

10th Sunday after Pentecost
July 28, 2024
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
2 Corinthians 9:8-11

God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work. ⁹As it is written: He scattered. He gave to the poor. His righteousness remains forever. ¹⁰And he who provides seed to the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed for sowing, and will increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be made rich in every way so that you may be generous in every way, which produces thanksgiving to God through us.

Dear Friends in Christ,

I'm going to start with a heavy question this morning. What do you want people to say about you at your funeral? When people are mingling before the funeral or sitting down to a meal after the funeral, what do you want them to be saying about you? While you might come up with something different or better, might I suggest Psalm 112. This psalm would be a great summary of the life of a believer. Let me share a few of the beautiful verses with you.

Praise the Lord! How blessed is a man who fears the Lord. In his commands he delights greatly.

This is most important. We are first and most importantly, Christians, those who fear, love and trust the Lord above all things. We honor and respect the Triune God who planned and carried out our salvation through the life, death and resurrection of God's Son. We love the Word of God. This is how I want to be known – a sinner, saved by the grace of God through Christ. A believer's life will also be shown in his life.

⁵Good things will come to the man who is gracious and lends, who conducts his business with justice.

To be known and remembered as a gracious and honest person is what all believers strive for in this life.

⁷He will not fear bad news. His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

To be known and remembered as one who trusted the Lord in bad times as well as in good would be a wonderful testimony to leave behind.

⁹He scatters seed; he gives to the poor. His righteousness stands forever.

And here is the part the apostle Paul quotes from in his second letter to the believers in Corinth. To be known and remembered as a generous person who shared what he had with the poor and needy is also a wonderful witness to leave behind. Paul is encouraging all believers to give thanks to God by overflowing in every good work and being generous in every way.

Paul tells us how we are able to do this as dear children of God. I'll read 2 Corinthians 9:8-11 again and see if you can hear the reasons why we are able to overflow in every good work and be generous in every way.

*God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work. ⁹As it is written: He scattered. He gave to the poor. His righteousness remains forever. ¹⁰And he who provides seed to the sower and bread for food will **provide and multiply your seed for sowing, and will increase the harvest** of your righteousness. ¹¹**You will be made rich in every way** so that you may be generous in every way, which produces thanksgiving to God through us.*

All, all, all, all. This is what our God does for us. All. The Triune God can never be accused of being stingy. When we were enemies of God, he poured out his grace on us. The Father freely gave his Son for us. Christ freely gave himself up to death for us. The Holy Spirit freely gave us faith and forgiveness and the sure hope of eternal life. Paul is not exaggerating when he writes, “God is able to make all grace overflow to you.” God has saved us by grace, through faith which he graced us with.

In addition to the grace that has saved us, our loving heavenly Father graces us with gifts in this life too. He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my mind and all my abilities. Our loving Father in heaven may also grace us with “food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.” (Luther’s explanation of the 4th Petition). His saving grace overflows and so do his gifts for our life on earth. God is not stingy with his gifts.

But maybe you don’t have some of the gifts on that list. Luther included cattle and not many of us have cattle today. Our sinful self looks at a list like this and wonders why others have more wealth or more friends or better weather or better health than we do. When Paul encourages us to be generous with all the grace God has made to overflow upon us, we object and say, “But I don’t have extra money to be generous with like some people...I don’t have the health that someone else does...I don’t have the mind and abilities that someone else has...” We make excuses for not being generous with our money and time and abilities. “Once God gives me this much...when I’m retired...If God had only given me this ability, then I would be generous in serving the Lord and my neighbor. But I’ve got to focus on me now, since God has not been so generous with me.”

That is the ungrateful attitude of our sinful self. When we focus on what we do not have we are in effect telling our gracious God that he has been stingy. When we catch ourselves doing that, it is time for an attitude adjustment called repentance. Turn away from that sinful attitude in disgust and thank the Lord that his grace continues to overflow in endless forgiveness for us. Receive his forgiveness in Word and Sacrament and rejoice with a new attitude of thanksgiving. Thank the Lord for what he has given and do not dwell on what you don’t have. We have Jesus...and we got to eat today. Thank the Lord. We are going to walk on streets of gold forever...and we have a few coins in the bank now. We are going to dwell in the presence of God for all eternity...and we have a church family to gather with today. Our God is not stingy. He gives us spiritual and eternal gifts along with gracious gifts for our lives today.

Paul tells us why God is so gracious to us.

So that...you will overflow in every good work...so that you may be generous in every way.

In this part of Paul’s letter, he was commending and encouraging the believers to complete their plan to give a generous offering for Paul to take back to the believers in Judea who were enduring a famine. He is specifically encouraging them to be generous with monetary offerings. But notice that he expands on that and tells us that God is generous with us so that we will overflow in every good work and be generous in every way. So be generous with the money God gives you. Cheerfully give your offerings to the Lord. Praise the Lord by finding ways to scatter your money around to worthy charities and people who need help.

But don’t only be generous with money. Overflow with every good work and be generous in every way. Paul tells us that when we do this, it *produces thanksgiving to God through us*. Jesus said it like this – “*Let your light shine in people’s presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16).

When the day arrives that we are in the presence of our Father in heaven, what do we want people to be talking about? We don't want people to be focusing on us. Instead, we want them to glorify the Father in heaven. Our attitude towards the gifts of God will help people to thank God on that day. Our generosity with our money, our generous use of our time, our generous use of our abilities, and all that we did with the overflowing graces of God will lead people to thank the Lord God for his free gifts, especially the grace of salvation through faith in Christ. We want to be a Psalm 112 type of believer – one who fears the Lord; whose heart was steadfast, trusting the Lord; and who was generous in every way. We can be that today by the overflowing grace of God to us through Christ our Lord.

Amen.