

Thanks (because of) Giving

Hey Amazing Love Church family - Happy thanksgiving thank you for being here for our Pie day and celebration. May God bless your travel plans, whatever you find on that table to eat, and of course the turkey. And as you gather for Thanksgiving a very common and appropriate question to cross the table is this: "What are you thankful for this year?" And it's good to think about. In fact I encourage you to do that now. In your life what are you thankful for. This past year was there a relationship you particularly thank God for. Maybe God brought resolve to a certain situation for your kids or spouse - jobs gained, and schools found. Perhaps he blessed you with materially with a new tv, car, or home upgrade. Some of you are thankful just to be off of school and have a good meal to look forward to. Anyone thankful for this? (Frozen 2) I have two girls thankful they didn't give up on the franchise.

As we've gathered in this place we find a superior reason for thanks. Don't know what you're experience is with church or God. But God is a giver - it's why we come to church. Because we know this house is filled with more free stuff than the aisles of Costco on Sat. We come here every week broken by our sins and failures, and as often as we come God gives forgiveness. We come here lost and wandering and without a clue how to go forward and faithfully God gives guidance through his Word. We come here emotionally exhausted from serving others, from trying so hard to be a light, and faithful God restores us with a joy unlike all others. We want to experience God and through his body and blood in the Sacrament we taste, touch and see the divinity and love of God. All this because God gave his Son Jesus Christ to us.

But something I recognize about thanks and giving is this. *Giving precedes thanks*. Your children do not give thanks for the gifts they have not received. Unless they are trying to manipulate. "This thanksgiving I'm so thankful that mom and dad are getting me a dog for Christmas." And this also may explain why some do not feel thankful. If you feel that you have not been given anything good, it's hard be thankful. If you cannot see the gifts around you, you do not pause to praise God. And perhaps you see this in others who are down and out. They are blind to the gift of life, the gift of a family, the gift of a house, or clothing, or plumbing. There is a great video that addresses this. I wanted to share with you the beginning of a day if you realized all the gifts you had. How often do we take for granted indoor plumbing.

As we've gathered for Thanksgiving emphasis we are also concluding our 10 for 10 series and challenge. The challenge is simply this that for 10 weeks give 10% of your income. And see what happens. Let me review just a bit, we talk about money because it has to do with our hearts, and the number thing vying for our hearts is money or what it can buy. In week one we considered God's promise to open the floodgates of blessing as we trust him and return what is his. You may have heard you can't out give the giver. That is true. A couple weeks ago we looked at Proportional giving, which leads us out of false pride or guilt, as we simply strive for our own personal record based on the measure of gifts God gave. This week as we conclude it's a matter of seeing it differently. That this isn't what we have to do, it's what we get to do.

You know there is a difference right. Have to do. Like doing laundry, homework, or dishes. Get to do like watching a movie, eating good food, or taking a nap. Giving to God and this 10 for 10 challenge is way more of get to do as we'll see. And as we give there will be reasons for thanks, but the giving comes first.

So we dive into God's Word and the section for today is Paul as he is writing to Corinthian Christians. I still remember studying this section at Seminary and thinking if everyone got a hold of what is going on here, it would change the landscape of giving in churches. The context is that Paul was gathering an offering for needy Christians in Jerusalem. And he says - you know what's going to happen because of your giving. A whole lot of thanks. Turn to your neighbor and tell them, "We can be thankful, for God has given."

There is a ton of wisdom in understand that on earth our life operates under the principle of seasons. Solomon wrote, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens." (Ecc 3:1) I think especially in the midwest we understand seasons because of nature. We are approaching winter, and we know what to expect in winter. You will need a coat, hat, and gloves, and maybe a sunlamp. Get ready. I was reading about how Norwegians are some of the happiest people even with long winter and they say, "There is no bad weather, only bad clothing." You need to know what to expect. When it comes to seasons though something true is this *What you sow in one season, you reap in another*. I don't know how many of have ever built your own house. You know this to be true. You may have sown blueprints and downpayment in one season but the reaping of that house will come in another season much later. This principle applies to sow much of life. It applies to your physical health. The choices you are making now about what to eat and drink and how much to exercise - you will reap in another season. If you are sowing in unhealth that too may be what your reap. It applies to your relationships and how you live your life. If you are selfish and isolating yourself, you may reap loneliness in another season. If you sow kindness and foster friendship, you may reap company. It speaks of integrity. If you are sow good character now, you will be found out later for the character you are sowing and reap a good reputation. If you sow bad character, you will reap a bad reputation.

And it also applies to what we talk about when it comes to money. In the New Testament we are free to give whatever we have decided to give. Here too Paul says in v.7 don't give out of law of obligation or if it grieves you. But one of the reasons we are stretching for 10% or even more in generosity is because of this principle. What you are sowing you will also reap. So some of are you going to sow with 10% and reap a dependance on God and freedom from greed like never before. For it's through generosity we release the grip of greed on our hearts. Just wanting the next and the next and the next. Some of you may actually see financial increase as God blesses your management of what is his. And as we give to church what we may also reap is a spiritual harvest. We support the sharing of the Gospel, that Gospel spreads and now that harvest is lost people being found.

Do you know people sowed so you could reap. Last week we welcomed our Synod Reps and before we every gave, they gave subsidy for 7 years so we could share the Gospel in this place and reap a spiritual harvest. When our gifts go in support of ministry what we'll find is those gifts given now will lead to a spiritual harvest later of people we have yet to meet but now can reach. This is why it's a get to give because of a harvest. Can you see them?

Another reason it is a get to give is because these gifts to God aren't wasted. Are any of you investors in the stock market or part of a mutual fund. Just a raise of hands. Charles Schwab has an effective marketing campaign going on right now. They encourage investors to ask questions and even for a satisfaction guarantee. But it's interesting because even Charles Schwab will tell you and publish statements like this, "*Past performance is no guarantee of future results.*" And the SEC enforces financial companies to say this. Because they know they cannot guarantee the stocks will always rise, or the economy will always go up. Which means as an investor you can't be 100% sure that you are making a good investment.

But here's why giving to God is completely different and why this is a get to give. *God can guarantee results.* Consider a few verses, "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion." (10-11) What I love is that God who owns all things says - don't worry I can give you all you need. I can and will enlarge a harvest of righteous as you give (ergo there is always a return) And I can make you able to give in the future so this isn't just a one-off - this is the new pattern and rhythm of your life.

But which comes first the sowing or the reaping. The seed or the harvest. The gift or reason for thanks. This 10 for 10 challenge requires serious faith. And the great definition of faith is being sure of what we hope for and confident of what we do not yet see. The question is who do you have more faith in - your financial advisor or God? I think so often we want God to give us a safety net. Could you just tell me how this works if I do this. Show my future if I take that path of obedience. But it's not the way it works. Faith must come first. And here I see all the times and ways I've been chicken - 'cause I didn't know how it would work out. Here again I see my sin, and that my faith has not been completed. What about you.

But here's why I love the faithfulness and the superiority of our Savior Jesus. Jesus is a culmination of every promise of God every sown. The promise sown for a deliverer, reaped in the deliverance Jesus won. Promise sown for a King forever, reaped in Jesus who will reign forever. The promise for one whose wounds would heal us, and death could free us - reaped in Jesus and all who are in him are free indeed. To the point where Paul says "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ." (2 Cor 1:20) And the beauty is he keeps his promises, when we don't keep ours. He is faithful, even though we have not been or are not. One thing you should know is that his love and grace is for you regardless of the 10 for 10 challenge. He wasn't waiting on your activity to love you, forgive you and take care of you, his love is conditioned on Jesus Christ. And the failsafe is that he can still provide for you regardless of what you do with his money. But he again is offering a hand. Saying you want to come on a crazy ride and see what I can do - come and obey.

And what will happen? You know a few years back we considered this same section of Scripture. And one of the things we considered as a visual of what happens when we take this word seriously is a Champagne fountain. With Welch's Grape Juice. What happens is that God has the floodgates right. He pours out his riches into one glass, and the goal is that those riches would not just stay there - that it would overflow. Like the Corinthian Christians giving to the needs of the Jews in Jerusalem. And those Christians too would understand their gifts are not just for them alone, but that they flow over to supply the needs of others. And even when they

can't supply for the needs of others. What does v. 12 say - when you let your gifts overflow, because God's grace overflowed, then their praise is overflowing their expression of thanks because of the gifts. And their hearts are bursting because you chose to believe that what God gave you was good to overflow to others. And so it's a Get to Give because *As Giving overflows so thanks of others will overflow*. God overflows blessing to us, so we can overflow blessing for others, and that overflow will result in the overflow of thanks and praise for such gifts given. What kind of praise will people give because others thought that this ministry was worth it to reach the Lost with the Love of Christ.

So it's time to implement. I've found that many times as a Christian I can be so inspired by a service or a concept, but it never really materializes in my life. And God reminds us don't just hear the Word but do what it says. In fact what many Christians have found in their faith life is that is obedience that leads us away from just staring at the menu of God's plan, and experiencing the meal he has for us. So there is a letter and and work sheet about how gifts might overflow to God on the table. And after you have calculated, and as we culminate this 10 for 10 challenge we have commitment cards. We will not have a commitment Sunday, but instead during this season of giving when you are ready in the next weeks to go through this process. Some of you might say Christmas Eve is a great time, for as God gave the greatest gift I respond as well. And what you can do is simply when you are ready to put these cards in the basket. And something happens when you do the practical work of checking a box and signing your name. This act of obedience makes this teaching real in your life. As a pastor I'm not better, but God has put me in a leadership position and so our family has committed to this challenge. We are excited for the overflow.

This week we'll gather for Thanksgiving. And there are so many dishes that go into it. Green bean casserole, potatoes, stuffing, bread. And I don't know about you, but I always think that whoever cooks the bird or brings the bird has the greatest honor. You could have all the sides, but without the Turkey is it really thanksgiving. If God allows you to be the one to bring the Turkey or make the Turkey it's a good thing. You are supplying what is truly needed. People will praise your Turkey skills and benefit. Just as there is an honor in supplying what's really needed for Thanksgiving. *There is honor in supplying what's truly needed*. That God might use you to supply what they needed spiritually or otherwise is significant.

As we close I wanted to consider once again with you what is the Gospel. The Gospel is God looking at the incredible needs of people, and saying I think I can supply what they lack. These people are dirty and stained, I can supply righteousness and purity. These people need a better way to do life, I can supply the guidance necessary. These people do not have strength in and of themselves, but I can supply the strength they need. All as I give them my Son Christ Jesus. God gives so we can erupt and overflow in praise.

But how will others know this is the heart of God? How will they see God as a generous, not greedy God. How will they know the Gospel is what God wants for people and not from people. It's through us - his people. If you are in Christ. You are to be walking, talking, visual examples of God for we bear his name. This reminds me of the many ways that people advertise. I recently was driving and saw a car wrapped with an add. Uniqlo is a coming to State Street in Chicago. They dressed up a Lincoln MKZ. Uniqlo a great place to go for weathertech. A great place to go for underlayers and keeping warm. I was driving and I see

wow Uniqlo. God's goal for us, the main purpose of living as a Christian is to give God glory. We are to be mini-representatives of Christ. We are to be reminders of what God is like and what God would do. *As we give we are visuals of the Gospel.* Paul put it this way in the lesson, "Others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your **confession** of the gospel of Christ." (13) How do we visualize the Gospel - we give because God is a giver.

This Thanksgiving may God open your eyes to see all he gave, the greatest riches are ours in Christ. May your heart burst with praise. But may the Spirit also move you to respond to him in kind. So that praise of God will overflow to the next and the next but this through us. Happy Thanksgiving. Amen.