

Serm. Series: “Sowing the Seed—the Art of Godly Giving”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—8/24/08

Title: “Seeing the Bigger Picture”

Text: 2 Corinthians 9: 11-15

Intro.: *Illus.: Sitting in God’s Chair (picture of astronaut floating in earth orbit)*

Theme: Our inclusion into the family of Christ at this time and in this place to participate in this effort is part of God’s bigger purpose to resource His plan for the miracle of grace and faith to be brought to our community.

Giving which is part of God’s plan (verse 11)

- God has already planned out your opportunities to give for ministry
 1. *He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Phil 1: 6*
 2. *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Eph 2: 10*
- God has already planned out the resources to enable you to give to those opportunities
 3. *“In everything...for the purpose of all generosity” (vs. 11)*
 4. *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed. 2 Corinthians 9: 8*

Giving which is part of our worship (verse 12)

- Generosity as ongoing praise
 1. Worship which is work (*leiturgia* = work/service)
 - a. Committing to give time, prayers, spiritual gifts, and financial resources to work of this congregation
 - b. God replenishes our resource so that we can replenish others’ waning resources
 - c. **Ills.: The Cycle of precipitation (rain to Great Lakes to Oceans to clouds)**
 2. Worship is about someone other than you
 - a. **Ills.: No strings attached giving**
 - b. *Generosity* = basic meaning = w/o ulterior motives
- Generosity as service
 3. A responsibility (deacon = household steward)
 4. Filling up needs and multiplier of ministry — fill in the need so that it disappears
 - a. **Ills.: Purpose of spackle before your paint – hide the spot and disappear**

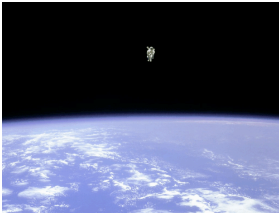
Giving which is part of God demonstrating His power (verse 13)

- Proof that God is at work in you and your faith
 1. **Ills.: Proof series of stamps/coins** (Certified to be the real thing)
 2. The Heavenly Father certifies that you are one of his in Jesus through the *good work* of your giving
 - a. *You will honor God through this genuine act (proof) of service because of your personal commitment. vs. 13*
 3. Good deeds not so that others pat you on the back but that others see God and his miracle at work in you
 - a. *Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matt 5:16*
- A signature and evidence of your “*fellowship*” with other believers at Lord of Life
 4. *Obedience/personal commitment* — military term=falling into rank (self/resources at disposal of unit for mission)
 5. What is at stake? — confession of the Gospel, salvation of souls for heaven, advancement of kingdom

Giving which has a boomerang effect (verses 14 and 15)

- **Ills.: The Fun of a boomerang giving**
- Blessed to be a blessing and in return being blessed
 1. Giving not just for now but for generations to come –both yours and others
 - a. **Ills.: Planting for the future**
 2. God’s *overwhelming grace* is meant to keep on giving until eternity
 3. God’s prompting of you to give away is intended to bring non-tangible gifts back to you (*affection, intercessions*)
- Blessed by my gift and its effect because it reminds of God’s gift in Jesus
 1. **Ills. Genuine Generosity**

Sitting in God's chair



No strings attached giving

The Disciples were hard at work distributing the food that Jesus had blessed and multiplied to feed the thousands. Peter heard a voice behind him and turned to see the boy who had given Jesus the little meal that was now feeding so many. "About my loaves and fishes," said the boy, "could I get a receipt for tax purposes?" **Citation: Adapted from an original cartoon by Doug Hall, *The Best Cartoons from Leadership Journal, Volume 1* (Broadman & Holman, 1999)**

Planting for the future

A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit.

Genuine Generosity

In *What's So Amazing about Grace*, Philip Yancey recounts this story about C.S. Lewis: During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time until C.S. Lewis wandered into the room. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace." After some discussion, the conferees had to agree. The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of Karma, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of law—each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional. **Citation: Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing about Grace?* (Zondervan, 1997), p.11**

2 Cor. 9:11-15

¹¹God will make you rich enough so that you can always be generous. Your generosity will produce thanksgiving to God because of us. ¹²What you do to serve others not only provides for the needs of God's people, but also produces more and more prayers of thanksgiving to God. ¹³You will honor God through this proof of service because of your personal commitment to spread the Good News of Christ and because of your generosity in sharing with them and everyone else. ¹⁴With deep affection they will pray for you because of the overwhelming grace that God has shown you. ¹⁵I thank God for his gift that words cannot describe.