



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
on
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Forward in Faith"
(Pentecost 2020)

This Week's Theme and Scriptural Focus: "A Giving Community."

This Week's Mark(s) of Discipleship: **Love** (In response to God's love for me, I sacrificially and intentionally extend myself for another's spiritual growth and well-being).

☐ **Day #1—Monday, November 23rd. Read: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. —Encounter:** God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

Every year at this time, I like to remind us what our purpose, vision, and mission as a church are all about. Our purpose: "To know Christ and make Christ known!" Our vision: "*Making Christ Centered, Emotionally Healthy Disciples of Jesus, One life at a time.*" Our mission: "*Reach and serve our local community, Equip their hearts, minds, and souls, and Release them into the world to share God's love.*" These statements inform and guide our mission and ministry at Red Hill.

As a human organization in the world today, the church's mission is unique; we are to make disciples of Jesus for faithful living. At the same time, as an organization in the world today, the church is similar to any other organization, tasked with accomplishing a mission: We are funded by the members of the organization. Yet, here again, we see something else that is unique about the church pursuant to financial giving: We believe that God "owns" everything—our money, time, and skills. God entrusts His people with these resources and tells His people to use *His resources* for His glory and others' good! One way we give God glory and bless others is through our financial giving to God's mission through the church.

Let's remind ourselves what the heart of God's mission is about: God's mission is to redeem and reconcile this world through Jesus Christ! God accomplishes this mission uniquely and primarily through the local church. As members (disciples) of a particular church, when we participate in this divine mission through giving our self, our time, and our possessions (money), we are practicing the Biblical doctrine of Stewardship. We see the doctrine of Stewardship front and center throughout the Bible.

In chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians, Paul gives instructions concerning a collection being taken up for Jerusalem Christians. These Jerusalem Christians, or the "Macedonian churches," were those in Philippi (Acts 16:12-40), Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), and Berea (Acts 17:10-15). The Macedonian churches had experienced the grace of God through the person and ministry of Paul (Ephesians 3:2-12) during his second missionary journey. However, the believers in the Macedonian churches were suffering severely (Philippians 1:29-30; 1 Thessalonians 1:6). They had not simply gone through "affliction;" they had experienced a "great trial of affliction" (v.2). They were in *deep poverty*. Their difficult situation may have been caused in part by their Christian faith, for they may have lost their jobs or been excluded from the trade guilds because they refused to have anything to do with idolatry. Even though they were facing difficult circumstances, they were still willing to contribute (give financially) to the needs of other Christians because they had received and experienced the grace and love of God. We give because God has first given to us—everything!

Consider/Reflect: The Bible teaches that our giving is to be a *thankful* response to God...

- It's to be a *thankful* response for what God has done for me in the past.
- It's to be a *thankful* response for what God is doing for me in the present.
- It's to be a *thankful* response for what God will do for me in the future.

□ **Day #2--Tuesday, November 24th. Read: 2 Corinthians 9.6-15. —Examine:** The Text and its Context.

⁶The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And 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. ⁹As it is written,

“He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰He 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. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹²For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! ¹

Related passages:

Psalms 112:9 | *He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.*

Proverbs 1:24 | *One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.*

Isaiah 55:10 | *“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater...”*

John 3:16 | *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

Consider/Reflect: Reflect upon the passages above. What do you notice? It truly is impossible to out-give God! Our giving, whether it is financial, and/or our time and talents, is always a response to God's first giving to us. What do you own that is NOT from God? Do you define your life in this manner? If not, why? If so, how are you returning thanks to God?

□ **Day #3--Wednesday, November 25th. Read: 2 Corinthians 8:8-12. —Examine:** The Text and its Context.

The standard for giving Paul cites here is not some arbitrary standard (like a tax) but personal sincerity and the sincerity of fellow believers. Paul was careful that the church understood that while he was not *ordering* them to give, he was contrasting the attitude and practice of the Macedonians (the “earnestness of others”) with that of the Corinthians.

However, for Paul, the Macedonians were not the prime example of the grace of giving: Jesus is! Jesus demonstrated this giving-grace in that, though He was rich (As God, He had the treasures of heaven!), He left heaven and gave all—His very life (“became poor”), that through His poverty we might become rich (Have the treasures of heaven!). Jesus Christ is always the preeminent example for the believer to follow when it comes to giving. Whether in service, suffering, or sacrifice, Jesus gave everything He possessed so that we may possess everything!

Paul was pleased that the Corinthians had earlier expressed a strong desire to help (v.10). But the Corinthians needed to carry their intentions through to completion, “according to your means” (v.11). This is an important factor in grace-giving. Again, the illustration of the “poor widow” in Mark 12:41-44 echoes Paul's point in this passage. The amount of the gift is not the issue. The “poor widow” gave a small amount compared to others. It was the widow's

heart and desire to give to God “all she had” that pleased Jesus. Here, Paul suggests that in regards to giving, the “heart of the matter is a matter of the heart.” The desire to give (v.10), even the “eager willingness” to give (v.11), must be accompanied by actual giving that is “according to what one has” (vs.11-12). True, generous, and thankful giving, is according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. We do not need to be a millionaire for our contribution to be significant. Again, God is concerned with the heart; an “attitude of gratitude” that follows from being a recipient of God’s grace and a love that motivates the believer to share his/her life so that others may be blessed (Luke 21:1-4).

Consider/Reflect: What from Jesus’ example (v.9) prompts you to be generous with your money, time, and energy? From *1 Corinthians 16:1-4* and *Romans 15:25-27*, what do you notice the collection to be all about? What principles about giving do you observe?

□ **Day #4--Thursday, November 26th. Read: Thanksgiving Day. Read: Psalm 89.5-8; John 13.35. —Explore:** The background to this text(s).

Today is Thanksgiving. As a country, we thank God for ALL of His good gifts to us! In gratitude to God, we are to use our lives as an offering of praise. An “attitude of gratitude” changes the way we view life in this world. As Christians, we are blessed to be a blessing for others! This is the heart of Biblical stewardship. As you read Psalm 89.5-8, I encourage you to read it out loud (or silently) as a prayer.

What are you living for? What are your ambitions? Jesus urges His disciples to live for God.

It’s important to have our true wealth in heaven, where there is no decay or loss...Jesus has already spoken of the wonderful rewards that await us. God will bless us beyond anything we have earned or deserved by our little acts of loyalty and obedience to him. It’s important to be clear about this. Just as good eyes enable us to see well, so a good heart will enable us to live well...Money is attractive to us. It makes us feel good because it gives power and choice. But the desire for money can take us over, and we end up worshipping it as our god.... Jesus tells us straight. We can only worship God *or* money. There isn’t room in our lives for both.”²

Consider/Reflect: What are your thoughts about the paragraph above? What convicts you? What comforts you? Pray about those thoughts, convictions, and comforts today. On this Thanksgiving Day, I thank God for you, and we thank God for all of His blessings in our lives!

□ **Day #5—Friday, November 27th. Read: 2 Corinthians 9.8-12. —Explore:** The Background to this Text. Let’s look at each verse in today’s text. In v.8 we read: “to make all grace abound to you.” This phrase does not refer to the Corinthians’ giving; it refers to God’s basic nature, which is grace. Because of God’s nature and God’s gift (Jesus), believers’ lives have been transformed and in response, we also must give. Believers reflect the family characteristics of God! Note what Paul assures: “...always having all sufficiency.” Notice the number of inclusive “all’s” in this verse (the Greek root-word for “all” is, *pas*).

- ...all grace (*pasan*)
- ...always (*pantote*)
- ...all sufficiency (*pasan*)
- ...in everything (*panti*)
- ...every good deed (*pan*)

The term “sufficiency” comes from two Greek terms, “self” and “contentment” (cf. I Tim. 6:6-10; Phil. 4:11-12, 19; Heb. 13:15). A. T. Robertson, in his book, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, claims that the use of this term shows Paul was familiar with Stoic thought and terms. However, he redefines them in light of the Gospel. “...you will abound in every good work.” God will give more resources to those who share their resources with Him.

(v.9): “...as it is written.” This is a quote from Psalm 112:9 from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). This quote includes one of the rare uses of the term “righteousness” to refer to human action (cf. Matthew 6:1). In Judaism, it came to refer to the weekly practice of Jewish almsgiving for the poor of the synagogue (cf. Psalm 112:1-6).

(v.10): The first part of this verse seems to be a quote from Isaiah 55:10, and the second part seems to be a quote from Hosea 10:12. These verses assert God’s ownership and provision of all things and the believer’s resulting stewardship. God is the source, but believers receive a blessing when they share. God’s ownership is communicated through the Greek word “supplies” (*chorēgeō*), which comes into English as *chorus*. As the doctrine of Stewardship indicates, which we have discussed all week, a Biblical world view attributes all resources to God.³

(v.11): “...you will be *enriched* in everything.” The Greek word for “enriched,” is a present passive participle of the Greek word, *ploutizō*, with, “in everything” fronted (in Greek) for emphasis. Similar to 2 Corinthians 8:7–9, this infers that God blesses us with both material and spiritual blessings (cf. 6:10; I Cor. 1:5).

(v.12): “...service.” This is the Greek word *leitourgia* (a compound from “public” and “work”) from which we get the English word “liturgy.” Originally it referred to someone who did public service at their own expense. In this sense it is similar to *chorēgeō* in v. 10. “...overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.” Those receiving financial support were thanking God for the sacrificial help of the Gentile churches (cf. v. 13).⁴

□ **Day #6-Saturday, November 28th. Read: 2 Corinthians 8:13-15. —Embrace:** God and His guiding you through His Word.

From this text in 2 Corinthians (really, the entire chapters of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9), we can discern the principles of New Testament giving and serving:

Give yourself. God wants you more than your money. When we have surrendered ourselves to the Lord, our giving will follow (8:5).

Remember Christ’s example. He gave everything to us! The riches we have in Him are the true riches, not material wealth (8:9).

Give as you are able. Giving is not intended to impoverish the giver. It is not the size of the gift but willingness, measured against how much we have, that pleases God (8:10–12). And, at Red Hill, we believe and teach the Biblical tithe (10% of one’s gross income). Tithing is the “floor” not the “ceiling.”

Give to meet needs. Giving is intended to provide for the basic needs of other Christians who are in need. The context of our passage that we have studied this week, reflects the vulnerability of the 1st-century world to famines, persecutions, and even *pandemics*, which often meant believers lost their means of livelihood. Giving, whether for emergencies or for ongoing mission, is a response to human needs. As a church, we seek to give and serve to meet the needs of the total human person: body, mind, spirit, and soul.

Giving is like sowing. Giving is an investment in our, and others,’ eternal future. (9:6).

Giving is personal. How much a person gives is between him/her and the Lord. God isn’t interested in money given grudgingly (9:7).

Giving is an expression of trust. God has promised to meet our needs and to even provide much more; we can give joyfully and without fear (9:8–11).

Giving stimulates prayer. The giver asks for God’s blessings on the gift; the recipient praises God for the gift and prays for the giver (9:12–15).

Consider/Reflect: Today, pray for those who are poor; those without any wealth or subsistence. Also, pray about your giving to Red Hill—how will you give of yourself, time, and possessions?

3 Ibid.

4 R. Utley. *Paul’s Letters to a Troubled Church: I and II Corinthians*. (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2002).