

Sermon Series: "Sowing for the Future– the Art of Godly Giving" – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN-7/13/08

Title: "Hilarious Generosity"

Text: 2 Corinthians 9: 6-11

Intro.: Ills.: The Smarties Principle

Theme: God intentionally and abundantly graces us with his blessings so that we could extremely joy the act of giving away from ourselves

Why we are way too serious when it comes to being generous?

- **Ignorance**

1. Everyone of us is ignorant of God's power and the blessings of Almighty God which are at our disposal
 - a. *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" Ephesians 3:20*
2. Spiritual foolishness = "I don't need to or want to learn" God's power/promise to support my generosity

- **Fear**

1. We are afraid of what we might lose if we give away too generously
 - a. *"I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed." Psalm 37:25-26*
2. We are afraid of how others might take advantage of us when we are made vulnerable by our generosity
 - a. *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6*

- **Greed**

1. *"Then Jesus said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luke 12:15*
2. **Ills.: Butterball Turkey Giving**
3. *"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." 1 Tim. 6:17*

God's guidance to us in having a lot of fun in our generosity (2 Corinthians 9: 6-11)

- Sow your generosity with the same level of your expectations of God (vs. 6)

1. The farmer analogy--a common sense picture of good management in sowing and harvesting big harvest

2. **Ills.: Eating the big potatoes**

- Giving from devotion rather than from duty (vs. 7)

1. *"Each of you should give whatever you have decided. You shouldn't be sorry that you gave or feel forced to give, since God loves a cheerful giver" (vs. 7)*
2. Giving that is **intentional** ("purposed")
 - a. a three year "**Sowing the Seed**" pledge based on a faith expectation of what God will give in next 36 months
 - b. a deferred giving for when I am gone – the gift that keeps on giving
 - c. a gifting that come because of the bigger picture of God's kingdom is kept in mind

3. Giving that is **hilarious** (*joy from what God has given, is giving, and will give*)

- The "All" giving philosophy — God has and will give his all so why shouldn't I (vs. 8)

1. **Ills.: God's cheerful extravagant generosity**

2. Not giving God leftovers but disciplining self to give first-fruits so God can demonstrate his abundant faithfulness
3. *"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" Romans 8:32*

- Confident-contagious generosity (vs. 9)

1. **Psalm 112: 6-9**

2. When my focus is on God's provision and not on my want or lack of ability to provide, my witness has integrity

- Setting our life's goal on the right harvest (vs. 10, 11)

1. Is my goal to succeed according to the world's temporal standards or according to God's lasting standards?
2. *"Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground. For it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you." Hosea 10:12*

The Smarties Principle

Kevin Harney tells the following story in his book, *Seismic Shifts*. Years ago, a little boy named Dustin entered the Smarties stage of life. It might not be in the psychological journals, but there is a time in the development of every child when they are ready to receive their first pack of Smarties. You remember Smarties, a row of multicolored, chalk-like, bite-size candies wrapped in clear plastic, about 10 to 12 pieces in a pack. They are perfect for sharing. I am not a huge fan of Smarties, but when I saw Dustin come into church with a fresh roll, I just had to ask him if I could have one. Dustin immediately became my Smarties hero. He peeled out a piece with a smile and handed it over gladly. This was surprising enough, but at that moment, something happened in this little boy's heart. From that day on, for the next two years, every time Dustin got a pack of Smarties, he took out the first one and set it aside for me. Every Sunday, Dustin would track me down at church and generously offer me one or more Smarties. He did it gladly, with a smile, as if he enjoyed it. Sometimes Dustin would open a pack of Smarties during the week, but he would still save me the first round, sugary, chalky tablet in his pocket. By the time Sunday came, the Smartie was a little mangy and would have lint and other pocket paraphernalia stuck to it, but he never forgot to bring it for me. In those cases, I thanked him and put it in my pocket so I could "enjoy it later." Dustin loved Smarties. He also loved his pastor. Every week before the worship service began, Dustin and I shared a time of communion. Jesus was present as we shared a few moments of conversation and partook of some Smarties together. Somewhere along the way, Dustin's mother pointed out that the packs of Smarties she bought for him had ten pieces, and she saw this weekly ritual as Dustin's introduction to tithing. What I saw was a little boy who loved to share and who understood the power of generosity. Since that time, I have asked myself many times, *How am I doing with my Smarties?* Kevin G. Harney, *Seismic Shifts* (Zondervan, 2005), p. 188-189

Butterball Turkey Giving

Around Thanksgiving a few years ago, radio commentator Paul Harvey shared a true story of a woman and her frozen Thanksgiving turkey. The Butterball Turkey Company set up a telephone hotline to answer consumer questions about preparing holiday turkeys. One woman called to inquire about cooking a turkey that had been in the bottom of her freezer for 23 years. That's right—23 years. The Butterball representative told her the turkey would probably be safe to eat if the freezer had been kept below zero for the entire 23 years. But the Butterball representative warned her that even if the turkey was safe to eat, the flavor would probably have deteriorated to such a degree that she would not recommend eating it. The caller replied, "That's what I thought. We'll give the turkey to our church." **Citation: Paul Harvey daily radio broadcast (11-22-95); submitted by Charles Kimball, Allen, Texas**

Eating the Big Potatoes

According to an Oriental legend, some farmers decided they should keep only their small potatoes for seed. That way they could enjoy the large ones for their meals. So that's what they did—they ate the big ones and planted the little ones. As the years passed, the practice was continued. But eventually the farmers began to notice something unusual at harvest time. Although the small seed potatoes produced a crop, the new potatoes were gradually reduced to the size of marbles. These farmers had learned a costly lesson. They could not expect to grow a crop of large potatoes if they ate the best ones and used the small leftovers for seed.

God's Cheerful Extravagant Generosity

The story is told that one day a beggar by the roadside asked for alms from Alexander the Great as he passed by. The man was poor and wretched and had no claim upon the ruler, no right even to lift a solicitous hand. Yet the Emperor threw him several gold coins. A courtier was astonished at his generosity and commented, "Sir, copper coins would adequately meet a beggar's need. Why give him gold?" Alexander responded in royal fashion, "Copper coins would suit the beggar's need, but gold coins suit Alexander's giving."

2 Cor. 9:6-11

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each of you should give whatever you have decided. You shouldn't be sorry that you gave or feel forced to give, since God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And 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. ⁹As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." ¹⁰Now 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. ¹¹You 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.[NIV]

Psalm 112:6-9

⁶A righteous man will be remembered forever.

⁷He will have no fear of bad news;
his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

⁸His heart is secure, he will have no fear;

in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.

⁹He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor,
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn will be lifted high in honor.