

Am I Asserting Myself In My Giving?

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[0 : 00] Father, thank you for your word. Thank you, Father, that your word is a letter directed to us, that you want to speak to us and tell us your heart.

Tell us who we really are. Tell us the hope that we have in you. Father, we thank you that you speak, that you speak in a powerful way. And we ask that your Holy Spirit would move mightily within us so that your word might enter into us and that in our day-to-day lives, in our dealings with people, we will bear fruit that brings you glory.

And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So, money and God and you and me.

Now that I've got your attention. You know, one of the great fears in our culture is that churches just go on and on and on and on and on about money. And the fact of the matter is that there are some churches that go on and on and on and on about money.

I can just tell you from experience that most pastors are terrified about talking about money. And in fact, I would say that in general, Anglicans are amongst the most terrified to talk about money.

[1 : 18] And I have to confess, I have... I'm not afraid of talking about money. I'm getting old and grumpy and cranky and all that type of stuff. So, I don't know. You just talk about money and people unhappy.

There you go. That's life. You know. Anyway, why am I a bit shy about talking about money? Because I'm a Canadian, eh? And originally, how we pick sermon topics here, if you're a guest this morning, what we do is we preach through books of the Bible.

That's what we do. I'll often ask the congregation to pray as I try to pick the next book that we're going to study together. And so I pick that we're going to do 2 Corinthians.

And I divide it up into 19 bits. And I look at the different weeks. And I know that chapter 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians is going to talk about money. But the way it was originally divided up, because next Sunday and the Sunday after and then Christmas, I do sort of Christmassy Advent sermons.

So originally, I was actually going to be talking about money in the first three Sundays of January. I mean, the 8th and on. And I was actually pretty happy about that, because I thought, you know, this is a nice, shy, self-effacing way of talking about money.

[2 : 29] You're not obviously just trying to talk about money to get the money in at the end of the year. But then, the bishop didn't want to preach. So I preached.

And this is the first fall in about five years we haven't had a guest speaker in the fall. So last week, I talked about money. It got moved forward. And this week, I talked about money as well.

Because 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 is the longest sustained treatment of money in the Bible. And so, we're going to talk about money. And so here, if you're a guest here this morning, and especially if you, mainly, especially if you haven't given your life to Jesus, this is my opportunity to tell you that if you read 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, what God wants to say to you, as you're trying to figure out, I mean, maybe you got dragged here with a friend, maybe you're a seeker, maybe you've been here for quite a few weeks just trying to figure out what you believe.

But the Bible is pretty clear that if you haven't given your life to Jesus, God is actually pretty happy if you don't put any money in the plate or make any donation to this or any other church. So, what we're going to do today then, if you're here in that state, this is a perfect chance to pretend the year is 1886.

And unlike 1886, where it would have just been a men's club, you've gone back to some adventurers club and you're an anthropologist. And, you know, the sherry is out, the cigars are out, and an anthropologist is going to report on this strange tribe, smoke the cigar, and how they think about money.

[4 : 05] And you're that anthropologist, you're getting to sit back there with your sherry and your cigar, listening to how this strange tribe called Christians talk about money. That's the attitude you can have this morning, because we're just going to listen to not what churches do, but what the Bible says.

So, if you have your Bibles, turn in them to 2 Corinthians chapter 8, beginning at verse 9. If you don't have a Bible with you, you can go get one here, or you can use the YouVersion app on your phone.

And if you go to events, you actually have the sermon notes there now with events this Sunday as well. So, let's read the Bible together.

2 Corinthians chapter 8, verses 9. We'll start reading at verse 9. 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, by his poverty, might become rich.

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.

[5 : 15] 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.

And so just want to pause here for a second. And it's very, very interesting that this long section, as I said, it's the longest section in the Bible that talks about money. And it's really interesting.

Most of the other places in the Bible, not all of them, but most of the other places that talk about money in the Bible, it's often done, it's not maybe always obvious immediately if you just read it superficially, but it's often done within the context of discussing idolatry.

And the great problem that money can have in many of our lives of becoming a type of idol that justifies us, that gives our lives meaning, that just guides, directs, grounds, gives the narrative by which we understand our lives.

And money has this great power to do that. And usually in the Bible, when it talks about money, it's dealing with that power of money as an idol. But chapter 8 and 9, it doesn't mention idolatry at all.

[6 : 24] It's all a discussion around money, all connected to the grace of God. It's very, very interesting. In fact, from a literary level, verse 9, the first verse that I read, that actually casts its light of understanding to the eight verses prior, and to the, I don't know what it is, like 25 verses or something like that, or 35 verses that come afterwards.

It's all sort of understood from this perspective of verse 9. So if you could put verse 9 up, could you just all say this with me together? Because if nothing else, this is such a beautiful verse.

I'm going to explain it a little bit more in a moment. Such a beautiful verse. It's a really good verse to memorize. Can you say it with me? So just before I explain that, here's the first point.

If you could put it up. God's grace is real and shapes me to accomplish things in the real world. God's grace is real and shapes me to accomplish things in the real world.

One of the things which is very powerful in our culture is that spirituality and religion should just be private. It's about, you know, that's why in our culture, if somebody was to tell me they have this particular belief in native spirituality, like at a party or something like that, or some type of spells or something that they do or some little type of ritual, if I was to start to actually go after them on that and say, well, how on earth can you believe that stuff?

[8 : 09] Like what, you actually believe the earth is like on a turtle or something like that? Or that, I don't know, like a fish spit you out and that's how the entire universe came to be? Or like, how on earth can you believe in spells?

Like if I was to go after somebody at a party like that in Canada, everybody would hate me. Right? Because in Canada, spirituality and religion is supposed to be private.

And, you know, and it's just something, if it gives you a sense of hope and gives you a sense of meaning, and if it doesn't bother anybody, then it's fine. That is a good thing, you know?

And people don't actually want to ask the question about things like spirituality and religion. They don't want to ask the truth question. They don't want to say, is this possibly true?

In the same way that mathematics is true? Or in the same way that you would say Sir John A. MacDonald was the first prime minister of Canada being true? In the way that lawyers try to explain and try to understand what really happened in the case.

[9 : 09] And that whole question of truth is a very, Canadians don't like to ask that question whatsoever. And so religion and spirituality is to be very, very private. It's just to be very, very personal.

And we get frightened. Canadians get very frightened with the idea that religion might have some type of public impact. Sharia law.

It's very frightening to a lot of Canadians that there might be a way of understanding religion and spirituality that has such a bad impact on how we live.

And it's in that context, it's very hard for us to grasp that the Christian faith is at the very, very center making a truth claim. Like when we hear, It's not just that the Bible is giving us an interesting story or an interesting idea.

It's not telling us that we should try to feel something. It's actually making it a very big truth claim. And if that big truth claim is true, if it's false, then you shouldn't have anything to do with Christianity.

[10 : 26] Paul actually says that in his first letter to Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15, where he connects the Christian faith as being all rising and falling on the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And he says, If Jesus didn't really die on the cross and really taste all there is to taste of death, and didn't really, on the third day, defeat death and that which causes death, and rise so that death no longer has a hold of him.

If that didn't really happen, then you guys are really wasting your time. And in fact, you know what? We should just go and have some good food and some good wine and have a good time and just don't bother with all this stuff.

So at the heart of this wonderful sounding verse is this very, very big truth claim that if it's not true, you should ignore it. We should all leave. We should all leave. And Tim Hortons fans and McDonald's fans and Starbucks fans, we all divide into our different tribes and just go have a good time and move on.

But if it's true, it affects how we understand economics. It affects how we understand politics. It affects how we understand literature and communication and social work and even physics and biology and geology.

[11 : 41] It's something that if this is true, it has to affect the real world and how we think about the real world and how we live in the real world. Because when it says, For the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, what it's saying is that God, the Son of God, the second person of Trinity, that before there was Jesus, that God, the Son of God, not incarnation, but that God, the Son of God, lived in heaven with heaven's glory and heaven's splendor and his unbroken relationship and fellowship with the Father.

And that he looked down at the earth and human beings were in rebellion against God. Human beings weren't all organizing petitions saying, God, please come and save us.

No, human beings, we loved our idols. We loved having God at a distance. We loved doing what we wanted to do. We loved that our king was a God or our queen was a God. We loved these things.

But God, the Son of God, looking down at human need and seeing that even though we seem to be both happy and sad, we were in effect deeply poor and that we were going to die and we were separate from God and we would be eternally separate from God and we could not save or help ourselves.

And God, the Son of God, in his honor, in his glory, in the riches and splendor and protection and safety of heaven, out of love for us, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.

[13 : 16] And the text is saying that God, the Son of God, takes upon, without stopping being God, he sets aside his appearance as God, his powers as God, his prerogatives as God, his environment as God.

He sets all of these things aside, but he doesn't stop being God. He, in a sense, empties himself of all of that, strips himself of all of that, and takes into himself our human nature. And he's born in the womb of a poor Jewish, low-income Jewish girl in an unimportant part of a large empire, not ruled by Jews but by Romans.

And Mary was neither Roman, the powerful group, nor did she even part of the linguistic group, which was Greek, which was how most people spoke.

And Jesus goes through, I mean, his conception is miraculous, an act of creation by God. But he lives a lower working class life in obscurity.

He lives a normal life. And then he has a three-year teaching ministry where many start to think very highly of him, and many hate him. And eventually, the political and educational and legal and cultural and religious and spiritual establishments combine to have him put to death for their good.

[14 : 43] And many people agreed with it. And you can't be poorer than dead. And so this Bible text is saying this, 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, by his poverty, might become rich.

That God does this spectacular, powerful act. And that's why miracles are so important to the Christian faith. It's the miracles.

You know, Jesus says, Is it easy? Is it easy? You know, only God can forgive sins. I've just forgiven that person's sins. Well, to show you that I have the authority to give you people sins, I'm going to heal this guy.

And he heals them. And he tells people time and time and time again, I came to die upon the cross. I'm going to go to Jerusalem. There's going to be a time I go to Jerusalem. They're going to capture me.

I'm going to let that all happen. I came for this very purpose. I'm going to be denied by people. I came for this very purpose. I'm going to become even poorer. I came for this very purpose. I am going to die upon the cross.

[15 : 47] I came for this purpose. I'm going to die upon the cross, bearing all human rebellion and sin and all the punishment that that deserves. And I came to die upon the cross for that very purpose.

And I will die as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And then on the third day, I will rise triumphant over sin and death.

And the resurrection of Jesus, all of that's in history. His teaching in history. His words recorded in history. His miracles in history. His death in history.

The empty tomb in history. The resurrection appearances in history. It's real in the real world. And now, for those of you who know the first law of thermodynamics, when it says that there's basically, there's no energy created or whatever, there's always, the amount of energy in a closed system is always the same.

You have to remember that it says a closed system. Creation is not a closed system. God acts. When you're looking at human origins, when you're looking at about gender, about sexuality, all of a sudden now, God who has acted in real time, in real history, it's real.

[17 : 06] And it's going to affect how we think about men and women. And how we think about science. And that's what God's intended. And so what the text is saying here is that God's grace is real and it shapes me to accomplish things in the real world.

That's why there's going to be, it's going to have an impact on my financial generosity, on money. Because money is real. For some of us, it's way too real.

It's way too big. But the text isn't talking about that. It's saying, I just want, Paul is saying, be gripped by this truth. Think about this.

God himself does something in the real world. And as grace comes into your life, it's going to mean you do things in the real world that are shaped and pulled and molded and grounded by grace.

And that's why in the text, if you go back to the text and look at what it says in verse 10. And in this matter, this is the matter of giving money to help Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

[18 : 13] And he's writing to a group of non-Jews, primarily in Greece. And he's saying in verse 10, and in this matter, I give my judgment. This benefits you. That's a hard thing for us to understand.

It's not part of this sermon. But Jesus says it's better, it's more blessed to give than to receive. And if that's true, then giving is actually, if this is true, if Jesus, if it's true that generosity benefits us, then bumper stickers that say, he who dies with the most toys wins is the dumbest possible bumper sticker.

It's even dumber, it's not dumber, the bumper sticker that says, I stop for elves and fairies and, you know, a whole pile of other imaginary creatures that nobody sees except myself, that's cute.

And it's sort of humorous. But it's not humorous when it says, the person who dies with the most toys wins. It's about the generosity, giving is the highest form of living.

Anyway, but here it is, verse 10, 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. 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.

[19 : 32] So that's the first big thing here, that God's grace is real and shapes me to accomplish things in the real world. And that's going to affect our money. Now, for some people, what I've just described is deeply frightening.

And if we're honest, there have been times in our lives, maybe for us right now, that it's a deeply frightening thing. It's a very, very different thing to think that basically at the end of the day, fundamentally, that religion and spirituality is about having a sense of peace, having a sense of order, having a sense of wholeness, having a bit of a sense of purpose, and maybe helping you do a little bit of good things for other people, and it helps you to be more calm.

And all of these things are very, very good. But it's really still all primarily about me, right? And now all of a sudden to talk about a real God who really, in a sense, invades, without human permission, invades our world, and acts on his own terms in our world, a real God who really comes and really acts is very frightening.

It's very, very frightening. He's really big. He demands, He can demand all things. And there can be a loss of my freedom and a loss of my identity.

And there's a deep fear that many Canadians have that such a real God will threaten their freedom and their identity. Could you put the verse 9 up?

[21 : 14] Could you all say this with me again, please? 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, by His poverty, might become rich.

And then just continuing on, listen again to verses 10 and following just after this. And in this matter, that's a financial generosity, not benefiting themselves, but in fact, Jewish Christians living in a different continent.

And in this matter, I give my judgment. This benefits you. And notice it says, I give you my judgment. It's not a command. It's encouragement. Right?

This benefits you who a year ago started not only to do this work, but also to desire to do it. 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.

Here's the big verse for if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

[22 : 26] The readiness, the desire, has to be there first. That's what God's saying. That's what the gospel does. That's what this text does. Like, in a sense, the text is saying, you know, listen, how does salvation work here?

God is trying to say, listen, human beings, just try to understand here first. How do you fundamentally know me? I want you to fundamentally know me. I want you to fundamentally understand my word by understanding verses like chapter, 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9.

First of all, that it is grace, 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, by his poverty, might become rich.

I, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we do this for you willingly. We do this voluntarily. We do this freely, out of our freedom.

You know, a couple of months ago I had a long, long half an hour talk in my favorite Starbucks with two Jehovah Witnesses, one who had just come back from the mission field. And I began as we got into the differences, you know, between me and me.

[23 : 38] And I said, one of the things, one of the things I'm not a reason, you can't be a Jehovah, I don't think you can, I would never be a Jehovah Witnesses, it doesn't understand love. It can't account for love. I said, only the Christian faith really accounts for love.

They denied it, of course. They said, because we believe the Bible. But I said, no, no, no. You see, the thing is that you just believe there's a single God. And so, why on earth does God create? Is it because he needs to have human beings so he will love?

How can, if there's just a single God, how can God be love if there's just a single God? But the Bible reveals that there's the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and from all eternity the Father has poured out his love to the Son.

And from all eternity the Son has poured out his love to the Father. And there's even Bible passages that sometimes describe the nature of the Holy Spirit is that very interchange, interchange, this constant back and forward and flow of love that that's what the Holy Spirit is.

And so, God does not have to create human beings because he needs us. He doesn't relate to us out of need love. He relates to us out of this because he is love.

[24 : 48] And it is of the nature of love to create. And it's of the nature of love to be generous and to pour yourself out and to go out. And that's who God is. And so, on one hand, it can be very, very frightening to think that God relates to us not out of need love but out of just pure love.

Pure, unadulterated, bottomless, unstoppable love. That's how he relates to us. And it's free. It desires. It just, that's how God is.

And so, when God's grace comes into our lives, it starts to break down those things, those fortresses and the selfishness in our lives, in our real lives, in how we really live.

That's how God's grace is going to work because God wants us to be free, to be voluntary, to be willing. If you could put it up, that's the next point.

God's grace is real and shapes me to freely and willingly desire to give. God's grace is real and shapes me to freely and willingly desire to give.

[25 : 55] God does not need our money. He doesn't need you and me. He loves you and me. That's why he became poor so that you and I through his poverty might become rich.

It's an act of freedom. And especially, here's the thing about true freedom. Okay, I'm not putting anybody down. It doesn't take much freedom freedom to just say, you know what, I don't care about my responsibilities as a husband or as a dad or a child.

You know what, I'm just going to sit on my butt this afternoon and I'm going to down a 12-pack and eat a whole pile of potato chips and watch football. Well, that's, I mean, you're free to do that, but that's not exactly the high-water mark of human freedom.

Like, going out on a Friday night and getting plastered is not the high-water mark of human freedom. The high-water mark of human freedom is to do hard things.

The more free you are, you are free to do hard things. You are free to start to try to forgive. You are free to start to be more generous.

[27 : 16] You are free to keep your promises even to your hurt. You are free to give of your time or to go where you don't by your very nature and flesh want to go.

That's the mark of human freedom. And that's what grace brings into our lives. And that's why, in a sense, this text is saying, you know what, when it comes time to pass the plate or when you're thinking about the financial needs of this church, you know, in a sense, God is saying to you, you know what, if you don't want to give, don't give.

I don't want your money. That's what God's saying. I don't want your money. You know, quite a few years ago, I got invited into another province to go speak at a variety of things over the weekend.

And these two couples, because they wanted to honor me, they wanted to take me out for supper. And I said, okay, you don't have to take me out for supper. You know, I'm a simple guy. I'm quite happy.

No, no, we want to take you out. I said, well, okay, listen, you know, there's these sports bars in town. Like, I'm quite happy just going to a sports bar or just like a, you know, a local place where local, but no, they had this, this community had to drive about 20 minutes, half an hour, but there was something the equivalent of the Chateau Laurier for that area.

[28 : 26] And they had to take me there. And I said, you know, really, I'm, I'm actually, you know, I have nine kids, you know, we don't eat in places like the Chateau Laurier when you have nine kids, you know, we, if you even eat it out at all, it's McDonald's, okay, I'm quite happy at McDonald's or Subway or something like that.

I'm quite happy with the pizza deal from the local pizza place. And, you know, just pick up the beer yourselves and save a lot of money. No, no, it had to be the Chateau Laurier, the equivalent of the Chateau Laurier. So they go there and it's just like, I maybe had, you know, I don't go to these places very often, but I've been and you look at it and in today's dollars, I don't know, like the entrees were, the cheapest entree was like 14 bucks.

I mean, not appetizer, okay, and it goes up from there, like, you know, lots of money and they literally, they look at the menu and I can hear them gasp. And I say to them again, you know what, we haven't ordered anything, let's just sleep out.

You know, there was some real, all these sports bars along here. I'm actually quite, no, they had to do it. Both couples only ordered one main dish, no entrees and shared it and you could just tell, you could just, I mean, God love them, but you could just tell that when it came time to get the money out of their fingers, it was just like this and in a sense, the owner of the restaurant had to sort of pull every single penny.

You know what, that was a miserable meal for me. It was really miserable. I didn't enjoy a bite, I didn't enjoy my time because, and God knows your heart and you know, frankly, God is saying here in this text, if you're not interested, you know, it's a grace issue and it's not being judgmental, it's a grace issue, it's being gripped with the gospel, that's what it is and you know, frankly, if you're giving out of some sense of obligation, some sense that you have to do this, if it's some type of manipulation, God's saying in a sense, you know, I'm just, you don't have to give, I don't want it.

[30 : 17] That's why this willingness is so important in the text. Now, here's another thing that's, here's another big, you know, some people say, George, here's the problem with this and here's the problem with grace, here's the problem, you know, I think religious people are very impractical, doesn't Jesus say somewhere whenever anybody asks, you have to give and George, do you realize just there's this black hole, there's this sucking black hole of human need and George, if you start me down this path of the sucking black hole, bottomless pit of human need, it's going to consume me, grace doesn't make any sense.

Well, the Bible here is addressing this particular fear. Let's, could we all say verse 9 again? Could you put it up? 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 by his poverty might become rich.

And then continue reading on from verse 11. So now finish doing it as well so that your readiness in desiring it, that's in being financially generous, may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

Notice that? Out of what you have. for if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

And then it's very interesting, I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that is a matter of fairness. And some of your Bibles say equality. Both words are good. I'll explain it in a moment. Your abundance at the present time should supply their need so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness or equality or interdependence.

[32 : 16] As it is written, and here he quotes a text about the manna in the wilderness, whoever gathered much had nothing left over and whoever gathered little had no lack.

If you could put up the point, God's grace is real and shapes me to understand that nothing I have is mine, it is manna. Whatever my IQ is, whatever my health is, whatever my time is, whatever my bank balance is, whatever my educational achievement is, whatever my EQ is, emotional quotient, whatever my AQ is, my attitude quotient, whatever I'm blessed with because I was born in Canada and not in another country, all of these things at the end of the day it's manna.

It's not mine. It doesn't mean when I say it's not mine that it's the government's. No, no, no, no, no, no. Kathleen Wynne and Justin Trudeau and Donald Trump, just to cover the whole political spectrum.

When it says it's not mine, it doesn't mean therefore, ha ha, it's Ontario's, Canada's or Trump's. No, no, no, no, no, no. It's manna under my care, not the government's under my care.

It's manna. And this is a very, very powerful thing. You see, once again, how does grace work, right? For the grace of our, if we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich.

[33 : 49] Our deepest human need is our alienation from our creator and because we are alienated from our creator from the entire created order. And how is that solved? It's solved by God.

How much of it, is it like solved 99% by God and 1% by me? No, it's actually solved 110% by God, 200% by God, 0% by me.

All by God. And it's this sense of the God's grace coming into our lives and that we're rooted in grace, that that's become the story of our life, that it becomes what shapes us and what grounds us.

We start to realize that everything we have is ultimately something that God has given us. And I don't know why God gave some people a lot of resources and others very little resources, but whatever it is, the story of the manna is very, very interesting.

And by the way, the story of the manna doesn't show that it's all equal, that it all comes by provision because in the nation of Israel, as in the wilderness and there's no food, every day God, as his provision, for six days of the week he provides this substance on the ground that people could gather.

[34 : 53] And people who gathered a lot they could gather a lot, they could gather a little. The implication is that at the end of the day, that at the end, the next day it was all, it would rot overnight. You had to pick it up every day. And as a miracle, on the sixth day, it wouldn't rot on the seventh day.

It would last for two days to show that it came from God. And so it would create within this community, not only do you take a lot or a little, but if at the end of the day, you know, you picked up not enough, that the community would have enough as a whole so that you could go to your neighbor and say, I forgot to pick up enough manna for supper.

And, you know, my cousin Abe has come to visit with his, you know, his 18 kids. And, you know, he can go around and there'd always be enough manna. And so this text isn't teaching, it's teaching us, it's helping the people in Corinth to say, no, no, you're thinking as if, okay, you're Greeks, you're in Corinth, and it's all yours.

No, no, God's community, it now involves people in Philippi and Berea and involves Romans and it involves Samaritans and it involves Jewish people and it involves people who are culturally different than you and God only has one people.

And God is ultimately giving you manna. And the image here, it's another time that I went out for supper and this was when I was building and helping to build an organization and a donor was there and he wanted me and this other minister to go with a couple of other people who had pretty good financial means and we were going to be doing a whole series of things.

[36 : 26] In fact, we'd been doing some things the other day and he said, let's all go out for supper and so we all go out for supper and we go to this place and to my horror, it's even more expensive than places like the Chateau Laurier. Like, I look at it and I think, I'm going to maybe have a half salad in this meal because that's probably all I can afford.

But I happen to be sitting beside the guy who'd invited me and the other minister and then there's about, I think there's about four or five other people and just as the menu comes, he just whispers to me, he said, listen, this is on me.

And then I noticed him go to the other minister on the other side, another young, I was young at the time, a long, long time ago and he whispers to the other guy, this is on me. He doesn't make it for everybody. This is on me.

Order what you want. It's on me. That's the image here in the text. Okay? That's the image. He didn't pick up the bill for everybody. He didn't pick up the bill, all of my bills for the rest of my life.

He picked up the bill for that particular thing. And that's the significance you see of this particular text as well. Is that the text is saying as grace comes into our lives, it means that we start to look across cultural lines and ethnic lines and race lines to other believers who are all part of this one family.

[37 : 39] God only has this one family of people. He only has this one body. And that's how grace is supposed to work. The grace is supposed to be the great destroyer of racism and the great destroyer of hating women or hating men or hating anybody.

It's to be this great destroyer and to change the way we look and to change our understanding of the resources that it's manna that comes to our hand. And you know what? You know, Shirley can tell you we get a constant stream of requests for money from the church and you can't, you only can deal with what you have but the fact of the matter is that a church has to always be thinking of what it can do beyond its borders.

A church that only thinks about using the money for itself isn't a church rooted in grace. But just because you're looking beyond your borders it's, you know, it's why I'm so glad that we have a missionary from our family, you know, people from our church family in Nigeria and we have somebody in Egypt and we have somebody in Zambia and we have, you know, we have somebody in a country that I can't say in public because it's closed to religion and another country that's sort of closed and it's so good and we give to that and we give to other types of things and that's, but we only can give what we have but we can all, we would have a very, very generous heart and always ask God can we give more?

Can we give more? Not, not, it's not, Lord, everything is just falling apart and we have to be really tight. No, can we give more? Can we give more?

That's the grace question. Can we give more? Now here, just one final thing we have to sort of wrap it up. You know, so normally I have these but George moments I shared it with last week.

[39 : 15] I start to walk like this, but George, I start, but here's now a but Canada question, not a but George question, but a Canada question, human being question. Here's the problem.

Not only do human beings are we grudging and giving, but a lot of times when human beings give, they have a whole pile of agendas. People give to assert their self in giving.

People give to justify themselves. People give to show off. People give in some way so they get a pass and having to deal with other things.

People give to put God in their debt. I know there were people, those of you who haven't been going here very long, when we walked away from our building because we wanted to honor God and we felt we had to honor God by walking away from our building.

I know there were many people who thought that God would give us a building within two years. Why? Because they believed that we had put God in our debt. And we human beings, let's read that verse 9 again.

[40 : 22] Can we read it again? 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 by his poverty might become rich.

I can never put God in my debt. The gospel is all about the fact that God does everything for me. He is the one who complete, Jesus is the one who by his work upon the cross has redeemed me.

He is the one who gives me grace today. He is the one who will give me grace tomorrow. That I'm to be responsive to grace but I can never put God in my debt.

And it's not about me asserting myself in giving. You know, in the early days in this church there was a couple of people when I came to this church you know, there was a couple of people who they'd had a, prior to me coming the rector would go to them at the end of the year to help make up the financial need and I didn't do that.

I've never done that. And I know that it sort of bothered this one person. You know, because at the end of the day he liked to assert himself in giving. But here's the text.

[41 : 33] If you read not only verse 9 but just listen to how it goes on from verse 16. But thanks be to God who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you for he not only accepted our appeal but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord.

With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. And not only that but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us.

Grace means it's ultimately from God. It's just being ministered by us. Why is it being done? For the glory of the Lord himself. For the glory of the Lord himself.

And to show our goodwill. That's why if you could put up the final point God's grace is real and shapes me to give so people are blessed and the Lord gets all the glory.

It's a profound challenge for us to think that we put God in our debt. It's a profound challenge to think that we assert ourselves with our giving. It's a profound challenge to thinking that giving somehow justifies ourselves.

[42 : 43] It's a profound challenge to think that giving is somehow a matter of us showing off. That the grace comes into our life. It comes into our life to shape us so that we start to die to these things and have a desire and have a desire to give in such a way that we don't care if we get a plaque on it at the end or get our paper in the National Post or the Citizen or the Globe and Mail because we went to a fundraiser.

Some of us have been in those pictures but that's not the goal. If they take your picture they take your picture right? But it's not the goal. So just in closing here just to wrap it up I just want to share a couple of little things about being generous.

The first one is once again about tithing. I don't think the Bible teaches the New Testament teaches that Christians have to tithe. I think tithing is a rule of thumb. I'll give you an illustration. The last summer job I had before I got ordained a friend of mine hired me to do he had a small construction company hired me to work for him and if some of you have heard before when it comes to being competent with a hammer I have two left feet.

I don't have two left hands I have two left feet I'm so incompetent with hammers. But he had to do a lot of work in some rural areas or just outside of Ottawa where he had to have digging done around septic systems and he knew George can dig and George can take shingles up on roofs and George can lug wood and George can do all this simple meat and that was fine I was very happy.

But there came a time he said I want you to nail in these boards I think it was part of a deck and I want them to be close together. Okay? So I said I don't know what that means.

[44 : 31] He said well I want them to be close together. And I said I don't know what that means. He said close together just like you normally do on a deck. I said okay time out Rex like I really literally don't know what you mean.

like a 32nd of an inch apart 16th of an inch an 8th of an inch a quarter of an inch half an inch I don't know what you mean. I have no rule of I don't know what you mean. Then he realized oh yeah yeah yeah George is completely clueless.

Like when it comes to carpentry George is dumber than a bag of rocks. Okay so he took pity on me and he laid them out so I had a rule of thumb. And I think that's the same with tithing in the Bible for the New Testament.

You can see here this grace thing some people grace is going to so affect their lives become like Mother Teresa. God doesn't call all of us to be like Mother Teresa where you literally have nothing everything that comes in just goes out for the poor.

Most of us aren't called to that but the Bible gives us a bit of rule of thumb as terms of what to look towards what to move towards. The 10% of our income we give to the church that's doing God's will and then beyond that we give to other things that are continuing to do to God's will and that's what we move towards.

[45 : 43] And that's so when it's talking about generosity in the real world that's the rule of thumb. I think that's what the New Testament teaches and the Bible as a whole teaches. And some grace the grace of giving will be well beyond that and by that I don't mean rich people and many of you know that it's often in poor countries that people are vastly more generous even though they have very little money.

And the other thing I guess I would just say to you is that for Louise and me when we got challenged about tithing because we were not even remotely close to tithing the time I was getting paid once a month we just thought we'd take a step of faith to start adding twenty dollars.

And you know what the world didn't collapse we didn't all of a sudden have no money to eat and then we trusted God with another twenty in a month. Oh okay we still ate this month.

The kids still have clothes and the house still has heat and that we just but you have to begin like begin today or begin tomorrow and begin where you are.

And the main thing is to be gripped by the gospel. Just one other thing I want to share with you as a practical matter for Louise and me it's far easier if we pay God first. I'm just sharing with you some practical thing we've learned.

[46 : 59] When the pay comes in I mean it would either be setting an EFT or just I literally take the money out of the bank when my pay comes in. I do that first. The second thing I do is move my money from the account the bank to the account where I pay my bills.

I do those two things first and then I try to live on we try to live on the rest. And that's just a practical thing that I've learned. In the Bible it's called The First Fruits but I just want to share that with you. But the main thing is to be gripped by grace.

As God grips us with what he's done for us in his son it changes us for real and for good. And it's not legalism it's not rules it's not earning God's favor it's being gripped by what God has done for you in the person of his son.

Please stand. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father thank you for Jesus.

Thank you Father for God the Son of God the second person of the Trinity. Thank you Father that even though we human beings didn't want a Savior didn't think we needed a Savior weren't looking for a Savior hadn't asked you for a Savior Father you knew we needed a Savior.

[48 : 18] You knew our true and deepest need. You knew that we needed to be reconciled to you that you loved us but we had a big problem and you knew that we had a big problem and we couldn't help ourselves and still you loved us.

Still you sent your Son to die upon the cross for us. Still you sent your Son to become poorer than poor could be so that we when we put our faith and trust in your Son Jesus become rich in him.

Father we ask that you make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel and learning to live free and whole for your glory.

Free and whole and generous for your great glory and the good of this created order and the whole world. Father make us such disciples of Jesus this we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.