



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for November 15, 2020
“The Grace of Giving: Sowing and Reaping”
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: II Corinthians 9:6-11

You Reap What You Sow

We are all aware of the farm subsidy program sponsored by the Department of Agriculture that offers price support for various commodities. Some farmers are actually paid for not growing crops.

I like the story told of the fellow who wrote the Secretary of Agriculture stating that *“he wanted to get in the not raising beans and corn business.”*

“I am also seriously considering,” he said, *“getting into the not raising hogs business.”*

“In view of the fact that I will be totally unemployed, I will be filing for unemployment and food stamps and was wondering if you could get me in touch with the right people to help with that.”

You have heard the expression, *“You reap what you sow.”* That’s certainly true for those in agriculture. If seeds aren’t sown, then there’s no chance for a crop later on. You can’t reap what you don’t sow. It’s just the natural rhythm of things.

When it comes to sowing the seeds of the Kingdom you and I are called on to broadcast broadly. If we sow seeds of discontent, malice, and anger, then the return will be the same. Divisions will abound and hatred will prevail. When you consider the state of things in our own country there has been a lot of those sorts of seeds sown as of late.

On the other hand, if we sow seeds of love, harmony, and peace, then those things will begin to take root. There is no time like the present to sow those kinds of seeds.

The adage, *“you reap what you sow”* holds true when it comes to giving as well. Paul knew all about that and writes about it in our scripture passage for today.

This morning we continue reading about Paul’s appeal to the church in Corinth about an offering he was taking for the saints in Jerusalem. In writing about that offering, Paul gave the church there a lot to think about. He gives us a lot to think about when it comes to our giving.

Let’s hear then this reading from II Corinthians 9:6-11.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written:

*“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their 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 enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Sowing Seeds of Generosity

Here’s what I think Paul is trying to get across, when you sow seeds of generosity, good things happen. Not only are others helped and supported, but our hearts are warmed with the knowledge that we have engaged in the divine privilege of making a difference.

Just this week, I received a call from a good friend who wanted to get connected with a ministry that supports kids after school. He is looking for a way to invest, not only his time, but his resource. I was glad to be able to point him in a good direction. I am confident that as my friend sows his seed there will be an abundant harvest.

Jesus himself said, *“Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use; it will be given to you.”* Luke 6:38

Jesus is not espousing a *“prosperity gospel”* here, as many assert, but rather points us to the deep and abiding spiritual blessing that comes when we give. As we have said often, giving is a deeply spiritual issue.

When we give generously to the things of God’s Kingdom and, for our purposes today, to the ministry of the church, we can be well-assured that the return will be many-fold. When we sow generously in this way, the potential for a wonderful harvest that glorifies God is real. And like all giving, our hearts are warmed and our lives transformed.

I am confident that sort of thing will happen for my friend. I am just as confident that sort of thing will happen for you as **you** give generously.

When we give to the things of God’s Kingdom, our focus becomes less on ourselves and more so on God. We actually find our relationship with him strengthened. We find ourselves freed from the hold our possessions have on us, while God’s hold on us only becomes stronger.

“Remember this,” says Paul, *“whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided to give in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”* II Corinthians 9:6-7

Standing with Faith upon the Promise of God’s Provision

Giving is always a matter of the heart. When we give, we make a statement about our faith in God’s provision for our lives. We not only recognize that God has provided in a big way, but will continue to do so. In other words, we place ourselves resolutely in God’s care.

We don’t give *“reluctantly”* or *“under compulsion,”* but freely, all because we choose to place our faith in him to provide. We stand upon the sure promise that God will meet our every need.

As Paul states, *“God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in **all** things at **all** times, having **all** that you need, you will abound in every good work.”* II Corinthians 9:8

Hear the word *“all”* used here. Paul doesn't use the word, *“some,”* but *“all”* when it comes to describing God's blessings. God blesses us in **all** things at **all** times to the end that we have **all** we need. Do you believe that? Are you able to stand with faith upon the promise of God's provision for your life?

I have always liked the story of the old prospector who was way beyond thirsty, but couldn't find any water. He was about to give up when he stumbled upon an abandoned well.

There was a pump there and he proceeded to pump with all his might. No water came out. He then saw a small jug with a cork at the top and note attached, saying that the water in the jug needed to be poured into the pump in order to prime it.

At first the thirsty man asked himself, *“What if the note was wrong? What if the pump no longer worked? Should he give up the water in the bottle or do as he was instructed for the promise of more water to come?”*

The prospector decided to follow the instructions. He used the little bit of water to prime the pump, and out came all the water he needed.

Now that's faith.

Before going his way, the man went ahead and filled the jug so the next person to come would be able to get water just like he did. To his note he added, *“Believe me, it works. You have to give before you receive.”*

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

Paul says that *“God loves a cheerful giver.”*

A mother wanted to teach her daughter a lesson about giving. She gave her little girl a quarter and a dollar for the church. *“Put whichever in the collection plate,”* she said, *“and keep the other for yourself.”*

When the two of them came out of the church, the mother asked her daughter which one she had given. *“Well,”* said the little girl, *“I was going to give the dollar, but just before the collection the man up front said that we should all be cheerful givers. I knew I'd be a lot more cheerful if I gave a quarter, so I did.”*

Let it not be said of us.

If you think about it, today ought to be the most joyous day of the year, as we consider our giving to the church for the coming year. As Paul did with the Corinthians, let me encourage you to *“give what you have decided in your heart to give.”*

So Much to Be Thankful For

You and I have so much to be thankful for when it comes to God's provision this past year. Through a tough and uncertain time God has proven to be true and we need to be thankful. We've pulled together—well, Ashlee has pulled together—a video highlighting God's good work in the midst of the pandemic.

I think as you watch it that you, like me, will be filled with great thanksgiving. Let's take a look.

(Play Video)

The Grace of Giving

I'll be honest with you I had a few tears well up when I first watched that. We have been through so much this year and, as we said last week, we've got a long way to go.

God will see us through. I'm confident of that.

God's grace is a great provision. None of us deserve it. We can't do a thing to earn it. All we can do is respond with faith, and as we respond with faith, we can't help but be generous.

I want to be that sort of person and I hope you do as well. After all, *The Grace of Giving* is a high and holy privilege.

Let's take some time, shall we? To consider "*what we have decided in our hearts to give.*"

Let's pray together:

"God, your grace has been poured out for us and you love us abundantly. May your love overflow from our hearts into our words, our actions, and our giving. Lead us to be faithful stewards who boldly respond to the great gifts you have given us. Help us to share the grace you freely give to all who love you by the giving of our time, talents, and resources. You do not hold back, and neither should we. And so God, we pray for the courage and the faithfulness not to hold back. We give to your Kingdom so that your love will be evident through our church, our community, and our world."