

## **The Giving God Loves** 2 Corinthians 9:7 10/27/02

Susie asked me this week if she should be “preacher’s choice” as the announced title for my sermon this morning. I have really struggled with how to finish up this four-week series on giving. Most of the week I leaned towards the payoff of giving being reaching those that God loves with the life changing message of Jesus Christ but I have decided to wait on that until I get back from Ukraine. This morning I am going to stick with what I originally intended and that is to wrap up this topic by looking at the kind of giving that God loves giving that comes God really loves. Perhaps you remember that I have said that it is giving from the heart that we are to move towards. Well, what kind of a heart express the motives and desires in giving that please God and reflect the indwelling presence of Jesus.

First of all it comes **from a heart that gives willingly.** *For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. 2 Corinthians 8:12*

Do you catch that the amount is not the issue. What is important is the attitude when you give. The reward for giving is based on your willingness to give not on your level of wealth. I think God looks at what you have left over and your generosity in light of what you keep. So many have said “I wished I had the resources of someone else so I could give more.” That never enters God’s mind or thinking. One of my favorite verse related to willingness is 2 Corinthians 9:7. **Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** Keeping this verse in mind can keep you from being taken in or giving not with a willing heart unto the Lord but because you have been pressured. Sometimes I think I am on the hit list for every organization in the country. Tow weeks ago I had three phone calls in less than two hours from people wanting support. And I am not saying that these are not good organizations. And the letters come but I think it is real important that you give with heart and mind. If you are getting pressure say no and back away. We take that real seriously here at Ridgewood. We will not use

scare tactics or pressure to support ministry. Word has gotten out about our remodeling and you can't believe the contact with groups telling me they have the right gimmick to raise the money. No way. God wants you to make an informed decision that comes from a willing heart. Most of us have been caught in a situation where we were manipulated to give, made a commitment and the next day regretted it. The Bible says no pressure.

Secondly we are to have a **heart that gives thankfully**. In Psalm 116: 12 the author declares *How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?* The answer is that you cannot. You will never be able to repay God for all that He has done for you. But every time you give an offering, every time you give your tithe you are saying to God, thank you for what you have blessed me with. And even if God never does anything else for you he has already done way more than enough to keep us giving forever. He helps you earn it. He has placed you in a land where you can work in a nation where you can thrive. With hands that he made. With a mind that He made. Giving a tithe and beyond is not giving from what is your own but in reality giving from what is already his. So give willingly.

Thirdly, God loves a heart that gives joyfully. There is a difference between joy and thankfulness. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 we read, *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* Circle that word cheerful. It is the Greek word hilarious from which we get hilarious. It means have fun when you give. I heard about two bumper stickers. "God loveth a cheerful giver but he also receiveth from a grouch" and "Tithe if you love Jesus, any fool can honk" If you are new to this faith family you need to know that people here give with a lot of joy. In the midst of one of the wealthiest areas of the upper Midwest is a group of Christ followers who every week say No to the materialism of their culture. I have never been part of a church that is more giving and generous. And many of you have shared with me your exciting journey to grow further and further in the grace of giving. We have some folks

here who have a goal to give over 50% of their income away. Some are already there and they are having so much fun they are moving beyond that. This is a church full of givers, not only in terms of their money but their time and abilities. And being around them is a blast. Let me tell you I have been around stingy people who are tight fisted with everything they have. It is a bummer. So God loves hearts that give willingly, joyfully and thankfully.

Fourthly. **God loves a heart that gives weekly.** 1 Corinthians 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made* Like many of you we get paid twice a month but as I looked at this again I have decided that I am going to start writing the check every week. It is easier to do it every other but doing it every week causes me to stop, thank God and have a blast with our giving. To do it on the first day of the week gives us that inner check that yes God you are first in our lives. I am giving Him the first part of our money not the leftovers. The set aside, and you can underline that, is again that it takes planning. It is not impulsive. I can't push that enough. Yes, the Holy Spirit may lead you to give way beyond what you would normally for a special need. But I really believe that when it comes to our regular weekly tithes and offerings it should be part of a plan. Now, here is another Joel not the Lord. And some of you are going to say, you are a pastor of course you will say this. Your first giving goes to the local church where you attend, worship serves and grow. And you give in proportion to what you earn.

Lastly **God loves a heart that gives expectantly.** There is a law that every farmer lives and dies by. When a farmer wants to plant or harvest a crop all he knows to do is to sow. He doesn't sow an acre and expect to reap ten. He doesn't sow ten and expect to harvest 100. Whatever he sows is what he will harvest. In 2 Corinthians 9:6 we read *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.* <sup>7</sup> I believe He is saying you plant the seed and God will provide. And in some way we get to decide the extent of God's blessing

based on the extent of our sowing. And I also believe this applies to all of our walk of faith. You need more time, give some to God. You need more energy, give some of what you have to Him in terms of prayer and devotion. You sow sparingly you reap sparingly. You sow with generosity you reap generously. But you must act first. Take the first step. Do the sowing. Coming back from Chicago this week we saw the harvesters working late into the evening in the fields. Where one kernel of corn had been planted a whole ear of corn was harvested. That is the law of the harvest. I could give you example after example of people in this church who have discovered this principle and God has totally tuned their finances around. The Bible tells us again and again that the essence of a walk of faith is to be a giving person.

Lou is going to flash up some key Biblical words and their usage in Scripture.

The word "believe" used 272 times

The word "pray" used 371 times

The word "love" used 714 times

The word "Give" used 2,162 times

The emphasis in the Bible is to be like God who gave.