

Thanksgiving Sunday has always been about having an attitude of gratitude—Because of God's amazing generosity. God is so good, Amen?
~Michael baptized into Christ's church @ 9am service--Thank you Jesus!
~15 members received w/joy & excitement--God is good, thank you Lord!
~With gratitude we claim stories of welcome, hospitality, & belonging from Saints like Lindsay & Sue Mitchell, & Lelesi Samuel, and so many others who embody God's wide embrace of love and welcome to all.

The Way of Generosity and Thanksgiving is an ongoing journey of faith and movement of the spirit. This month we've been talking about what it means to be generous—not just with our money but with our time, talent, love, & our energy—and friends...gratitude plays a huge part in that.

This Sunday before Thanksgiving is when we make our commitments for the coming year, and it's a perfect moment to reflect on how generosity & thanksgiving go hand-in-hand in our lives as followers of Jesus. Today, I want to share some brief thoughts from the Bible that will help us understand why generosity isn't just about giving—it's about the kind of life we're called to live. Let's look at **2 Cor 9:6-13** (Message)

The Apostle Paul writes to the early disciples about this way of generosity. It's a reminder how God calls for their support to the newly forming church through a collection. A financial commitment of resources, and why its so important. So Paul writes to US today as well about The Way of Generosity:

⁶⁻⁷ Remember: A stingy planter gets a stingy crop; a lavish planter gets a lavish crop.
I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over,
 and make up your own mind what you will give.
That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting.
 God loves it when the giver delights in the giving.
⁸⁻¹¹ God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways
 so that you're ready for anything and everything,
 more than just ready to do what needs to be done.
As one psalmist puts it, He throws caution to the winds,
 giving to the needy in reckless abandon.
 His right-living, right-giving ways
 never run out, never wear out.

This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer
that becomes bread for your meals, is more than extravagant with you. God gives
you something you can then give away,
which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way,
so that you can be generous in every way,
producing with us great praise to God.

¹²⁻¹³ Carrying out this social relief work involves far more
than helping meet the bare needs of poor Christians.
It also produces abundant and bountiful thanksgivings to God.
This relief offering is a prod to live at your very best,
showing your gratitude to God by being openly obedient
to the plain meaning of the Message of Christ.
You show your gratitude through your generous offerings
to your needy brothers and sisters, and really toward everyone.

This is the Word of God for the people of God, thanks be to God.

You know, generosity and gratitude really go hand-in-hand. They aren't just things
we do once in a while—they're attitudes that shape how we live every single day.
And when we talk about generosity, it's not just about giving money. It's also about
giving of ourselves. It's about how we share what we have, whether that's our time,
our talents, our love, or even our energy.

That's what Lelesi shared in her powerful witness about Sue & Lindsay Mitchell,
Amen? Full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way so that they can be
generous in every way. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, says something
important: *"A stingy planter gets a stingy crop; a lavish planter gets a lavish crop."*
2Cor 9:6. What does that mean? Well, think of it like this: If you & I hold on
tightly to everything we have, we might not experience the kind of joy or
fulfillment that comes from sharing.

But when you & I live with open hands... and open hearts, willing to give & share,
you & I get back more than we could ever expect, more joy, more connections,
more purpose. I am so thankful for all the Saints who have helped raise up other
Saints, who will raise up even more saints.

This beautiful way of generosity & gratitude all flows from the Holy Spirit pouring
forth from lives of God's beloved ones who give of themselves in so many ways!

And Friends it's important that we give with the right attitude. Paul says that each person should take time to think about what they're going to give, & that *God loves it when the giver delights in the giving*. 2 Cor 9:7. Other translations read "God loves a cheerful giver!" God doesn't want us to give because we feel forced to, or because someone's twisting our arm. God wants us to give because we're **thankful** for what we have. Gratitude opens the door to generosity.

When we give generously, we are also blessed in ways that go beyond material things, the "stuff" that clutters our lives and homes. In v 8, Paul says that God is able to "*pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything*." Think about that for a moment. God is able to "*pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything*."

Generosity doesn't just benefit others—it also enriches us, meaning it improves or enhances the quality & value of our life, of our very being. When we give Of time, talent, and treasure—when we give...we grow as people. Our hearts become fuller, our lives more meaningful. Generosity isn't just about what we can give; it's about the kind of people we become...when we choose to live generously...When we choose the way of generosity.

Paul says that the more we give, the more we grow "*into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way*." 2 Cor 9:11. This doesn't mean we'll just have more stuff or more money. It means we become richer in Spirit, more connected to the people around us, and more aligned with God's purpose for our lives.

This is in part what our new members have committed to in their vows. They've said we promise to faithfully participate in God's church here at FMC by our prayers, our gifts, our witness, our presence, & our service. They are giving of themselves to Christ here as members of FMC hoping, trusting they will become richer in spirit, more connected to other people around them, and more aligned with God's purpose for their lives. I thank God for the joy of such life-giving vows taken today by so many, because such a generous giving of oneself to God & Christ's church—reminds me of my own promises made so long ago when I first joined the United Methodist Church.

Oh friends have you ever experienced the joy that comes from giving? I'm not just talking only about giving money. I also include giving your time, your encouragement, your attention, Your energy, ideas, your leadership, your passion &

love. Because when you do that, you're not just blessing the church, or someone else—you're also blessing yourself, & honoring God.

The Way of Generosity helps us find a deeper sense of purpose, and a deeper sense of gratitude for everything we have. In v 12, Paul says that our generous acts produce “*abundant & bountiful thanksgivings to God.*” When we give, we're not just meeting needs—we're showing the world what it looks like to **live with gratitude**.

It's like this ripple effect. When we give, the people who receive benefit from our generosity are grateful, and that gratitude spreads outward. It's a way of showing the world that we are grateful for everything God has done for us, and we want to pass that on.

This is why our church is all about being relevant to the community, impacting all generations & embodying radical acceptance of all people. When we live with this kind of generosity, we create a community where everyone feels welcomed, seen, and valued. We show the world that God's love is real, that it's bigger than us, and that we are all in this together.

As we approach this season of Thanksgiving, I want to challenge all of us: How can we live this Way of Generosity and Gratitude every day? It's not just about one day a year, on this Thursday...and it's not just about making a pledge on Commitment Sunday. It's about how we live, how we interact with others, and how we respond to the blessings God has given us.

Today, as we prepare to make our pledge Commitments to the ministries Christ has called us to here at FMC for the year ahead, I want us to remember this: **Generosity is not just a transaction—it's a way of life. Generosity is not just a transaction—it's a way of life.**

It's a way of living with open hands, of being thankful for what we've received, and of sharing what we have with others. May we delight in the giving...May we delight in the giving! May it be so. Amen and amen!