

**St. Paul Lutheran Church, Grant Park, Illinois**  
**The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**July 29, 2018**  
**2 Corinthians 9:8-11**

*And 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. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now 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. You 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.*

How do you define generosity? Is it lending a helping hand to someone in need? Is it taking the time to talk to someone who is hurting? Is it hosting a meal without asking for anything in return? One of the things you'll find I like to do is to look up words on [wordreference.com](http://wordreference.com) and look at their definition for words. Wordreference.com defines generous like this: **free in giving or sharing; unselfish, free from meanness or pettiness and large; abundant; ample.**

I like wordreference's definition of generosity because it highlights some specific things about generosity. One important part of generosity is putting someone ahead of oneself. Generosity involves being unselfish and putting others ahead of yourself. Generosity also means you don't complain about putting someone else ahead of yourself. You do it because you want to and not because you have to. Finally, generosity provides for people much more than they could ever want or imagine.

Now, I understand generosity isn't something which comes naturally to any of us. What makes me suggest generosity isn't natural? Well, do we always want to put others first? Or are we able to keep ourselves free from meanness or pettiness when we don't get our way? I don't and I know you won't either. However, Paul shows us there is a way to be generous to others which isn't selfish or self-serving. Where does the ability to be generous towards others come from? It comes from God.

Paul records for us, **"And 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. As it is written: 'He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' Now 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."**

**"You 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."** Did you hear some of the blessings Paul lists? He says, **"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. Now 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."**

Paul tells us God has blessed us with everything we need to be a generous blessing to others. What are the blessings God has given us? He has given us his grace aka God's undeserved love for us. This grace transforms our hearts from hearts which struggle to put others first and transforms them into God's perfect likeness. God's perfect likeness allows us to be generous and show love to other people by putting them ahead of ourselves because we love others the way God does.

Paul says God's children will have ample chances to show their love which God has shown them, but do you know what is amazing about our God? He promises our generosity will glorify him. **"You 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."** Paul says other people will praise God because we have brought him glory. How will they bring God glory? They will be a blessing right back to you.

Wow. What a concept. Paul tells us that God promises to bless us when we are kind and generous to others and he will give us even more than what we gave out. It sounds so different. It sounds so off. I

mean have you stopped to think about it once? Paul is telling me to take my hard earned time, talent or treasure and give it to others and by doing so I will become rich. Is it just me, or does this sound backward to you?

I mean think about it. How successful would a business be if it just gave money away all the time? Or sent its workers to help another company three days a month? Or shared its company secrets with a failing company to try and help the company survive? Your company wouldn't survive. It would go belly up because you are giving away something which helped you reach the secure financial position and helping the competition would mean you'd lose business.

Now, I want you to translate that concept to your own life. God wants us to use our personal gifts and be generous towards others with them. He wants us to use our time to be in church or to cut the grass for the neighbor who can't. God wants us to bring glory to him by using my time to serve others. But what if I'm already overworked and hardly ever home? What if we don't get to spend time together as a family? What if I need to work? Or play in a ball game? How can God expect me to use my time for him?

Ok, so maybe I've made you feel a little bit guilty about the way you use your time, but I guess there is another way we can be generous with God and it can be done today. We can make service to him number one on our money priority list. But wait a minute. If I make God number one, what about me? Will I have enough to live on and retire? Will I have to pay for school some day? Will I get the cell phone and data plan I want? Fishing pole? Golf clubs? How can I be sure?

Why do we struggle so much to put God and others before ourselves? The simple answer is our sinful nature. Our sinful nature doesn't want to put others first. It doesn't want to take a back seat to anyone. It wants to make sure I'm getting what I deserve and want. Other people? They can take a hike because I don't care about them. It is my day to be number one in my life and make sure I get what I deserve. These are the thoughts and attitudes which dominate the sinful mind.

Does this sound like the mind controlled by God? Does it sound like someone who is made in God's likeness? Does it sound like a person who is using gifts to glorify God? Hardly, because these thoughts are not God's thoughts. These ways are not God's ways. They are the thoughts and feelings of selfish sinners who are only thinking of themselves and their needs rather than thinking about ways to be generous and bring glory to God.

Do you like hearing this reality about yourself? It is rather painful to hear, but the part it hurts doesn't belong to God. It is your old sinful nature and not the part which has been made into God's likeness. Paul shows us the part which belongs to God earlier in Second Corinthians, **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:"**

**"That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."** Paul reminds us God has reconciled selfish

sinners to himself through Christ. Jesus put our salvation first before his own life to ensure we could enter into heaven. Jesus' generosity has opened heavens doors for us by making us a new creation.

What more could we ask for? What more could we want? God free of charge and completely out of his love for us has made us a new creation. Our eternal future is safe and secure simply because he loves us. This helps us understand Paul's words, **"You 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."** It helps us realize we can be generous towards others and not worry about what it might cost us. How?

God's love he has shown us in Jesus will remind us that God has shown us the ultimate form of love because he has secured our eternal future. It will remind us taking care of our earthly needs is no problem for God. I want you to think about our gospel lesson for today. By all appearances the crowd and the disciples were in trouble. There were over 5,000 people there and the only food they really had were five loaves of bread and two fish.

There was no way humanly speaking that would be enough food to feed 5,000 people, but what did Jesus do? He gave thanks, passed out the food and provided more left overs than they originally started with. Are you worried about what will happen if you give generously? Think about this story illustrates Paul's point when he says, **"Now 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."**

God will bless you when you are generous and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. Think about what happens when you generously share your time with others to show them Jesus. Think about what happens when you generously share your money to help show people Jesus. Your time, effort and money might help others be in heaven someday. These people will be eternally thankful and grateful to you for your thoughtfulness.

Guess what? When you are generous God is going to make sure you are ok. You aren't going to starve. God will make sure you have enough to eat. It also means you'll experience God's scattered gifts in places you didn't expect. You will see him in the loving smile of the person whose needs you put ahead of your own. You'll see his gifts when you gather together with your fellow Christians who love the way you do. You will see him in the harvest of righteousness he gives us which will last to eternity. Amen.