



The Shape of Faithful Living: Grace, Gratitude, and Generosity.
A study of 2 Corinthians 8-9

Saturday, October 16, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.
Ask God's Holy Spirit to be your teacher and guide.

2 Corinthians 8:1-7 ¹And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the LORD's people. ⁵And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the LORD, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷But 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.

Sunday, October 17, 2021

Listen to the sermon as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

Facebook @ FPCAmbler.

YouTube channel: FPC Ambler

Monday, October 18, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:1-2

¹And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

Reflect:

- Why do you think Paul wanted the Corinthians to know about the Macedonian churches' giving?
- Do you think of giving - of your finances, your hospitality, your time - as a grace?
- True confession: When I experience a "very severe trial," I usually do not overflow with joy and rich generosity. At least not initially and not on my own. How was it that in the severe trial the Macedonians experienced they had great joy and, in extreme poverty, gave generously?

Pray: God, we thank you for adopting us into your family and pray that you will help us to see Christians throughout the world as our own brothers and sisters. May we learn from the example of your people across history and across the world, as well as from each other. May we overflow with joy and generosity in every circumstance, trusting in your faithfulness and provision, and may we have a sense of the great honor it is to participate in your work.

Tuesday, October 19, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:3-4

³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the LORD's people.

Reflect:

- What do you think inspired the Macedonians to give in this way?
- We can participate in service to the LORD's people directly by serving in the Soup Kitchen, the Meals Ministry, Rising Stars Homework Club, etc. We can also give financially to work being done far from here. We may never get to a foreign land but can still *participate* in Kingdom work with our giving. What a *privilege*!

Pray: Lord, we thank you that you created works for us to do for the good of your people and the glory of your name. May your Holy Spirit inspire us to participate in Kingdom work and be filled with joy for the privilege.

Wednesday, October 20, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8: 5

⁵And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the LORD, and then by the will of God also to us.

Reflect:

- The Macedonians gave themselves *first* to the LORD. There are so many things pulling for our hearts and minds, so many competing priorities. Giving ourselves first to the LORD can be an adventure that makes us out of step with the world around us.
- Can you think of a time when you leaned into the LORD wholeheartedly and then, by the will of God, were led to serve, give, or love in surprising ways?
- Imagine Christians from Ambler, this nation, all the world, giving themselves first to the LORD and then to each other. What might that look like?

Pray:

Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, thank you for calling us your own and loving us so extravagantly. Help us to give ourselves entirely to you. Show us where we hold back and help us to let go and lean into you with our whole selves. By your will, may we give ourselves to one another in faith and with love, living out of your deep well of grace.

Thursday, October 21, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8: 6

⁶So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

Reflect:

- There is an entire letter written to Titus in the New Testament. Does seeing the same person mentioned in multiple places in the Bible make it more real to you? Titus was part of a small network sharing the Good News that has been going out ever since.
- How does looking at giving as a privilege, as a way to participate in the work of the Kingdom, and as an act of grace change the way we ask for support and give of our means?

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for the grace you give us so freely, for teachers and preachers who inspire us to grow in discipleship, and for opportunities to give. Please give us a proper perspective on giving and sharing all that you have entrusted to our care.

Friday, October 22, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:7

⁷But 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.

Reflect:

- The Corinthian church was not without its problems, but Paul called out their strengths: faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, and love, and urged them to extend those positive attributes to giving.
- The Corinthians had already committed to giving. Paul was holding them to this commitment. Is it possible to commit to something in when caught up in worship, and later hold back? Why do you think this happens?
- The Corinthians were Gentiles being called to give to the Jewish believers in need in Jerusalem. How might their giving have fostered unity in the church? How can WE foster unity among believers?

Prayer:

Lord God, thank you for using us in your ministry to the world. It is an honor to serve with the gifts you have given us. May we use all we have to do your will, to build your church, and to share your love. May we give ourselves to you wholeheartedly and live our lives with you and to you and for you. May we honor our commitments and may this, too, be for your glory. Thank you, Jesus, for giving us your all.

Reflections from this week: October 16 – October 22



Saturday, October 23, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:8-24 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon. Ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and guide.

⁸ I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹⁰ And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something— ¹¹ now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. ¹² For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. ¹³ I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between ¹⁴ your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. ¹⁵ As it is written,

*“The one who had much did not have too much,
and the one who had little did not have too little.”*

¹⁶ But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. ¹⁸ With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming the good news; ¹⁹ and not only that, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill. ²⁰ We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, ²¹ for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of others. ²² And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters, but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. ²³ As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. ²⁴ Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

Sunday, October 24, 2021

Listen to the sermon as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

Monday, October 25, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:8

⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

Reflect:

- Altruism is the act of promoting someone else's welfare, even at a risk or cost to our own. Paul is asking the Corinthians to help the less fortunate because they WANT to, as a selfless act, not out of obligation or based on what others are doing. Challenge: Do something today to help another person, with no expectation of reward. It can be something subtle, such as letting someone go in front of you in the grocery store line or leaving an extra-large tip for wait staff, or something big like funding a college scholarship or legal account for persons looking to obtain citizenship, etc. The value is not in the amount of money, the value is in the selfless act. Ask God to open your heart to see the needs of others and make the commitment to help willingly without recognition, accolades, or praise.

Prayer: Dear God, as we set our goals for the week ahead, let us remember all we are, and all we have, is because of you. May we remain humble with steadfast faith and give with sincerity, in thanksgiving. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Tuesday, October 26, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:9

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ^sthough he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Reflect:

- An advice column on a marriage website I read provided this definition of sacrificial or diving love "an unselfish display of affection that will strengthen and improve all types of relationships." (Pace, 2021) Paul reminds the Corinthians, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." Sacrificial love is so challenging because human nature is innately self-centered. We often think of our comforts first and give only what we have in excess. This applies to our relationship with God, and in all relationships, marriage, money, time, work, school, etc.
- Challenge: Name just (1) one idea of how you can strengthen and improve your relationship with God? How can you implement that idea in your day-to-day relationships with others?

Prayer: Dear God, please guide our actions (and reactions) so that we live out of the grace and love you show us. Please strengthen our relationship with you as we serve others. In Jesus name we pray.

Wednesday, October 27, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:10

¹⁰ And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it.

Reflect:

- Paul reminds the Corinthians of their original goals and encourages them to follow through on their promises to help the suffering Christians in Jerusalem.
- Set (1) one new spiritual goal for yourself! Maybe join a small group, commit to reading the bible daily, attend worship every Sunday for a month(s), volunteer to teach Sunday school once a month, pledge/tithe challenge, help assist with game night at a nursing home, etc. Get creative and pick a goal that's manageable! Once you have your idea, what's your 'plan' for accomplishing that spiritual goal? What's your start date and end date of your goal? Write it all down and tape it to your fridge, computer monitor, car dashboard, somewhere visual to remind daily of your promise!

Prayer: Dear God, please inspire our efforts to reach spiritual goals Help us to forgive ourselves when we stray from our plan and give us the strength to start again with renewed hope and remember always we are loved by you. In Jesus name we pray.

Thursday, October 28, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:11-13

*¹ So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹
² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable ^waccording to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness...*

Reflect:

- Keeping promises. Paul warns the Corinthians the importance of following through with their promise to help the suffering Christians in Jerusalem. The willingness that Paul would like to see the Corinthians give is not based on what they have, but instead on what their neighbors need.
- Challenge: Take a moment to reflect on God's promise to us: Hebrews 10:23-25
23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Prayer: Dear God, please open our hearts and cast aside all feelings of entitlement and selfishness that prevent us from serving willingly. Challenge us to move past our comforts and all that limits our ability to connect with our neighbors and experience the freedom of living generously with the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. In Jesus name we pray.

Friday, October 29, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:14-15

¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵ As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

Reflect:

- Paul doesn't ask the Corinthians to sacrifice all they own to help their neighbors, but instead asks them to 'willingly' give in proportion, so there is 'fairness.' This passage encourages us to trust in the Lord, that he will provide for those that help others, with thanksgiving, in God's name.
- Challenge: How willing and fair is your giving to the church? Do you sacrifice comforts when you place your offering in the Sunday plate, or pledge a 'safe' amount that allows a current lifestyle with little or no change? Is there something in your lifestyle and comforts you would be willing to give up helping someone in need?

Prayer: Dear God, help us trust you will provide what we need. For the gifts you have given us are not to be held close, but instead to be shared. Help us to recognize the needs of others and to have the generous spirit to give of ourselves and resources. In Jesus name we pray.

Reflections from this week: October 23 – October 29



Saturday, October 30, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:1-5 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.
Ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and guide.

2 Corinthians 9:1-5 ¹*There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the LORD's people. ²For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. ³But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.*

Sunday, October 31, 2021

Listen to the sermon as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

Monday, November 1, 2021

Read: Read the passage once again.

2 Corinthians 9:1-5 ¹There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the LORD's people. ²For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. ³But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

Reflect:

- Remember how Paul used the Macedonians as an example of giving? Now we learn that he also used the Corinthians as an example to the Macedonians! Does hearing about the generosity of other Christians spark your own giving spirit?
- Giving to those far away took a very long time in the years before Venmo, wire transfers, and Western Union. It's easy to believe that the initial zeal for giving a big gift could wane over time. Even now, frequent reminders can help us stay on track with our commitments.
- What is the difference between nagging and reminding? Does the difference lie in the heart behind the words spoken or in the heart receiving the words?

Prayer: Lord, everything we have comes from you. You are faithful and you are generous. You supply all our needs. Quicken our hearts to care deeply for the needs of others, to follow your example in generosity, and to be faithful to our commitments to give of our time, talents, finances, and hospitality.

Tuesday, November 2, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:5.

⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

Reflect:

- Why do you think Paul thought it necessary to send “the brothers” to the Corinthians to finish arrangements for the gift they had promised to give?
- When you have committed to give a significant gift, do you find it helpful to plan in advance? To set it aside little by little? To have someone to hold you accountable?

Prayer: Dear God we thank you for your word which can be so practical and helpful for us. Help us to learn from the examples you provide. May we communicate clearly and always in love. May we be generous as you are generous.

Wednesday, November 3, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:5

⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

Reflect:

- The Bible talks about money, wealth, and possessions over 2000 times, in over 10% of Jesus' preaching, and in 11 of the 39 parables. Why do you think there is so much talk about money in the Bible?
- The Bible does not say that money is the root of all evil, but rather that the *love of money* is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10.) Money, given generously and received with thanksgiving can be a tremendous blessing. Yet, *love of money* can keep us from generosity, depriving us of joy. We all know, or know of, people who have lots of money, but are miserable.
- Can you think of a time that you gave so generously that it hurt...but the giving brought you joy?

Prayer: Lord, your heart is generous. Regardless of our means, may we grow in the joy of generous giving.

Thursday, November 4, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:5 *⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.*

Reflect:

- Can you think of a time that YOU were had a need that was met by another's gift? How did that make you feel? It can be humbling to receive a gift...but can also be tremendously moving when we see that the gift was given in love.
- Discipleship happens in individuals as we spend time in prayer and the Word, and corporately as we spend time together in worship and ministry. Likewise, we give as individuals, but also corporately. When we give according to what we have been given, together we can provide clean water, rebuild after earthquakes, provide shelter after floods.
- Remember the widow's mite? (Mark 12:41-44) What matters is not the size of our gift but proportionality and the faith and love behind it.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for this day, this breath, and for your very presence. Thank you that YOU are the giver of every good and perfect gift (2 Corinthians 9:8.) Forgive us for any and every bit of entitlement we may feel and create in us hearts of humble thanksgiving.

Friday, November 5, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:2

²For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.

Reflect:

- Does the generosity of others stir you to action? Can you think of an example?
- Enthusiasm can be contagious! Can the joy you have in giving of your talents, your time, or your finances make others want to come along?
- My cousin is going through cancer treatment. Before her hair fell out from chemo, she went to a salon and had her long, thick, blonde hair cut super short. Her high school son went with her and cut his long locks short in solidarity. When she went to pay, she learned that a fellow customer had paid for their cuts and both stylists refused her tip. My cousin's heart was touched, yes, and I am willing to bet that the one who paid their tab was filled with joy. How can we surprise and bless someone with unexpected generosity? For Christians, generosity is a way of life. What is a generous action you can take today in response to God's great generosity toward you? Your generosity might be extending grace, overlooking an offense, tipping more than expected, visiting someone who is lonely, baking cookies for a neighbor.

Prayer: Generous Lord, you love us with an everlasting love. You delight in giving good gifts to your children. You give us hope, peace in the midst of messy lives, and unconditional love. Help us this day to reflect your extravagant love as we go about our day. May we have joy in partnering with you as we delight in blessing your people.

Reflections from this week: October 30 – November 5



Saturday, November 6, 2021

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon

⁶ The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. ⁹ As it is written,

*“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”*

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; ¹² for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Sunday, November 7, 2021

Listen to the sermon as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

Monday, November 8, 2021

Re-read: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

⁶ The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. ⁹ As it is written,

*“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
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¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; ¹² for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Reflect:

- Take the time to consider the descriptions of generosity given in these verses.
 - Abundance
 - Increase
 - Bounty
 - Enrichment
 - Sufficiency
 - Thanksgiving
 - Abounding grace
 - Surpassing grace

- Contrast these words with the familiar fable of the miser. The miser is seen miserably hunched over, endlessly counting his coins in the dreary counting house, toiling away in his loneliness. A penny is grudgingly given away with a string of obligations and interest attached. Pity the poor miser as he doesn't realize his heart is turning to stone, his body and soul turning inward from clutching.
- Contrast with Jesus who opened his heart and gave it all away on the cross with a heart of compassion. He could have held tightly to His position as the Son of God and declined to suffer on our behalf. The royal crown was exchanged for thorns as He acknowledged our need and weakness. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for your amazing gift. You left glory to live a life of humility. You showed us what has true value. Help us to follow your example.

Tuesday, November 9, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:7

⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Reflect:

- Prayerfully consider how often we are like the miser, stingily hoarding our time, affections, finances, or belongings. How have our hearts become imprisoned through greed and tight fistedness?
- Think of one way this week that our hearts can be changed by one act of cheerful generosity. Watch with expectation as you reap bountifully.

Prayer: Lord, we pray for openness in our hearts and our hands. May we be filled with gratitude that overflows into generosity.

Wednesday, November 10, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:8.

⁸ And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

Reflect:

- Note how having sufficiency in all things is tied in with being able to “abound in every good work.” The wording is almost exuberant. We have enough so that we can *abound*, overflow, joyfully move forward in every good work.
- This is not something that we whip up in our own strength. “God is able to make all grace abound” to us. God gives generously, freeing us to give generously. It’s the flow of the Kingdom.

Pray:

Dear Lord, we thank you for providing for our needs and for your abounding grace. We ask you to help us to live out of that abundance, sharing freely of our time, energy, listening, hospitality, and all you entrust to our care.

Thursday, November 11, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:11-12.

¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; ¹² for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

Reflect:

- We are enriched to be generous. Reflect on that.
- Supplying the needs of others not only meets tangible needs, but also produces thanksgiving to God. We who are enriched can give generously to others, meeting their needs and bringing great thanksgiving to our God. This participation serves to further enrich our spirits.

Pray: Lord, we thank you for the joy we have in participating in your plans. You have equipped us for all you call us to do and be. May we live it out with enthusiasm and gratitude.

Friday, November 12, 2021

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:13-15

¹³ Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Reflect:

- Can you think of a time from your childhood when your parent included you in a project to help out a neighbor, your community, or church? Your parent likely secured the supplies and gave you guidance along the way. Do you remember how it felt to deliver the gift or present the project? How amazing it is that the God who created universes invites us and equips us to be part of his work on planet earth.
- What is our 'why'? We confess the gospel of Christ. Christ gave his all for us and ever lives to intercede on our behalf. Our God sent his Spirit to guide and empower. The gospel of Christ gives meaning, purpose, and direction for this life and the promise of life without end. Yes, thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift.

Pray: Triune God, we give you thanks and praise. Who is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him (Psalm 8:4). And yet, you care so much that you gave us Jesus to die on the cross, canceling our debt, conquering death, promising us resurrection. Jesus gave us his all and we are amazed by your plan. Thank you for your inexpressible gift.

Reflections from this week: November 6 – November 12



Saturday, November 13, 2021

Read: 1 Corinthians 13 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon

13 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Sunday, November 14, 2021

Listen to the sermon as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

Monday, November 15, 2021

Read: 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3:

1. If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Reflect:

- There are four types of love: Erotic (Romantic) Love; Love of Family (Storge); Brotherly Love (Philia); and Self-giving or Self-sacrificing Love (Agape). Agape Love is the focus of this chapter and to which Paul speaks. This Love is superior to any Spiritual gifts, talents, or abilities we are naturally endowed with.
 - Speaking in tongues of men and angels may or may not be a human language at all, but how God speaks to us in a non-verbal way. In 1 Cor. 14, Paul encourages believers' desire for spiritual gifts, and explains that speaking in tongues strengthens the believer, but is of no use to others if they don't understand what is being said. He also says that purpose of the gift of Prophecy is to strengthen the church. Without Love, what are the pitfalls of the Spiritual Gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13?
 - It seems that giving possessions to the poor is a good thing, and it's what Jesus told the Rich Young Man to do (Mark 10:17-21). How can a good thing like giving to the poor be done without Love?
 - In Paul's time, there were Christian martyrs who gave themselves to be burned. But according to Paul, sacrificing one's body without love is useless. Why do you think Paul made a point of this?

- All these gifts appear to be good things, but love is so valuable that apart from it, good things are useless. Agape Love – or God's Love (Love is an attribute of God) is to be given to unlovable and offensive people; it loves when rejected, doesn't expect to receive back and is sacrificial for the sake of another. What is your motivation for doing good things for others?

Pray:

Father, fill me with Your Holy Spirit so that I may use my Spiritual Gifts, talents and abilities with a Love that pleases and glorifies You in service to others. Guide my path in greater service. Open my eyes to a greater awareness of my own motivation for doing good things. Fill me with Your love in all I do, in Jesus' name.

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

Read: 1 Corinthians 13: 4-6

4. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs. 6. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.

- Paul tells us both what love is – patient and kind- and rejoices with the Truth (the Truth of God’s Love for us, expressed through us) – and what love is NOT. It is easy to recognize when we fall into some of these egoic behaviors that are not expressing God’s Love.
- Love does not Envy –Unchecked envy leads to gossip and fault finding with others; or feeling smug and satisfied by another’s misfortune and can even lead to murder.
- Love is not proud, boastful, or rude; love doesn’t need the limelight or special recognition, it doesn’t show off, brag, or get a swelled head. Love is not insulting, superior, or snobbish. The worst pride is spiritual pride.
- Love doesn’t seek its own. Love is satisfied in the welfare and comfort of all and is like Jesus in the most basic way.
- Love is not easily angered – All of us are imperfect. We can become easily provoked by those closest to us, and to those we find annoying, offensive, obnoxious, self-seeking, and arrogant.
- Love keeps no records of wrongs, doesn’t delight in evil, and rejoices in truth. Love puts away and forgives hurts of the past, sees and wants what is best for others and the common good of all God’s creation. Love does not seek vengeance, those with Godly love do not avenge themselves.
- Do you catch yourself when you have feelings of envy, pride, selfishness, reactive anger, or holding grudges? Are you able to turn them over to God, and to make His Love your focus?

Prayer: Father, by the power of your Holy Spirit, make me aware of how I fall short of Your Grace so that I may be filled with Your love expressed in patience and kindness, and that rejoices with Your Truth, toward my family, co-workers, brothers and sisters in Christ, strangers I encounter day to day, and toward all people in the world at large. Help me to love the unlovable with Your Love, in Jesus Name.

Wednesday, November 17, 2021

Read:

1 Corinthians 13: 7-10

7. It (love) always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10. But when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

Reflect:

- God's love watches out for others, withstands difficulty, and if there is a shortcoming or fault in someone, has the ability to cover it. This doesn't mean we excuse wrongdoing or consequences of it; but that we strengthen what is weak, shield what is vulnerable, and forgive what is provoking. When Joseph first learned of Mary's pregnancy, he was planning to keep the matter quiet to protect her from public shame. Why is God's protective love so important in marriage, family, and other relationships?
- A person with God's Love will "always trust." We're not talking about gullibility, a foolish lack of skepticism, or believing lies when the facts demand otherwise. Rather, we will not be suspicious and will be slow to believe any damaging news and always give the benefit of the doubt and believe the best. Mistrust, cageyness, and suspicion are at odds with Godly Love. How can God's Love help us navigate, and even change, the hate driven suspicion encouraged in our culture?
- Love always hopes and has confidence in the future, not pessimism. Part of showing love is hoping. Where are you (or have you been) called to maintain an attitude of hopefulness when the odds seem(ed) stacked against any hope?

- Love always perseveres or endures. Jesus models enduring love. In good times and bad, the love of God's people endures life's challenges and remains steadfast. In 1 Cor 4:2, Paul says: "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure." Such perseverance in the face of opposition can only come from God's Love rooted in our hearts. What things might you be (or have been) called to persevere (endure or bear) that seem(ed) impossible?
- Love never fails. Love is permanent and will outlive all temporary and imperfect spiritual gifts. That which is perfect speaks to the coming of Jesus when the imperfect disappears. How can we reflect the coming of Jesus in our daily lives?

Prayer: Father, keep me rooted in Your Love, so I may reflect Christ's love toward others in all I do and to glorify You. May "Thy Kingdom Come" as Your Love lives through me, in Jesus' name.

Thursday, November 18, 2021

Read: 1 Corinthians 13: 11

11. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

Reflect:

- The display of God's Love in our actions is the measure of spiritual maturity, not spiritual gifts. Gifts are appropriate in the present time, just as childish things are appropriate for children. If we are mature, we will not over-emphasize spiritual gifts at the expense of love. Spiritual maturity is something God desires for us.
- Spiritual gifts are from Christ, "...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-13
- The spiritually mature have the courage and desire to face the truth about themselves and they are motivated on their own to seek God and to seek the Truth. They admit the truth about themselves (sins) before God. James 5:16 encourages us to "confess our sins to one another and pray for one another..." We need each in our spiritual walk and to "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2.
- Spiritual maturity takes constant training. Hebrews 5: 11-14 speaks to this, saying that Christians who are "slow to learn" who "...by this time ought to be teachers...need someone to teach you elementary truths of God's word all over again," likening this to "milk, being still an infant not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the MATURE, who by CONSTANT USE HAVE TRAINED THEMSELVES to distinguish good from evil."

- A way to measure one's spiritual maturity is to PUT YOUR NAME in place of the word "Love" (from Enduring Word, David Guzik c 2018) (i.e., "Susan hopes all things;" "George endures all things" "Janet is not easily provoked" "Gary is kind", "Mary is patient" "Josh rejoices with the truth" etc.) Does that sound like you?

Prayer: Father, it is my intention to be mature in my walk with you, that I may live into the whole measure of the fulness of Christ in service to others, in Jesus' Name. May your Holy Spirit transform me. Thank you for your forgiveness when I fall short.

Friday, November 19, 2021

Read: 1 Corinthians 13: 12-13

12. Now we see a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13. And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Reflect:

- Paul reminds us that the realities and truth we have come to understand now are just glimpses of the truth we shall come to face with God. Mirrors in Paul's day were very dim, made of polished metal, but even today, mirrors reflect images backwards. We should look at all revelation, whether biblical interpretation or Spiritual gifts of prophecy and tongues, as fallible until the return of Jesus.
- It is an amazing truth that to the extent that God knows you, you will know God. He made you fearfully wonderfully (Ps 139:14). He sees you. He knows your heart, your pain, hopes, dreams, fears, and future. He knows every hair on your head (Mt 10:30). Through faith and hope, Christians are reassured that one day we shall "know fully", even as we are fully known.
- Only by faith is it possible to come into relationship with God. Eph 6:16 describes faith as our shield. And hope increases our faith, gives us courage instead of fear, confidence in the face of doubt, and trust that one day we will know God fully. When we come face to face with God, faith and hope will be fulfilled, but Love is greater because it continues through eternity..
- In Galatians 5:6, we are taught that "...The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."
- Remember, it takes constant training to distinguish good from evil within ourselves, and spiritual maturity to face the truth about ourselves before God. What is your Christian life focused on and what do you want more of in your spiritual walk?

Prayer:

Father, make me a vessel of your Love that I may use the spiritual gifts you've given me to serve others and glorify You every day of my life. I pray this also for my brothers and sisters in Christ, that our faith may be strengthened in the hope of knowing You fully, just as You know us fully, in the promise of meeting you Face to Face. In Jesus' Name.

Reflections from this week: November 13 – November 18





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and we live out our faith together.

