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Pentecost 16 –September 25, 2022 Everyday Disciples

“Cheerfully Giving”

Read: 2 Corinthians 9: 6 - 15 / Memorize: 2 Corinthians 9: 10

When you hear the word generosity, what do you think of? My suspicion is most think about money. If you’re familiar with 2 Corinthians 9, you know Paul is urging the Corinthians to finish gathering an offering for the church in Jerusalem. He will use the example of the Macedonian people as an example of generosity who, although they had very little, had been very generous.

In 1 Corinthians 8 we hear about the beginning of that offering. Now, a year later, it had been stalled because of unrest and disagreements in the church in Corinth. In the meanwhile, the church at Macedon had heard of that offering and had literally begged to be able to participate in it.

This inspired Paul. He was now using their enthusiasm to inspire the Corinthians to finish the offering they had begun. He had sent Titus ahead to remind the Corinthians of their promise, so that neither they nor he would be embarrassed when the Macedonians arrived.

So often we think that the most important thing we can give is money. For many of us it is precious, no matter what we have. We think of it as our money, we earned it or however we have come to have it, and we hate to part with it. We may give lip service to the idea that it’s God’s, but it’s a hard thing for us to accept, when we have worked to get it.

However, I would like to challenge you in the thought that money is your most precious gift, if you think that way. I don’t think it is. Any idea what I might be thinking of? I think it’s time is. I know it is to me. Many of you know I am a member of Kiwanis, a community service organization. We often do fundraisers to help people

This spring we hosted a chicken barbeque. We raised \$1,000. My dilemma was that we probably invested sixty hours of time in this as a group. We have a hundred members. If we each threw in \$10 bucks, we could have done it in just a few minutes.

Time appears in many of the fairytales. In Alice in Wonderland the Mad Hatter says of time, "So supposedly it's nine o'clock in the morning, just the time to begin lessons: you only have to whisper a hint at time, and around goes the clock in a twinkling! Half past one, time for dinner."

Time does seem to fly, yet time is exactly what God gives us to serve Him. We're talking about ministry today. Ministry is Christians serving one another. Just imagine how crazy it would be if you came to worship each week and the communion elements were not set up, the sermon was not prepared, there were no greeters or any other servers.

It would present quite the disorganized situation and could have an impact beyond us. That lack of servers might give the impression to our guests, some of whom don't know Jesus, that it's not important to serve God.

So we organize ourselves. People offer their gifts of service each week at worship. People offer themselves in other ways. Take a look at our lawn and garden. That happens because people serve us each week. We get professional care from volunteers. They spend their time caring for us.

Our helping partners help people with things like getting to medical appointments or other transportation needs. They offer assistance to people who are going to doctor's appointments to have an extra set of ears to help them understand what the doctor may be saying.

They organize meals to be brought to people when they have been in the hospital or have been injured. Once again, that is people using their time and talents to serve God by serving people within our own congregation.

Most importantly we should never forget that as we serve each other, we are also an example to those who don't know Jesus. They see a place where the worship of God is central to the activity of the parish and it's organized.

Sometimes the jobs are official, but we should never forget that all of us have an unofficial job. God calls us to be hospitable to people because of His hospitality towards us. It is one of the ways we can touch people who don't know Jesus because they feel welcomed and cared for.

Everyday disciples serve. Just as Paul encouraged the cheerful giving of money, we encourage cheerful giving of time and talent. The attitude that you use to give your gift has a great impact on the quality of the gift. If we present like we're grumpy, people will think that we're not pleased to serve God. It might mislead them to think that our God isn't a grace-filled; that our service to Him is done out of obligation, rather than joy.

Why are cheerful givers cheerful? We only need to look at God to understand that. They are cheerful because God has made them a promise. We heard in Paul's letter in 2 Corinthians 9: 10: "For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and bread to eat. In the same way, He will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you."

God is the provider. We serve Him out of love because of His great generosity towards us. Jesus is the sign of His greatest generosity. We serve with joy because He provides the joy. We rejoice in the opportunity He gives us to serve Him.

In addition, when we serve Him He gives us another blessing. Studies have shown that there is a remarkable difference in the health and quality of life among those who serve and display loving concern for others, compared with those of the general population, who do not.

The stress level, which increases cholesterol, raising blood sugar and depresses immune functions is much higher among those who share little of themselves. Giving of ourselves to others is a great way to obtain a wonderful and healthy glow. I've never known a giver who is not better off for it in every way.

I won't tell you that because you give to God He will bring you health and wealth. That would be transactional. God wants us service to be a love response. I will stand on the promise of God, that we will reap what we sow. I stand on the character of God, who is always generous. He loves a cheerful giver and promises that those who serve will be blessed and be a blessing.

Perhaps this story about an old prospector who is thirsty will remind us that when we give, it changes lives. An old prospector was thirsty, but couldn't find water. He came to an abandoned well. He found a pump and proceeded to pump with all the strength he had remaining. No water came out.

Then he saw a small jug with a cork at the top and a penciled note, directing that the water in the jug be poured into the pump to prime it. At first, the thirsty man questioned it. What if the writer of the note had been mistaken? What if the pump no longer worked?

Should he use the water at hand with only the promise of more water to come? He decided to follow the directions. He used the water in the jug to prime the pump, and he obtained a much more satisfying flow of water.

Before going his way, he filled the jug with water so that the next thirsty person could draw water. He added one thing to the note, "Believe me, it really works. You have to give before you can reap." That, by the way, is a biblical principal, you cannot reap what you do not sow. When you are a cheerful giver you will find that you reap great joy, which will return to you many times over.

Here's your question: How will you minister as an Everyday Disciple?