

Worthy of Thanksgiving

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[0:00] Well, we can turn back to our reading in 2 Corinthians chapter 9. We're going to look at the section, verse 6, down to the end of the chapter.

But just take with you these words of verse 15. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift.

Coming away from a blessed communion weekend, it's always maybe in many ways strange going into the week after it. And there's so many different emotions involved maybe in coming away from it.

We can come away with a sense of rejoicing in the Lord's goodness to us in so many different ways. But we can maybe also come away from it with a sense of regret.

There can be maybe some of us who feel a sense of regret and maybe not coming to the Lord's table. And not doing maybe as we were maybe feeling that we should.

[1:02] So there can be a real sense of mixed emotions coming away from the Lord's table, from the Lord's communion as we have enjoyed last weekend.

But as we come away and as we go forward, I want us to go on just thinking the Lord has been good to us. Whatever situation, whatever circumstances we're finding ourselves in, we can remember the Lord has been good to us.

And to come away with that sense of thanksgiving. We're going to look this morning at that sense of thanksgiving, that he is worthy of our thanksgiving.

And then this evening, God willing, we're going to look at the Lord in the sense of worthy to be praised. So the Lord is worthy of thanksgiving and worthy to be praised is going to be our theme for the day today.

This morning with that sense of thanksgiving. Now when you think of communion, we think of a communion weekend, there are other events and maybe the church calendar that we remember as well.

[2:10] Things like Christmas and Easter. We're in between the two just now. We'll shortly be coming up to Easter time. We also have a time of the year when there's a special focus on thanksgiving.

So there are certain things in our calendar, communion, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving. What do you think of when you hear these things mentioned?

For some people, it might be we think of special services that take place in the church with a particular focus. But for others, when they hear these words mentioned, it can mean holiday. Because very often these things coincide with a holiday time. Christmas is a time of holiday. Easter, we have the Easter holidays. Thanksgiving so often falls on a holiday weekend.

And even last weekend, our communion weekend, it fell on a holiday weekend as well. And so for some people, we can think of these occasions as significant church services.

[3:19] Or for others, they maybe think holidays. Actually, the two are true. They are a time of holiday.

And they are a time of special focus. For example, when we think of Christmas time, some people try and put that away now. The word Christmas or even Easter.

Try and take the religious aspect out of it and just say, we'll call it a holiday time. And they say, happy holiday. But maybe they don't realize just how close they are to the real sense of the meaning behind it all.

Do you feel today here that you are on holiday? We are all on holiday here today. Because when you look at the word holiday, where does it come from?

It comes from holy days. That's where the word holiday came from. Holy days. Days set apart for us to focus on God.

[4:24] And so that is what we have here today. We have a holiday. We have a holy day. A day set apart to focus on God.

Now when we think of holiday, we think of maybe rest. And that's important. But when we think of the holy days that we have.

And not just the days when we have a communion or a Christmas service, Easter service or Thanksgiving. But we think of it in the sense of every Lord's day.

That we have that holy day. A day set apart. It reminds us that it is to come and see that our rest is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that is what Paul is reminding the church at Corinth of here. Reminding them of what they have in Christ. That they are a holy people.

[5:23] God's people are a holy people. They are set apart for God. And that in their service to him, they have holy days. Days when they are set apart to worship God and to show their love towards him.

When we think of the church in Corinth, it was a place, Corinth, that had many different issues. Many different problems. Immorality, idolatry, false teaching.

All of these things were there in Corinth back in the day. Just as they are in our world today. But Corinth was maybe a particular place in that sense. It was a vast city with many different kinds of people coming into it and passing through.

And a whole variety of teaching. But for God's people who were there, yes, they were maybe pulled in different directions. They were under pressure in many different ways.

But it would be wrong of us just to criticize them. Because given the opportunity and given encouragement, they were a generous and a thankful people.

[6:31] And we see that in chapter 9 here as we're going to look at it. Paul here is sending the brothers, as they're called. The others who went ahead of him to meet with them in Corinth.

To stir them up, to encourage them. To be thankful to God and to continue in their service to God. And to be encouraged to keep this going.

And so there is this sense of thanksgiving in this chapter. And especially as we look at verse 15. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift.

But to get to that verse, we have to go through verse 6. Beginning there down to verse 15. And here we see just why they should be so thankful.

And what they have to be thankful for. And we're going to focus on verse 6 to 15 and see three things here. First of all, we see a generous heart. A generous heart among the people.

[7:30] Then we see a godly blessing. A God who is able to give them more than they can even imagine. And then we see that inexpressible thanks that they finish on in verse 15.

So first of all, we see a generous heart. And the people in Corinth were a generous people. They had stirred up others in other areas in their giving.

The church of Macedonia is mentioned here as being encouraged through the giving of the church at Corinth. But we often associate giving thanks with receiving something.

So that the church in Macedonia would have been thankful having received the gifts of the church from Corinth. But the Corinthians had given. And that's where the thanksgiving begins.

It begins with giving. And we see that in verse 6 here as Paul takes that image of the farmer who sows the seed. And he uses this as the basis of where their thanksgiving begins.

[8:41] Because it leads them to see how gracious God is as we give generously to him and to his cause. So you have in verse 6, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.

And whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So it's the image of the farmer here who goes out to sow his seed.

And there's two different ways that he can do it. He's saying, well, one goes out and sows sparingly. And when he does that, he reaps sparingly. But the one who goes out and sows bountifully reaps

bountifully.

So that if he freely gives his seed, he freely receives. It's a farmer who has nothing left in his hands. And it almost seems like everything that he has has gone.

But when the harvest comes, his barns will overflow. It will soon be time to start planting vegetables again. And many of you will be doing that, I'm sure.

[9:50] But how do you sow the seeds? I mean, some of the seeds you get now, for example, for carrots, they're tiny little things. So how would you sow it? You would maybe make the little trench in the soil.

But would you just put one seed at a time? Is that the way you would sow the seed? If you did, you're going to get little in return. It requires a sprinkling.

It requires a giving of all the seeds that are in the pack. If you want to reap, you've got to sow bountifully, as it says here. So it's literally scattering, as we have.

In his commentary, John Calvin puts it like this, looking at the comparison between giving and sowing, he says, In sowing, the seed is cast forth by hand, is scattered upon the ground.

On this side and that is harrowed and at length rots. And thus it seems as good as lost. The case is similar in giving. What goes from you to some other quarter seems as if it were diminishing of what you have.

[10:55] But the season of harvest will come when the fruit will be gathered. And so there's this encouragement there to give bountifully.

And what's interesting here is when you look at verse 6, that word bountifully, it can be translated blessing. So whoever sows blessingly, we could say, will reap blessingly.

That's what's behind this word. And so are we a people who are sowing blessingly. Seeking God's blessing in the work that we are involved in.

Giving to that work blessingly, bountifully. Seeing that we would see a harvest in return for it. We can all ask ourselves.

I can ask. You can ask. Are we a people who are sowing blessingly? Or could we do more? And this isn't to stir up some kind of guilt trip.

[11:57] It's not what it's about at all. But God's word is just there before us to help us to understand how we are to live in light of God's blessings to us.

How we are to live. And what he says here is as we sow blessingly, we are to give it as a cheerful giver. Each one, it says in verse 7, must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion.

For God loves a cheerful giver. This is how we are to be. This is to be our attitude. A cheerful giver. And again, you go back to what the word means.

A cheerful giver. The word there is *hilaros*. And there's an English word that we can take from that Greek word. *Hilaros*. You can almost hear it as I'm saying it.

Hilarious is the word that's there. *Hilarious* is the English word that we have. So there's that sense of the hilarity of giving. The joy of giving. The sense of almost laughter as we're giving.

[13:01] God has given us, we can give him with that sense of joy. With thankfulness assured that in doing so, God has great desires towards us as well.

And so a grateful heart is something that we have in thanksgiving. A grateful heart in giving ourselves to God and giving all that we are to God.

And so as we come away from a communion season, we think we might have regrets. We might have a sense of rejoicing. But let us always have that sense of thanksgiving.

And that thanksgiving be full of bountiful, blessingly sowing for the Lord. And cheerfully, hilariously giving to the Lord.

The second thing we see here is a godly blessing. Paul then goes on to describe the generosity of God in every aspect of life.

[14:04] You look at verse 8. God is able to make all grace abound to you. So that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Does God hold back? Well, we might have an attitude, if I give, I'm going to have so much less for myself. But that's doubting God.

That's doubting a God who we see in so many parts of Scripture. This is just one of them. The God who is able to make all grace abound to you.

The word abound is used a few times here. And at all times, you may abound in every good work. The Lord is able to bless.

And we are to have faith in him who is able to bless. God is able. You will abound. So there's the promise of getting from God here as well.

[15:03] When we think of that word, bountifully sowing, blessingly sowing, we are reminded here that God gives back blessings as we give as a matter of blessing from ourselves.

And this is not a prosperity gospel message. This is not a plea for your money and saying the Lord will then bless you with riches beyond your wildest dreams.

That's not what it is. We know that and we should know that. But God will reward. That is the promise. But the rewards we look for, they're not material.

We don't look for wealth as we give to God. We look for him to pour out his spiritual blessings on us. His grace, his mercy, his love towards us that he has an abundance to give to us.

And God, as it says here, make all grace abound to you. That his grace will be poured out to you and to me again and again.

[16:07] God gives us that promise as we bountifully, blessingly so that he is able to blessingly reward us well.

When we step out in faith, the Lord is able to bless. When you think of Isaiah and back in chapter 6 of Isaiah, that great passage, it says there in verse 8, And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us?

Then I said, Here am I, send me. I say I was placing himself into the Lord's hands. And you see it with Samuel, you see it with so many throughout the Old Testament.

When the Lord is calling, we place ourselves into his hands. The God who is able to make grace abound to you. You put yourself, I put myself into his hands.

And when you look at your life and your lifetime, whether it's personally or even as a congregation, and all that we have received from the Lord, isn't that a reminder to us that as we are faithful to him, he is faithful to us?

[17:21] That as we seek to show his grace, sow his grace in every aspect of the congregation work that we're involved in, that he is able to make us abound in grace going forward as well.

We see encouragements. We don't take them for granted, but we see the Lord is able to bless. When we see people coming to church, when we see the Sunday school thrive, when we see the creche grow, when we see people being engaged with in different ways with the gospel, and a hunger for the gospel.

Where does it come from? It comes from a people who are blessingly sowing, and looking to a God who is able to abound in grace to us, and favor to us.

And so we have so much to give thanks for. And we're reminded again and again of how God can supply. Philippians 4, 19, My God will supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

So we have godly blessings that follow a generous heart. We have received much, and let us be ever thankful for that.

[18:39] But then that leads us then to that inexpressible thanks. Verse 15, as Paul summarizes things here, Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift.

As we see a spirit of giving, as we see a vision of what we are receiving, where does that make us go? In some ways we could look at each other and say, Well done to one another.

And there's a great encouragement in that. But that's not the main place we are to go. Verse 15 just reminds us of that. Thanks be to God.

That is the source of all that we have. And the source of all our thanksgiving is to look to him. Our thanks is in God.

But sometimes thank you seems so feeble. To give thanks to God is a good thing to do, but sometimes it just seems so little to do.

[19:52] And there's a sense of that in the way Paul writes here in verse 15. He just doesn't have the words. Thanks be to God for what?

What could he say here? What word could he use? Well, he actually came up with a brand new word. It was the first time this word was used.

The Greek word was used that's here inexpressible. Because there just wasn't a word for it. Every year, usually at the end of the year, we have some place that gives, what was the word of the year for 2025?

When you look it up, you find that there were maybe a couple of new words that were introduced or used in a different way. 2025 was rage bait. It was that kind of idea of online where you're putting out thoughts or ideas that are there to entice people to throw a bit of rage and anger against something that's being said.

Rage bait was the word of the year. Well, this word in Paul's day would have been the word of the year. Inexpressible gift. There's just no word for it.

[21:08] So he makes up a new word. Because how do we describe God's gift to us? There are no words. It's a gift that's described partly in chapter 8, verse 9.

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. How do you describe it?

Well, Paul concludes here with that inexpressible joy and thanksgiving that there is. When you think of that verse we were mentioning to the children earlier, John 3, 16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that inexpressible gift.

How can we give thanks to God for that? And when you consider what we have in Jesus and the reasons that we have to praise God, you could go through a whole list of things.

Forgiveness of sin. We have a Redeemer. We have the promise of everlasting life. We have that adoption that he speaks about, that we are made into the children of God.

[22:20] That we have a place in heaven as we put our trust in him because Jesus says, I will go and prepare a place for you. We have his abiding presence.

We have his numerous promises. We have his everlasting love, his amazing grace. The list just goes on. We have the promise of his Holy Spirit. We have his precious word given to us.

We have all of these things. And so it's no wonder that Paul just couldn't find a word and had to come up with a new word. Inexpressible. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift.

And so what do we make of all of these things? If we can't describe it because it's inexpressible, what are we to do with it?

Just like we were saying to the young ones, we can't measure it in any way. So what do we do with it? We trust it. We put our trust in this gift of God.

[23:28] This gift of a redeemer. And we recognize how much we have to be thankful for. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift.

A farmer once went to church one Sunday morning and listened to a sermon. The sermon was in Isaiah 1, verse 3. And it says this, What was the verse saying?

It's saying, well, even the animals recognize something. But Israel says the people of God didn't. And the next day, as the farmer was feeding his cattle, one of the cows, to show its thanks, licked the farmer's hand.

And at that moment, that farmer, who was not a committed Christian, he was convicted in his heart. And he actually burst into tears and said, it's all true. How wonderful is the word of God.

[24:50] Because he recognized that that cow was more thankful to him than he was to God. And yet he said, I am in debt to him for everything.

What a sinner I am. And it was that lesson that led him to see his need of Christ and brought him to Christ.

Sometimes the world around us says to us more than we recognize of who God is. The simple little things can remind us.

So even as you sow a seed and you think, well, where does the increase come from? It comes through sowing blessing. But it is God who gives the increase.

And so it is with our faith. As we cast ourselves on the Lord. As we give ourselves with that sense of cheerful giving.

[25:54] Recognizing God who is able to bless. May he help us to find ourselves with that sense of thanksgiving. for that inexpressible gift.

The gift that there are no words for. But that can be known through faith in the Lord Jesus. May the Lord bless these words to us.

Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we thank you that everything that we have is from above. Every good and perfect gift is from you, the one who does not change.

And we find ourselves just looking at these words before us and recognizing that we too feel like Paul. That there is that inexpressible nature of the gifts that you have given to us.

How can we describe them? How can we possibly give thanks for them? But yet, O Lord, you encourage us in our hearts to come, to simply come, and come and rest in you.

[27:00] To find in these holidays, as it were, the holy days that we enjoy. The days that are set apart for you. To find in there the words of faith, the words of love, and grace that abounds.

And to know what it is to put our trust in you. And to find there that we have a rest. And a word, and words that are inexpressible.

That peace that passes understanding, as Peter says. And may we know it for ourselves. Lord, receive our thanks. And may we continue in much thanksgiving and praise to you.

And in our service for you. As we ask all in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 106, the Scottish Psalter version, page 378.

Psalm 106, we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 5. Page 378. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, for bountiful is he.

[28:10] His tender mercy doth endure unto eternity. God's mighty works who can express or show forth all his praise. Blessed are they that judgment keep, and justly do always.

We'll sing from verse 1 to 5. We stand to sing to God's praise. praise and thanks to the Lord, for bountiful is he.

His tender mercy doth endure. This tender mercy doth endure unto eternity.

God's mighty works who can express the mighty works who can express our show for the Lord, God's mighty works who can express our show for the honest grace.

for all his grace. Blessed are he that judgment keep and justly do always.

[29:42] Remember me Lord with the love which thou to thine dost bear with thy salvation O my God to this it be drawn near that I thy chosen good miss thee and in their joy rejoice and live with thine in their hands thy mouth with cheerful voice after the benediction

I'll go to the main door we'll close with the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore Amen God desde God Thank you.

Thank you.