small group of truly generous Christian givers are

essentially 'covering' for the vast majority of Christians who give nothing or quite little."

- "Americans who earn less than \$10,000 gave 2.3 percent of their income to religious organizations whereas those who earn \$70,000 or more gave only 1.2 percent."
- However, relative righteousness doesn't count for much. Let's keep going.
- Let's excel in this act of grace called generosity.

*How do we do it? Let's get practical.*

## **SICK Giving: Give...**

1. **Sacrificially**
2. **Intentionally**
3. **Cheerfully**
4. **Kingdomly**

### **1. Give sacrificially.**

**Give according to your means and beyond your means. This is what sacrificial giving means!**

**1 Corinthians 8:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, <sup>4</sup> they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.

God calls on us to sacrifice what we do have. He doesn't expect us to give something we don't have.

- Our standard of living has gone up but our standard of giving has gone down. That ain't cool!
- Are you more concerned with your standard of giving or your standard of living? How much do you need? How much do I need? Really?
- If a 10% tithe was the gold standard of giving then the application point today would be easy. If you're already giving at that level then you feel good about yourself and go home unchanged. If you're not giving anything at all and you can't hit the 10% gold standard you probably go home crushed and despairing and still unchanged.
- Giving according to your means suggests a graduated tithe would be appropriate. Why not make a plan as a family to increase your

percentage of giving as your wealth grows while keeping your standard of living relatively stable?

- What kind of givers are we raising our kids to become?

*Illus:* Family of four making \$50,000 giving 10% lives off of \$45,000. Same family making \$100,000 giving 10% lives off of \$90,000. Same family could live off of \$50,000 by giving 50%. Wouldn't that be cool? Some of you will or are making much more than \$100,000 annually. What kind of joy might you experience if you intentionally set a goal to give at an increasingly higher percentage the more money you made?

### **1 Timothy 6:6-11**

<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. <sup>9</sup> Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.



<sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. <sup>11</sup> But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

- Give sacrificially or you may sacrifice yourself on the altar of the love of money!

*Jesus gave sacrificially!*

## **2. Give intentionally.**

**Impulse giving is weak.**

**2 Corinthians 9:5-7** <sup>5</sup> So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

<sup>6</sup> Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- Spontaneous and sporadic go hand in hand...neither is good.
- What people say they give and what they actually give often don't add up.
- Dave's told me stories of people calling him up after getting their year end giving statement thinking they had given much more than they actually had.
- Look at the intentionality in this giving and the checks and balances and safeguards Paul puts into place.

**1 Corinthians 16:1-3** <sup>1</sup> Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. <sup>3</sup> Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem.

- Paul isn't going to show up and try to tug on the heart strings and get a bunch of money through a highly emotional plea.
- He preaches the cross, communicates the need, and gives people time to respond intentionally.
- Organization and orderly arrangements and deliberate intentionality lead to success and reduced pressure in the local church. It also keeps things above board.
  
- ***My story:*** First time I read Randy Alcorn's book *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* it made sense to me that I was a rich American and that the tithe is just training wheels and if I want to pick a number to tithe on then I should just go ahead and calculate all income and financial benefit we receive.
  - We've added supporting two children monthly through Compassion International to our giving—Minerva and James.
  - Maris and I need to revisit our giving again together.

***Action Step:***

- A baby step of faith could be giving just \$25 more per month to our church.

*Jesus gave intentionally!*

### 3. Give cheerfully—with gladness!

**2 Corinthians 9:5-7** <sup>5</sup> So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given (not as an exaction in ESV). <sup>6</sup> Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- God loves us all, of course. That's why He sent His Son. But His heart is happy when you grow to become a cheerful giver. That's the

direction that sacrificial and deliberate giving takes you. Towards cheerful giving!

- *Does the cheerfulness come before or after you give?* I think most assume that it should be before...but I'm not so sure. Perhaps the cheerfulness comes as you discipline yourself towards sacrificial generosity in light of the cross. *What do you do if you're not a cheerful giver? Should I not give?* NO! Remember, the crutch of duty can be helpful until the desire comes. Paul had to give these exhortations because they weren't cheerful enough yet. Don't hide behind this one. Well, I'm just not excited to give so I guess it would be unbiblical for me to take a step towards giving. C'mon. Serious?
- *How do you move from reluctant giving to cheerful giving?*
- **Matthew 6:21** Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

***Jesus gave cheerfully...for the joy set before Him!***

Paul always points us to the Way of Jesus.

**Acts 20:35b** “...remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

## **4. Give Kingdomly**

### **Excel in this grace of giving**

**What kind of church can we be together as we follow the sacrificially generous Way of Jesus?**

- Lord willing, we can create space here, in Downtown MHK, for those who feel forgotten and unimportant...no matter what baggage they bring through these doors.
- Lord willing, we can create space across Manhattan and the surrounding area in homes and coffee shops and brewing companies for people to gather and explore their faith...no matter how unlikely they'd be to ever step foot in a church building.
  - BTW, this isn't a church building. This is a leased-space downtown where we gather on Sunday mornings to worship Christ through music, gather around His Scriptures, and connect with one another so we can be those who learn to follow the Way of Jesus out there and invite

others into that journey alongside us. Also, BTW, let's figure out how to use this space for the good of our city throughout the week!

- One of the original visions for the Tallgrass name was to reclaim the Tallgrass prairie that had been destroyed over the years
  - Lord willing, we can create space for Emotionally Healthy Discipleship to happen...no matter how immature and spiritually anemic people are when they show up or how much church hurt and cynicism they bring and we still have.
  - Lord willing, we can create space for people to find their way back to God... no matter how far they've run from Him.
  - Lord willing, we can create space for women to lead in the church...no matter how much they've been told they can't in the past.
  - Lord willing, we can create space for people to move towards sexual health...no matter how unhealthy they've become.
  - Lord willing, we can be the church that invests in other great organizations like Orphan Helpers, Life Choice Ministries, Helping

International Students, Be Able, Habitat for Humanity, etc.

- Lord willing, we can be the church that has Neighboring Funds available for you to help your neighbor who is down on their “luck” and needs not a hand out but a hand up.
- Lord willing, we can be the church that initiates new Kingdom endeavors like business incubators that include childcare facilities and a coffee shop and a yoga studio and you name it.
- Lord willing, we can see Your Kingdom come, Father, Your will be done HERE as it is in heaven.

Friends, we can handle that...and much more!  
That would be madness and would result in gladness!

**What’s your scary step of faith? Just how scary are you willing for your step of faith to be?**

## **SICK Giving: Give...**

1. **Sacrificially**
  - Go from giving 10% to 12%?



## 2. **Intentionally**

- Start giving something monthly.

## 3. **Cheerfully**

- Invest in an organization that's doing great things.

## 4. **Kingdomly**

- Dream up something and go for it.

## **Reflection Questions to Ask Jesus:**

(Some questions are from *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* by Randy Alcorn p. 218)

1. What does the way I handle money say about how I view You and Your grace?
2. Is the fact that You've entrusted me with so many resources an indication that you want me to excel in the grace of giving?
3. In light of the cross, do You want me to set a basic level of income and assets to live on, then give away whatever you provide beyond that?