



The Trinity Pulpit



What You Get When You Give 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

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It is more blessed to give than to receive! That is what we say until we do not receive anything. The truth is, most of us enjoy receiving as much as we enjoy giving. However, we know the blessing of giving is something that is hard to describe. It is a sense of satisfaction, fulfillment and purpose. Yet, there is even more blessing that comes to giving to the work of the kingdom of God. As we begin our giving this Christmas season for our World Missions Offering, I want to speak to you about what you get when you give.

Our text is a practical text from 2 Corinthians. Paul is encouraging the church in Corinth to join the other churches in an offering for the church in Jerusalem. The church in Jerusalem was the first church. It was the place where the Holy Spirit came and birthed the church on the Day of Pentecost. Now this church had become the mother church of all of the other churches. The gentile churches were in existence because of the church in Jerusalem. However, unlike the church in many of the gentile regions of the Roman Empire, the church in Jerusalem consisted of very poor people. They were in constant need and persecution. They desperately needed the help of the more wealthy congregations. Paul was organizing an offering for the mother church. As he instructs the church at Corinth, he reminds them of their eagerness to give the year before. They were not only eager to give but the first to do so. Now other churches had followed their lead and had given. The Macedonian churches had not only given but had made a great sacrifice in giving. They were in persecution themselves, but this persecution had caused them to be giving and generous. They had set the example of sacrifice. Now it was the church

at Corinth's turn. Paul was urging them to give. Paul was urging them to be faithful to the promise they had made. Paul tells them that they are a church that excels in everything else, now it was time to excel in giving to this offering.

I thought about our church when I read Paul's words. Paul said that the church at Corinth excelled in faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness and love for Paul and the missionaries. Trinity is a church that excels. We excel in ministry, care, love for each other and, I believe, love for the work of Christ around the world. Paul says, however, that giving is also an act of excellence. As a church, our giving has been excellent for several years now. We have learned to excel in giving as well as other opportunities. Today we have an opportunity to again excel in ministry and love for Christ by our giving. What will we get when we give? Let me mention three things to you from our text.

First, we get the knowledge of knowing we are sharing in the work of Christ around the world. As Paul describes the attitude of the Macedonian churches and their attitude of giving, he writes, "they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints." Many scholars suggest that the words that Paul uses here in 2 Corinthians indicate something very profound about this offering.

David Garland, in his commentary on this text, writes, "For Paul, this ministry was far more than delivering aid to poor people. It had major theological consequences and was something he was prepared to risk his life to carry out. Business language is therefore hardly adequate to describe it,

and so Paul resorts to theological language.”

Paul does not use words like “partnership” and simply “giving to the poor,” but Paul uses theological words that have deep and various meanings in other places in scripture. In verse 4 Paul uses the word for grace that is translated as *privilege*. To give is an act of grace and is a moment of grace in our lives and in the lives of others. Grace is that God-like word that indicates an act which is not deserved or expected. The privilege to give to the kingdom of God is a moment of grace. God allows us to participate. It is a holy moment to be included in God’s acts and purposes.

In verse 4 Paul uses the word “koinonia” that we translate as *sharing*. Koinonia is the word that we most of the time translate as *fellowship*. In fact, Paul introduces a new concept to the word in this passage. To share our lives together in fellowship also includes the giving of offerings to others and supporting each other financially. Paul says that this giving of an offering is evidence of Christian fellowship that is that mysterious eternal bond between brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul uses another theological word when he writes “service for the saints.” The word translated as *service* is the word for deacon. It is the word that describes a humbling of oneself and ministry to others. Paul’s point is very clear – this is more than giving of money for those who do not have as much as you might have. This was about something much more. This offering was about the grace of participating in fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ and humbling ourselves in ministry to them.

When we give to the World Missions Offering, you and I receive a moment of grace to participate with the work of Christ in this world. It is our moment to minister to others who are ministering to those in need in our world.

I don’t know about you, but the older I get I want my life to count for something more than the here and now. I want to think that my life can make a difference in the lives of others. I want to believe that there is something I can do that is beyond me and beyond my own time and existence. I want to

believe there are some things I can do that are greater than my own doing and will have a lasting significance. That is what we get when we give. We gain the knowledge that this moment of grace can be a moment that our lives count for more than we will ever know.



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Saidat Makop is sick. To look at her she looks healthy, but she is sick. Makop carries the deadly virus we know as AIDS. She is one of 40.3 million people who live with HIV/AIDS globally. In Uganda and other sub Saharan African countries there is still a great epidemic. It is estimated that 28.5 million of those with HIV live in sub Saharan Africa. About 97% of all AIDS related deaths occur in this region. Even though Makop takes drugs for her disease, her odds of surviving are not good. She lives in a country where HIV/AIDS education is a top

priority. However, it is not the billboards and educational programs that inform Makop of the seriousness of her disease. It is the fact that since a teen she has witnessed death after death of friends and family from HIV/AIDS. When she tested positive, Makop said she lost all hope. She had so many thoughts about her children. If she died, where would they go? Who would take care of them? Then one day, hope came to her house.

Two Christian counselors visited Makop one day. They talked about her disease and her medicine, and then the conversation turned to God. They talked not about Allah and her understanding of God as a Muslim. They talked about a forgiving God. Makop is surprised when she hears about this forgiving God. Makop is interested in hearing more about his forgiving God. The two counselors return each month and share Christ with Makop. These two counselors are from Words of Hope, a Baptist organization funded by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. These counselors not only offer hope in disease, but also share the love of Jesus Christ. Many churches and Bible studies have sprung up as a result of this ministry. People’s lives are being changed. One counselor says people are healthier because they are taught how to eat and how to be healthy even with HIV. People are happier because they are learning to forgive each other because they know of God’s forgiveness.

Makop says Words of Hope changed her life. She used to look to the mosque for answers, but no longer. She now looks to the Bible. Makop knows that the odds are still against her, but she would say with a smile, “I now have hope in God. All my hope is now in God. I trust God to take care of me and my children when I am gone. All my trust is in God.” (International Mission Board, Missionary Stories)

What a privilege it is to share in the life of another through the holy moment of giving.

Paul says not only do we get an understanding that we are participating with Christ, but we get the knowledge that in our giving we become Christ like. Paul writes in verses 8 and 9, “I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

Now let’s follow Paul’s point about being Christ like when we give. First, he tells us that giving is a test of our sincerity. We can say we love God and love others, but giving of our resources, Paul says, is a test of sincerity. God’s giving us Jesus was proof of God’s love for us. The Bible tells of God’s love, grace, forgiveness and faithfulness, but it was Jesus’ coming that proved God’s sincerity. The Bible tells us plainly that God demonstrated his love for us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God demonstrated his love for us. The test of God’s sincerity of love for us was the coming of Jesus.

Paul says that Jesus was rich (meaning heavenly rich) but became poor (that is, became human like you and me), so that by his coming and his sacrifice we might become rich. We might inherit eternity. God has demonstrated the sincerity of his love for us in Jesus, and in our giving we demonstrate the sincerity of our love for God. This is why, when you and I give, we get the opportunity to be Christ like because Christ gave all that he had for our sakes.

Many times we hear about the Kurdish people of

Northern Iraq. We know that the Kurdish people are really a people without a home. In fact, one ancient Kurdish proverb says, “a Kurd has no friends.” Fatima is a Kurdish woman who lives with her five children in the mountains of Northern Iraq. At her door is an AK-47 assault rifle as a reminder of her past and her future. Fatima’s husband was one of 5,000 men that Saddam Hussein rounded up in 1988 and killed and buried in a mass grave. She and her children survive by eating roots and herbs while on the run. She found refuge in Iran but now has returned to her home. When she arrived back to her home she found others claiming it to be theirs and was forced to go and find another place to live. She and her children have built a small home out of stones from her father’s ruined house. When asked by CBF personnel what she needed the most, she said, “Look around. We need everything. Anything you give us will be a blessing.” Fatima is just one of the Kurdish people that CBF missionaries have worked with, and the Kurds are one of the most neglected people groups that CBF missionaries are reaching out to. (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, People Groups Focus)



“God demonstrated the sincerity of his love for us in Jesus, and in our giving we demonstrate the sincerity of our love for God.”

Jesus was rich but became poor for our sakes so we might be rich. When we give, we, in essence, become like Christ. We become poor for the sake of others that they might become rich. When we give to World Missions we get to be like Christ.

Finally, when we give to World Missions we receive the blessing of God’s provision. Paul writes in verses 13 through 15, “Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: ‘He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.’”

Paul is reminding us of a wonderful promise from God—when we give, we open our lives to the blessing of provision. Paul is telling the church in Corinth, when you have plenty, you give and when you are in need, others will care for you. When the church gives with open hands and hearts, God

provides for all.

In Micah there is a great promise of God that says, "bring to God the whole tithe and test me says the Lord. See if I will not pour out a blessing on you that you cannot hold." God says, "Test me in the area of giving. See if when you give I will not always care for you and pour out a blessing upon your life." I have never known an unhappy tither and giver. People who tithe do so joyfully and whole heartedly. In fact, most of the time when I preach on anything to do with money, it is the people who give and tithe who love to hear the sermon. It is an affirmation to what they have already discovered. They have discovered that God's words are true and God's promise is true. When we give, God will make sure there is enough for all.

God is a tither and giver. God gave us his tithe. The tithe was not only 10% of one's income, but it was the first 10%. It was the best part of one's resources. The tithe was not the left over but the very first and best presented to God. When God gave us Jesus he gave us his tithe. We have begun the Advent season and it is the reminder that God kept his promise and sent a Messiah, but the glorious part of this story is God's Messiah was himself. God came to us. God gave his best to you and me.

Jesus is also God's sacrificial offering. Jesus is not only God's best, but through his death on the cross God showed us the way of sacrificial giving. God gave his best and God gave his all. God is a tither and a giver.

God has a financial plan for your life and my life. It is called tithes and offerings. When you and I give our first and our best to God and we do so routinely and sacrificially, then we open our lives to the blessing of God. Sometimes it will be financially, but most of all it will be spiritually. It is the knowledge that we are in the will of God.

God has a financial plan for our church. It is called tithes and offerings. When we tithe, the needs of our ministry together are met and surpassed. But God also calls us to present an offering. That is what today is about. It is about giving an offering beyond the tithe. We give, as Paul puts it, according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. In other words, Paul instructs the church to give as it can to the work and the glory of God.

In a few moments you will have the opportunity to give to our World Missions Offering. This is not just another fundraiser for the poor. It is a holy moment, a moment of grace where we get to participate in the work of Christ. It is a moment that we can be like Christ. It is a moment when we can discover what it means to trust that God will provide.

That is what you get when you give.

