

2 Corinthians 8:1-7 A Generous Church in a Stingy World

Today we are going to talk about giving, but please don't press "mute"! **What you are about to hear may surprise you... maybe even shock you!**

I have never been so excited to talk about this topic from the pulpit before! There is great reason for us to rejoice! Though it's true, that never before have we faced a challenge like what we are facing today as a church...

God has been amazingly faithful during this time of trial, & God's people have been amazingly generous as we have faced these uncertain economic times!

If there was ever a time to give into fear in this area of faithful giving & stewardship, now is that time, but we as a church have not done so!

In both the month of March and April, our giving has exceeded our budget! From Jan. 1 - April 30, our giving has increased by \$10k over last year during the same period of time! Yes, we missed a Sunday in January of 2019, but...

All I can do is stand in awe and say, "Praise God!" and "Thank you!"

Because of this, I've been so looking forward to our time of praise this morning!

- "*Blessed be Your name in the land that is plentiful, where streams of abundance flow, blessed be your name.*"

"Blessed be your name when I'm found in the desert place though I walk through the wilderness, blessed be Your name!"
- "Lord we lift You high, oh God be magnified! You have overwhelmed my heart; I'm amazed by who You are!"
- "Give me faith like Daniel in the lion's den. Give me hope like Moses in the wilderness. Give me a heart like David, Lord, be my defense. So I can face my giants with confidence."
- "Let all things their Creator bless. And worship Him in humbleness. Oh praise Him, Alleluia!" I only wish I could hear all our voices singing together!

You've heard it said that these are unprecedented times, but in terms of the church rising up and responding in faith, & with great generosity, it's not!

We know what such a church looks like (2 Corinthians 8:1-7), but let me share the similarities of what I've seen in you over these past several weeks.

The Apostle Paul views financial stability as a "grace from God", and he is right!

- Everything we have, individually/as a church, is a gracious gift from God!
- "*Apart from Him we can do nothing*", so even our ability to provide is grace!
- "*All creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they can neither move nor be moved*" – H.C. # 28.

Our stability... comes from being held securely in the hand of God! It is in realizing this that we too can respond as the Macedonian churches did.

Vs. 2 – "For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part."

What a strange dynamic this is! Severe affliction led to abundant joy, and extreme poverty led to a wealth of generosity! Only with God is this possible!

Is our joy abundant right now? What about the wealth of our generosity?

Vs. 3 – "For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord..."

They gave what they could and more, and they did so freely. No one coerced them to give or laid guilt upon them, they simply gave because they wanted to.

In unsettling times like these, does our desire to give increase or decrease?

Vs. 4 – "begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints..."

God's people begged for the privilege of helping those in need who had been affected by the circumstances of their day. I have been privileged to see some of this generosity taking place here at BRC these past few weeks!

Vs. 5 – "And this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."

This kind of generosity was surprising/shocking, but it's the evidence that God was at work as they submitted themselves to Him! Our offerings are evidence!

Vs. 7 – "But as you excel in everything– in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, & in our love for you– see that you excel in this act of grace also."

My prayer for us as a church is that we will continue to rise up & excel during this difficult time. That we would be a true picture of the very grace of God!

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