

SERMON FOR NOVEMBER 20, 2022

TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-7

THEME: GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER

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

In the name of Jesus:

One day a pastor was summoned to the home of an obviously poor man who was trying to live on \$4,000 a year. The pastor talked with him for awhile and finally said, "Let's begin at the beginning and have a word of prayer in which we will dedicate one tenth of your income to the work of Christ." "No problem," thought the man, "that's only \$400 a year and that isn't much nowadays. Why, that's only \$8.00 per week." So they prayed together, and he promised to give back 10% to the Lord and the Lord's work. Over the years this man became quite wealthy, and eventually came to the point where he was making almost \$100,000 a year! He came to the pastor and said: "I'd like to be released from that promise I made many years ago. One tenth of my income is now \$10,000 a year, and I have some other plans for that." "No problem," said the pastor, and as they bowed in prayer the minister prayed not for the release of the promise, but that the man's salary would be reduced to \$4,000 once more so that he could again afford to tithe. The man jumped up

from the prayer and stamped out of the room muttering something about, "That isn't what I had in mind at all!"

What do you have in mind to give to the Lord? Do you know that the Bible says that God loves a cheerful giver? After all the cheerful giver reflects the heart of the Lord, for the Lord Himself is a cheerful giver. He has given to you all that you have freely, with no cost to you, all because He loves you. He not only has given you all that you have, He has purchased you with the price of the precious blood of His Son Jesus, shed on the cross, and not only this, God the Holy Spirit has given to you with in Jesus, a saving faith which receives all that God has given to you, forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Seeing as God has given to you all of these gifts, He wants you to use these gifts to His glory. After all, gifts are meant to be used! God gives us a wonderful example of this in the book of Acts and the Christian Church at Macedonia. There was a famine predicted in the region and this is recorded in the book of Acts, chapter 11. **“28** And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). **29** So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.”

A relief effort was soon underway. Some gave, many did not. The Christians at Corinth gave all sorts of excuses as to why they couldn't or

wouldn't give. But God saw through these excuses, and was not pleased by the attitudes shown nor the lack of generosity shown. Paul used the example of the Macedonia Church to show them, and us, what a cheerful giver looks like. Paul writes: "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, **2** for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. **3** For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, **4** begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— **5** and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."

Even in extreme poverty these Christians begged for an opportunity to give, they didn't have to be asked. They understood what the Lord Jesus said and what He meant when He said: "Whatever you do to the least of these you do it to Me." They properly understood and realized that when they gave, they gave to the Lord. Their attitude was, "If the Lord has need, then we need to give." And that is what they did, knowing that in their giving they were giving to Jesus.

Martin Luther reiterates this attitude in giving when he writes: "The Son of God says that whatever is done to the least is done to Himself. So

nothing is so costly or difficult that a Christian doesn't do for the sake of his brethren. If anyone really believed this that He is receiving the Lord Himself when he helps one in need, there would be no need for anxious, zealous pleas for giving. Our coffers, our storerooms, our love would be open at once for the benefit of others. There wouldn't be any ill will, and together with Abraham we would run to meet those in need, invite them into our homes, and seize upon this honor and distinction ahead of everyone else and say: "O Lord Jesus, come to me, enjoy what I have, enjoy my food, my money, how well it has been invested in me when I invest in you." (Paraphrased from TDP reading for Tuesday November 19).

Examine your attitudes in giving. Do you give as to the Lord? Are you generous? Or do you grumble, complain, give sparingly or not at all? Remember what the Lord says in the First Commandment: You shall have no other gods. He is a jealous God and will not share His honor or glory with anyone or anything else! Are you trusting in Him in all things? Are you showing that you trust in Him in all things, including your giving? Or are you showing a lack of trust in the Lord? If everyone gave generously, each and every congregation, each and every ministry, and each and every missionary would have all that they needed to do the work that the Lord is calling them to do.

It is because of the love of money, which is the root of all evil, and the "me first" attitude that many have that God doesn't get what He deserves or desires. Mother Theresa put it this way: "If you give what you do not need, it isn't giving."

Giving is simply a matter of putting your faith into action. If you give first to the Lord, you are showing that you are trusting Him to take care of you, that you have faith in Him to meet your needs. God has cheerfully given to you all that you have, so that now you can cheerfully give to Him.

There are many ways to give to the Lord here at Redeemer. But here is the main thing: Give to the Lord first, then rely and trust in what He has given to you to use the remainder to His glory.

Some time ago, Peter Marshall was chaplain of the Senate and a Presbyterian pastor in Washington D. C. He had a prayer that should get each of us to think about our attitudes toward giving to God. Peter Marshall prayed: "Lord, help me to regulate my giving according to my income, lest You would regulate my income according to my giving!" If God were to give to us the way we give to Him, we all would be in the poor house. But God gives generously, so that we can give back to God. May the Holy Spirit so move you to Godly repentance, that you may see all that God has given to you in Christ, so that you will give to God cheerfully, for God indeed loves the cheerful giver.

Amen