

2 Corinthians 8:1–15  
“The Grace of Giving”  
23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday af. Pentecost

November 17, 2019  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

**[Introduction]** It had been a hard winter in the Rockies.  
The snow piled deeper and deeper.  
The temperature dropped below zero and stayed there.  
The rivers froze over.

And people were suffering. So, the Red Cross used helicopters to fly in supplies.  
After a long, hard day, as they were returning to their base,  
the rescue team saw a cabin nearly submerged in the snow from their helicopter.  
A thin wisp of smoke came up from the chimney.  
And the men figured the people in that cabin  
were probably short of food, fuel, and medicine.

Because of the trees they had to set down about a mile from the cabin.  
They put their heavy emergency equipment on their backs,  
trudged through waist-deep snow,  
and reached the cabin exhausted, panting, and perspiring.

They pounded on the door and a thin, gaunt mountain woman finally answered.  
Ma’am, we’re from the Red Cross.”  
She was silent for a moment, and then she said,  
“It’s been a hard, long winter, so I just don’t think we can give anything this year!”

We have become accustomed to people’s relentless asking for money.  
The salesman who rings at the door,  
the computer recording on the other end of the phone,  
the appeal letter in the mail,  
the panhandlers on the street corners, and  
the Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts outside of Walmart and Hy-Vee.  
They are all out to get our money.

**[Apostle Paul]**  
The Apostle Paul was traveling all over the world  
taking up a collection for the poor and distressed Christians in Jerusalem.  
After all...Christ commands: contribute to the needs of the saints. Therefore...  
*We show hospitality!*

Usually the mother church supports the mission churches,  
but there was a famine in Judea,  
so the economy was suffering and  
the mother church needed help.

On top of that, Christians were being persecuted, and  
many of them had lost their jobs.  
As a result, many of them were just barely staying alive.

So Paul went from church to church urging the Christians  
to give generously to support those who were in need in Jerusalem.  
Paul said,

***“Just as you excel in everything...see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (8:7).***

[***God***]

You know, whenever we talk about grace and giving, we have to talk about God.  
Grace begins with God.  
Grace is the gift He gives to us.  
Grace is getting what we don't deserve. It's unmerited on our part.

But you know God is not only gracious, He is giving.

In fact, He is the greatest giver ever.

John 3:16 tells us, ***“God so loved the world that He gave is one and only Son that whoever should believe in Him shall have every lasting life.”***

He gave His Son and that is an expression of His love.

When He wanted to tell us how much He loved us,  
He didn't send us a letter, an email, or put something on Facebook.

He sent His only Son.

AND His Son *WHO* was rich became poor.

Paul said, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Yes, this was something they already knew,  
but something they needed to keep on hearing.

To describe the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul used the terms rich and poor.

He applied these words to Jesus.

He was rich, Paul reminded them.

He was referring to the eternal riches that were His  
as the Son of God from all eternity.

There was and is nothing that does not belong to Him.

But for your sake He became poor.

This is what Christians today call Christ's state of humility.  
Writing to the Philippians, Paul put it this way, "Christ made Himself nothing."  
Literally He emptied Himself.  
The Macedonians Christians had very little.  
The very little they had—they gave.  
Jesus had absolutely everything.  
He was Lord of the universe, and He gave it all.

As Paul told the Corinthians, He died so that they may become rich.  
Jesus, the God-man swapped places with us sinners.  
He underwent the agony, desolation, and the deserved punishment  
of fallen mankind.

In return, we sinners receive a share in His Sonship and the forgiveness of sins.  
You see, because of Christ's poverty, we are rich.  
But we are not rich by nature. By nature, we are poor.

Scripture tells us we are spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God.  
There is no goodness of our own.  
There is not one good—not even one, we are told in Romans.

All of our efforts fall short, but in Christ we have become incredibly rich.  
We have forgiveness of sins.  
The slate is wiped clean.  
We have eternal riches.

### **[*Campaign*]**

We have received Immeasurably More!

Just look around this place.  
In 2012 we had leaks in the ceiling and carpet that was buckling.  
I had a Father of a bride who asked if he could give to the fund  
because he wanted the roof fixed before his daughter's wedding.  
And he wasn't a member. Of course I said, "Yes!"

And now, as we inch towards the year 2020, the facility plan is almost complete.

For years, we planned... we dreamed... we researched... we prepared.  
We prepared for this day.  
The facility plan was called "Vision 2020."

And the question was —

What do we need to do to our facilities to advance our ministry?

Here at Our Redeemer, we know our vision, we know our mission,  
for we are about... *equipping disciples to make disciples for Jesus.*

And there is no doubt. The enhancements we made —have made a difference.  
On a regular basis we hear how nice our facility is.  
Just this week, one of the old capital quilters said, “WOW! This is so nice!”  
She hadn’t been upstairs for a while.

The plan was Vision 2020 and we wanted to raise 50% of the funds.  
We wanted to pay 50% in cash.

Enter the capital campaign Immeasurably More.  
Three years ago we gathered on a special night to make our initial pledges.  
Three years ago, \$627,000 was pledged.  
Today, we have raised \$680,000.  
That is worthy of celebrating. So we are having this wrap up party this weekend.

Your treasure has gone into this effort, but so has your time and talent.  
Hours—countless hours have gone into painting and projects.

The church cannot thank you enough. I cannot thank you enough.

Know that God has worked through you. Through you...  
God has given Immeasurably More!

### **[Conclusion]**

We are rich and to be rich means that we belong to Him.

We have been chosen by Him.  
We have been bought by Him, by His own blood. To be rich is to live for Him.  
Doing His will instead of ours. Seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness.

Paul wrote: “since you excel in everything  
—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we  
have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.” AMEN.

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As followers of Christ, “Keep loving one another earnestly  
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” AMEN! (1 Pt 4:8-9)

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