The Compass

Red Hill Lutheran Church

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

Sermon Series: "Hope is Here!"
"Hope and Commitment." Text(s): Various Texts.

☐ **Day #1—Monday, November 16th. Read: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. –Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

As examined last week, our mission at Red Hill Lutheran Church and School is to…:

"Reach and serve our local community, Equip their hearts, minds, and souls, and Release them into the world to share God's love."

As an organization in the world today, the church's mission is unique; we are to make disciples of Jesus for faithful living. 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 giving to God's mission through the church. Let us 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 the giving of 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). These 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. Likewise, when we have experienced the grace of God in our lives, there is no excuse for not giving back to God. Grace-giving means giving and serving in all circumstances; God asks us to be faithful at all times. When it comes to financial giving, Jesus makes it clear that the *heart of the issue (giving) is an issue of the heart*. 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 17th. Read: 2 Corinthians 8:8-12.—Examine: The Text and its Message.**

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 (Jesus had all), He gave all ("became poor"), so that through His poverty we might become rich. 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). However, 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—it is the attitude of human heart that *desires to give!* 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 agrees that (as we discussed on Monday) 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 contributions 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 #3—Wednesday, November 18th. Read: 2 Corinthians 9.8-12.–Explore: The background to this text(s).**
Today, let us look at today's text verse by verse…

(v.8): "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 likewise must give. Believers reflect the family characteristics of God! **"…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 what is needed to those who desire to *do* what is needed!

(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 in the synagogue for the poor (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 quoted from Hosea 10.12. These verses assert God's ownership and provision of all things and believers' resulting stewardship. God is the source, but believers receive a blessing when they share. God's ownership is described through the Greek word "supplies' (*chorēgeō*), which comes into English as *chorus*. As the doctrine of Stewardship indicates (and which we have discussed all week), a Biblical worldview attributes all resources to God.

(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 word 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).[1]

Consider/Reflect: "This bounteous God can and will richly bestow on the Corinthians the capacity for generosity in surplus measure…In Jesus, it is always more and never less. Even when in reduced circumstances, Christians will always be given opportunity for doing good…"[2]

☐ **Day #4--Thursday, November 19th. Read: 2 Corinthians 8:13-15.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**
As a summary of this week, and taken 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). Moreover, 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 and of the church to persecutions which often meant believers lost their means of livelihood. Giving, whether for emergencies or for ongoing mission, is a response to human needs…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 is not 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?

☐ **Day #5— Friday, November 20th. Read: Matthew 6.19-24.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**
Many people divide life into things "spiritual" and things "material;" but Jesus made no such division. In many of His parables, Jesus made it clear that a right attitude toward material wealth is a mark of true spirituality (see *Luke 12.13ff; 16.1–31*). God made all things, including food, clothing, and much sought after "treasures" like gold and silver. God has declared that all things He has made are good (Genesis 1:31). God knows that we are in need of certain things in order to live healthy lives (Matthew 6:32). In fact, He has given us "richly all things to enjoy" (*1 Timothy 6.17*). It is not wrong to possess things, but it is wrong for things to possess us!

Nowhere did Jesus magnify poverty or criticize the legitimate getting of wealth. However, humans tend to confuse the gifts

1 A.T Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Broadman Press, 1993).
2 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

with the giver of the gifts. There are many warnings in the Bible against both idolatry (confusing the gifts with the Giver) and covetousness (*Exodus 20.17; Psalm 119.36; Mark 7.22; Luke 12.15ff; Ephesians 5.5; Colossians 3.5*). Jesus' warning against the sin of living for the things of this life, similar to all of God's laws, is to guard our hearts and keep us focused on the true source of wealth: Jesus Himself!

Today's text in Matthew 6, is found within the larger context of Matthew chapters 5 through 7 and Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount.* In chapter 5 Jesus gave the moral basis for life lived according to the truths and values of the Kingdom of God; Jesus' people are *transformed from within*, and their godly values are expressed in a holy life that fulfills not just the letter of the Law, but its spirit and intent. The major emphases in chapters 5-6 indicate that the person who lives as a citizen of the Kingdom of God, in any time or place, will…

- •Seek to please God, who sees in secret, rather than men who judge by what is on public view…
- •Trust God completely to meet material needs, and so concentrate on God's kingdom and righteousness…
- • Express trust in God through praying and looking to Him to meet every need…
- •Act on and obey the words of Jesus, which are the only sure foundation for the kingdom lifestyle.

Christians, who develop the lifestyle Jesus explains in these two provocative chapters in Matthew, will experience the presence and the power of God in and through their lives.

Consider/Reflect: What do you "treasure" in your life? What is the relationship between this treasure(s) and Jesus?

☐ **Day #6-Saturday, November 21st. Read: Acts 2.42-44. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.** After Pentecost, the early church expanded beyond the borders of Judah, into Rome, and eventually into the rest of Europe. One day, a group of English Pilgrims, seeking religious freedom, will land on Plymouth Rock, and begin the "American Experiment." Because of this, we are free to worship and gather together as disciples of Jesus. In *Acts 2.42-47*, we read how the church grew and impacted the world—it is still the same today! A church that gathers around Word and Sacrament to be equipped to serve Jesus and others will be a faithful church! Today, give yourself a little quiz; be honest with yourself and where you are in these areas.

*WE STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER. *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching…"* Am I studying the Bible, God's Word, individually and/or with a group of fellow-believers?

*WE ENJOY FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER. *"They devoted themselves…to the fellowship" "They ate together with glad and sincere hearts"* Am I in fellowship and enjoying others?

*WE SHARE COMMUNION TOGETHER. *"They devoted themselves… to the breaking of bread"* Am I receiving Holy Communion regularly (weekly) through my church?

*WE PRAY FOR EACH OTHER. *"They devoted themselves…to prayer"* Am I praying for others and my needs?

*WE SERVE OTHERS. *"And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need…"* Am I *giving to and serving through* my church?

Consider/Reflect: How did you do? What needs to change for you to continue healthy "habits" as a member of God's family? Pray about this today.

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow…
Sermon Series: "Hope is Here!" (The Mission of the Church)
Scripture Texts:
Deuteronomy 10.12-15, 20-22
Acts 20.18b-24, 28-35
Mark 13.24-37