

## Kingdom Giving

Next week, during the Sunday School timeframe, you are going to hear even more updates on a building. What you're going to hear will be new information. You're going to hear of next steps. You're going to discover that what's to come may come quickly and move fast. So, I encourage you *all* to come to that meeting. What's said there will affect everyone here.

I'm grateful that in God's providence I've been able to preach on the topic of the building. I am also very grateful that God pointed me to the truth of the Kingdom and how that relates to our local church, buildings and even giving campaigns. God's Kingdom shines through to this world primarily through the local church – and the local gatherings need gathering spaces. But now we move on this week to then ask, "How are we to think about the money it takes to finance such spaces?" Today, I actually want to pare the question down. How are we to think about giving and how does it apply to this project? Because I'm just as much a member of this church as you are, I personally want to know what God *actually* says about the local church, buildings and giving. I'm personally in a process of trying to think through what sacrificial giving looks like – and I want to be wise and not foolish. If I'm telling you something, it needs to be said just as much to me. And if I want to be wise, I want you to be wise, too. It's interesting to me that when Paul writes to the Corinthians about giving to the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem, he writes, **"I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction."**<sup>1</sup> He is writing to them to give them opportunity to work through their hearts and minds and prepare for giving. By the way, I'll be referring to this passage most during this sermon, so if you want to turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 8, feel free to do so. In that passage, Paul calls the Corinthians to a prepared, sacrificial and joyful giving that keeps eternity in view.

As I thought about various giving passages in the New Testament, I couldn't get away from the theme of Jesus' Kingdom. I saw how giving even is subservient to our Master who reigns over all. And I saw that because my money is actually his money, I'm a steward and not the owner. I think we all need to hear these things because I tend to think that we can quickly confess that everything else is God's, but not *our stuff*. But what if **"seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. . ."**<sup>2</sup> is actually in the context of money and things (which it is)? What if the Kingdom applies to how we use our money and if money and Kingdom relate, then money and church building spaces relate, too! The reality is that if we set our mind on things above, and we truly understand that the Kingdom is *over all*, then we have a context for everything we do. Whether we eat, drink, gather together, build buildings or spend money; we are free to do it for God's glory, which is our greatest good! So, I have a question for you: **"Do you want your money to be spent in such a way that God's magnificent power and steadfast love would be known more and his Kingdom would be highlighted to others?"**

There's a specific parable of Jesus that is probably one of my favorite parables. It's regarding a steward who is about to get fired. The story is in Luke 16, and I'd encourage you to read it this week sometime. It's an intriguing parable because Jesus uses a negative example to spur us on in a positive way. The owner of the property is about to fire his manager. The manager finds out and then tries to figure out a way to protect himself once he's out of a job. So, he goes to the people who owe his boss money. He slices away at what the people owe. At first glance, we may only see a steward lessening the bill, but if

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 9:5.

<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 6:33.

you read the story, you find that the owner had been charging people commodities and he was adding interest in the form of a commodity. If you read your Old Testament, you find that God commanded the Jewish people to *not charge interest* to fellow Jews. But in those days, it seems as though some people would say it's ok to charge interest if you transfer it to a commodity. Probably what the steward is doing here is skimming off interest. And, if the owner cries wolf, he indicts himself for charging interest. So, the steward has done something successful. He's helped other people and he's protected himself. He figures that when he's fired, someone else is going to hire him because he helped them.

Then Jesus gives a conclusion of the parable: “. . .the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. <sup>9</sup> And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.”<sup>3</sup> Essentially, **Jesus says that the unfaithful steward their unfaithfulness better than the faithful in their faithfulness.** And that's an indictment against the *faithful*. Why should we let sinners do better at sinning if sinning is destructive? Why shouldn't people who are citizens of the Kingdom be *more shrewd* (in a positive way) than the citizens of the kingdom of darkness?

Jesus goes on to say, **“<sup>11</sup> If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? <sup>12</sup> And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? <sup>13</sup> No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”<sup>4</sup>**

In this conclusion of Jesus, he shows us something that we struggle admitting: the money we have isn't our own. Are we going to live as though it's ours or are we going to recognize that as Kingdom ambassadors, the money is to be used for his glory? **Will we steward the resources he's given to us for his glory or are we going to be like the shrewd manager and use resources for our self-protection and fame?** Jesus goes on to say that we can worship money. And, we also need to ask ourselves, “Do we worship money *or* God.” We can't say we worship both. **You either worship God and spend money for his glory. Or, you worship money and you use God to get more.**

In this whole story, we shouldn't fail to recognize that Jesus is bringing up money in the context of the Kingdom. Even immediately after this story, Jesus talks to the Pharisees, who are called “lovers of money,” and then Jesus speaks to them explicitly about the kingdom of God. The idea of kingdom is within this parable, too. Jesus' conclusion is that we should use money in such a way that “when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.”<sup>5</sup> What's that supposed to mean? When does money fail? Money fails *when you die!* And Jesus says that you can *make friends* with people through the use of money and that money can be used by God to minister to them and even lead them to see the Kingdom of God. Somehow, money can be a means of grace through which he led individuals to see their need for Jesus. Then those people die before you, enter Heaven, and then when you die and that money fails you, those people welcome you into Heaven!

Whoa, Ventura! This is fantastic! Jesus says that God uses green bills with holograms and checks with our signatures on them to minister grace to people, show the love of Christ and lead people to see there's a greater Kingdom to live for! So, “seek first the Kingdom!” We must be thinking about our money and resources from a *kingdom perspective*. And, since the Kingdom is primarily revealed through

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Lk 16:8-9.

<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Lk 16:11-13.

<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Lk 16:9.

local churches, then **we as a gathered people must ponder how and why we are to steward money.** I hope my study this past week encourages and challenges all of us as a people pursuing Jesus together. I came up with four biblical motivations to open our wallets and evaluate our banks accounts and reveal to us, as fellow ambassadors, that our King is Jesus and his kingdom is what we live for and steward all things for!

### 1. For God's glory,

When I say "for God's glory," I don't mean we steward money in order to impress God. God doesn't need our money because the money is already his. The Bible says he's the one who owns the cattle on a thousand hills. So, when I say "for God's glory," I mean that it is our **desire to know his glory and to make his glory known.** To live for God's glory is not merely living a moral life. To live for God's glory is to say that you want to know him more. It's a confession like the psalmist, "<sup>11</sup>**You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**"<sup>6</sup> To glorify him would then be to plumb the depths and heights of the forever pleasure in himself!

But what does that have to do with money? Well, you can't say you glorify God if you only say with words that God is all-glorious. You've heard people say before, "Put your money where your mouth is?" If you say you love God and follow Jesus, does your money communicate that, too?

Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."<sup>7</sup> Then he says that we cannot serve two masters. Again, you either love God and money follows him and his ways or you love money and God's a side-kick to get more stuff. Think practically about this. How often do we talk of God as being good when we get material blessings? This past week, I came across a video where a person spoke of how often she's seen on Facebook and Twitter the word "#blessed." She saw that in every occasion it related to physical and tangible blessings, like when someone said, "Spent the weekend with my family. #blessed" We can hear people say things like, "I got a good tax return. I'm so blessed." I've only rarely heard people in the midst of tragedies or very difficult times say, "I'm so blessed!" Christians even speak this way. We view blessings almost solely in terms of physical prosperity. Does God view it that way? As I watched the video, this person went on to say that they did a study on the New Testament usage of the word "blessed." Did you know that in all 112 usages of the word, it *never* relates to physical prosperity? Actually, the word either almost always (or always) directly connects with suffering. How can that be? Because it's through suffering that God reveals who he really is. He strips us of things we've been trusting in in this world, and causes us to see that he is superior and worthy and good and great!

If we think of money and physical prosperity as blessedness, then we may be missing God. When Jesus taught his disciples that it would take a miracle for the wealthy to enter the Kingdom, the disciples were shocked – and it was because they were taught that material blessings signified God's greater approval and blessing. They were wrong. And we are wrong if we think that way, too. So, ask yourself again, do you find yourself only rejoicing in God when he gives you physical prosperity or do you serve God and know all things are under him? If you serve him, then you can rejoice always – even in adversity. Because the fact of the matter is that money fades, but God never does! This leads me back to Jesus' statement that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." This verse is not primarily saying that if you give towards something, you're going to end up loving it. If that's the case, then that means I love the taxes because I pay them all the time. The point of Jesus' statement is to be evaluative.

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<sup>6</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ps 16:11.

<sup>7</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 6:21.

Look at where you spend your money. You open up your checking account or your VISA statement and you will quickly see what you love. Now, I know my response to that statement. I want to say, “Hold on, Timothy, are you saying that it’s wrong for me to go out on a date with Tracy and then spoil her with some gift?” And I respond to myself and say, “No, Timothy, that’s not what I’m saying.” But more importantly, that’s not what Jesus is saying. Jesus is confronting what we spend our money on, and also more-so confronting what our intent is in spending the money.

I think we should be asking this question when thinking of our finances: **Am I spending this money so that I might learn to trust God more and rejoice in his glory?** If in God’s presence there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore, then where do you want your heart? Do you want your heart in the fading glories of cash or resting in the everlasting glory of God? Do you spend money in such a way that it makes God’s glory known to you? Do you use it in such ways that it would cause you to trust him more?

Please listen to the author of Hebrews when he says that apart from dependence, it’s impossible to please God. That means, even in our stewardship of money, we are to be aware of our dependence on the Lord and even use it in ways that would encourage dependence on him. I hope and pray that as Ambassadors, we steward God’s money in such a way that shows one another and the world that Jesus is our treasure and God’s Kingdom is what we live for. When Paul prepares the Corinthians for the gift they’re going to give to the Jerusalem church, he writes, “<sup>11</sup>You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.”<sup>8</sup> Why steward and give generously? Because it produces greater thanksgiving to God! And, as we learned last year in our thanksgiving series, thanksgiving is a powerful gift of God to fight sin and pursue righteous living as we learn to worship our Creator more and more.

I know as I say all of these things that you could have many questions. You could have many “yeah, but what about” thoughts swirling around in your mind. I have had (and have) them, too. But, by the grace of God, will you (with me) stop justifying the idolatry of money? Maybe the reason why you and me keep saying “yeah, but” is because we really love money and things more than Jesus. If that’s the case, should we confess that? And, if it’s sin, doesn’t that mean that living for God’s glory is actually more satisfying than living for stuff? Absolutely! God created us for his glory. And only in knowing, savoring and living for his glory do we find greatest satisfaction. God said it in Nehemiah 8 that the joy of the Lord is our strength. We are called to ultimate delight and that’s only found in God.

So, for God’s glory and our satisfaction in his glory, I pray that God causes us to see the areas where we’re justifying our gluttony on worldly pleasures and saying “Oh, isn’t God good? I’m so blessed.” I pray that the glory of God sets us free to reveal in our actions and spending that “the things of this world have grown strangely dim in the light of Jesus’ glory.” He has set us free!

So, how and why are we to steward money? Because God’s glory is our aim and purpose. In all we do, and in everything we spend our money, we want God’s majesty to shine through. And that leads me to the next point:

## 2. To serve others,

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<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 9:11.

As I talk about God's glory and our joy in God's glory, I want to be careful that I'm not saying that whatever makes you feel joyful is therefore for God's glory. Or, if you're living for God's glory, you're always going to naturally feel good. That's a worldly, narcissistic philosophy. There are many things that don't naturally feel good that God calls us to. When Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is, do you remember what Jesus says? Answer: **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."**<sup>38</sup> **This is the great and first commandment.** <sup>39</sup> **And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**<sup>9</sup>

If money is to be stewarded in such ways as to reveal God's glory (and our joy is wrapped up in God's glory), then must admit that a vital part of glorifying God is serving others. Think of the story of the Good Samaritan. What does he do? With shocking generosity and sacrifice of time and money, he cares for someone who should be considered an enemy. This is the type of love for others that we should be portraying to the world around us.

In all avenues of life, we need to recognize that we're here to show others God's glory. If you are content *feeling* like you're glorifying God, but you don't spend yourself serving others, your *feelings* are deceiving you. Paul, in giving himself as an example for the Philippians to follow, states that he is poured out as a drink offering for their faith. This is even how the Philippians were to treat one another – with sacrificial love. Again, some people might think, "But I don't feel refreshed when I live that sacrificially." Then I would say, "Those feelings are suffering the effects of the Fall." If God says that it's good to serve others and to share in the sufferings of Christ and to be longsuffering and forgiving, then that's good. If my feelings tell me otherwise, then I must preach to them, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, Bless his holy name!"

But what does this have to do with the stewardship of money? When Paul talks to the Corinthians about their giving, he is talking about giving to needs of another embassy – to ambassadors in Jerusalem. And Paul says that if they give generously, something amazing is going to happen. Not only will they glorify God through thanksgiving. But others will, too. He says, <sup>13</sup> **"By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, <sup>14</sup> while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you."**<sup>10</sup>

When we give in a way that causes us and others to revel in God more, it actually leads even to greater unity and prayers for one another, too! Look what God can do through glad and generous hearts!

Now, what does this have to do with our current circumstances as we face a building project? In last week's sermon I sought to emphasize the importance of a building on the basis of Jesus' kingdom plan through committed, regular local gatherings of believers. If we are to have committed, local gatherings, we need a space. But, even more than that, we as believers are also to witness to the world corporately and individually. And, churches are to be a training grounds of disciple-making disciples. In addition, we don't want to assume that this church is going to die when we die. We pray that the Ventura embassy remains until Jesus comes, yes?

Last week, I told of a story of a pastor who said he was grateful for the people 100 years ago who sacrificed and planned and built an auditorium for the church in which he is now a pastor. One hundred

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<sup>9</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 22:37–39.

<sup>10</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 9:13–14.

years later, they're making, training and sending disciples. Ventura, that should be our prayer, too. Those believers knew that Jesus' plan through the local church matters, and so they gave to a bigger goal. It's not just about a building – it's about believing Jesus will work through his gatherings throughout the world. Do we believe that?

Recently I came across a story of a man who was planting seeds for a certain type of tree that took 70 years to yield fruit. A person came to him and said, "Why are you planting that tree if you aren't going to be able to taste the benefits of it?" The man responded by saying, "I've been eating fruit from these trees and realizing that those trees were planted by people in ages past, and I've reaped the benefits. I'm not planting that tree for me. I'm planting it for future generations."

The same is true when I think of a gathering space. Yes, many of us will probably live to enjoy it if we move forward with the plans. But, are we building with just us in mind? I pray not! We have our sights higher. This past Tuesday night at our elder's meeting, a couple elders were talking about how they've been partaking the blessing of *this* building for years – a building that people decades ago sacrificed for so that we could be blessed to gather together. Through the years, God has worked in this building to grow people in the faith and lead people to worship God, growth in thanksgiving and be strengthened to tell others about Christ. As they were talking, they said, "Can you imagine how God could use our giving and planning for a building in greater ways in the future?" There could be people someday reaping the benefits of a building that frees them to train and encourage and exhort one another as a church family of disciple-making disciples. God could use this building for his Great Commission purposes. Can you imagine looking down from Heaven and seeing greater discipleship, evangelism and spread of God's glory? I was so excited in our conversation that I said something like, "Can you imagine hearing of someone being saved and then hearing where they were and I can say, 'I was a part of *that* embassy!'" Oh, may our prayer be greater obedience and joy in God in the years to come. May God use our sacrificial giving and the building to serve his purposes.

Let's not just think of our generation. Let's think of Jesus' Kingdom – praying and giving in ways that we look ahead to what Jesus promises to do through local churches until he comes. As we give in ways to know God and make him known, let's ensure we're thinking of sacrificing for others so that they would want to know God and make him known, too. And let's not only think of the ones we can see. Let's know that God is working to reach those we cannot see, too!

So, why give? For God's glory and for other's good. But the Scriptures also say that living for God's glory and other's good is for our good, too. It's actually:

### **3. For our eternal investment,**

In Philippians 4:16-17, Paul writes to that church saying, "<sup>16</sup> **Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.** <sup>17</sup> **Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.**"<sup>11</sup>

The Philippians helped him financially, and then Paul thanks them for the gift, but also says that there's fruit that increases to their credit. In the Corinthians situation, Paul wrote, "**whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**"<sup>12</sup> Then in Jesus' teaching, he says that we are to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. As you read these verses, you could

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<sup>11</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Php 4:15–17.

<sup>12</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 9:6.

almost think that we're being sinfully motivated. And, I could preach a sermon saying, "Do you want to be blessed? Do you want more money? Then give to others!" Some say, "Put your seed money in, and be sure that it's going to sprout up with maybe a new house or more money." Is that the fruit that increases to our account? No. So, what is it then?

Jesus' teaching is that there are blessings to come in the Kingdom to come. And, by the way, if the streets are gold, I don't think we're going to be concerned about how much money we have in a bank account. The glories of Heaven are beyond imagination. All we need to know is that Jesus says that in God-glorifying giving in this life, there are *treasures* (whatever they may be) that are going to be rewarded in Heaven. So, God exchanges worldly kingdom currency into heavenly Kingdom currency. Get this, when we give, we are trusting God to bring about eternal investment. We are trusting God and his gifts are better than what cash can give me. This seems to be Paul's emphasis to the Corinthians, too.

But there's more than this. I think in both Corinth and Philippi, there's a "fruit" that can result in our lives as we give for God's glory to be known. As we love God and love others, we grow as followers of Jesus. And, as we give money, we are saying, "I believe God's ways are better, and I believe that God will work in greater ways! I don't trust money to give me what only God can give!"

Ventura, I believe Paul wanted the Corinthians to reap bountifully with the fruit of the Spirit in this life. He wanted the Philippians to have increased fruit to their credit. Do we want to grow in godliness? Let's learn to love others not only in word or deed, but even through money. As I say these things, I must confess my own heart's pull to money. I hear this and think, "Wow, this could be very guilt-inducing. If I give sparingly, I don't get much?" By the way, sparingly doesn't mean, "How much are you giving in comparison to someone else. Sparingly relates to stinginess. In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul is addressing the tendency of the Corinthians stinginess, and do you know what he does? He talks about the Macedonians sacrificial giving. They gave *out of their poverty*. Then Paul also says that he tells the Corinthians this so that they would be encouraged in that kind of giving. I have a confession. I hear about the Macedonians and I think, "But I think my money, and I don't like not having money." And yet, Paul tells us that if we're thinking rightly, the story of the Macedonians would encourage us to give *more*. In fact, Paul goes on in chapter 9 and says that we should think through what to give and then give generously with a cheerful heart!

So, even as I think about a building so that Jesus' glory might be known more in people in Holland and around the world, I have to ask, "Am I going to give sacrificially with joy to this?" Paul's encouragement in chapter 9, verse 11, he says, "**You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.**"<sup>13</sup> The enrichment relates to a growth in righteousness so that we will be generous.

Somehow, God promises that if I'm focused on his glory, he will increase my generosity which then leads to thanksgiving. Listen, this past week as I thought about this sermon and thinking about talking about money, I thought to myself, "We could go through a building project and people could give sacrificially, but if their focus is just on a building, then we're done for." I prayed, "Lord, let me be concerned about our hearts!" May we give in such a way that generosity and thanksgiving flows so that as we have learned sacrificial giving, we have come to know God's glory more and share it more with others.

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<sup>13</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 9:11.

This is the goal of God, and Paul even said of the Macedonians that the reason they gave so sacrificially was because **“they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”**<sup>14</sup> When we live this way, we’ll grow in our spiritual walk, experience greater blessedness with the Lord (even though our savings account be decreased) and we anticipate Kingdom blessings that are beyond what our minds can conceive. Do you care for God’s glory, others good and your own growth in holiness? Then pray for generous hearts.

In saying all of this, I recognize the stranglehold that money can have on us, and there’s one final reason that must be given in all of this. As I just said, people can be generous and happy in giving. Rockefeller was a man with extreme wealth and finally learned to give a lot of it away, but did he do it for God’s glory? Probably not. In all the giving that we give, Paul tells us that our giving is to be on the basis of Jesus’ sacrifice.

#### **4. On the basis of Jesus’ sacrifice.**

Again, going to the Corinthians situation, he says, **“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.”**<sup>15</sup> As I read that this past week, I thought to myself, “Paul, aren’t you stretching the context of Jesus’ sacrifice a little bit?” But clearly, he’s not. Now, keep in mind the context is about giving to people who are in need; so, giving to a building isn’t the same as giving to those in poverty. However, the gospel message applies to giving to a building because the emphasis here is on sacrificing ourselves like Jesus did.

So, let me ask you, do you believe Jesus sacrificed the glories of Heaven so that we could have genuine, eternal riches? Oh, Jesus sacrificed all. He not only sacrificed the riches of heaven, but he drank the dregs of Hell. On him was laid every sin and he took God’s wrath that we deserved so that we could be rich in him! Oh, Ventura, let the gospel permeate your thinking regarding giving – and especially regarding giving to a building where we pray we would grow in being a training grounds of disciple-making disciples. If we have genuine riches, and God gives us what we have so that we can give to others and encourage them in his Kingdom, then should we get to steward that money through sacrificial giving – trusting that others will know this gloriously good Savior who lived, died and reigns today – calling people to enter his Kingdom of grace.

Did you hear me say “get to steward?” Giving is a privilege for those who have been saved by grace. Right before Paul comments to the Corinthians about Jesus’ sacrifice, he says, **“. . .as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. <sup>8</sup>I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.”**<sup>16</sup>

In my study this past week, I have found idolatry in my own heart regarding money. Often in Paul’s argument to the Corinthians, I’ve thought, “Man, Paul, talk about guilt-tripping!” And yet in verse 8, Paul says, “I’m telling you about the giving of others so that your soul would resonate with that giving, and you’ll want to give, too. I’m telling you about Jesus and his sacrifice and the blessings of God through sacrificial giving so that you’ll be excited to steward these resources for his kingdom. I’m telling you this

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<sup>14</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 8:5.

<sup>15</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 8:9.

<sup>16</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 8:7-8.



because I want you to excel in all of God's graces." If my heart feels a guilt-trip, I think that speaks something to me. I'm guilty of idolatry. So, I can confess that sin, but I can also rejoice and kill the idolatry as I learn to give more. Only because of Jesus can I do this. He has set me free to grow in grace. And, just as I want to grow in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in earnestness and in the love of fellow believers – I also want to grow in the grace of giving. I hope that is your prayer, too. And, over the next month or so as the elders call you to pray through your commitments to a building to be used for God's Kingdom purposes, contemplate what that giving means. I'd encourage you to read and re-read 2 Corinthians 8-9 and also Philippians 4.

**May it be said of us that we excel in all the graces – including the grace of sacrificial giving. And, as we enter a capital campaign, may we (and others who see us) say, "It's not about the money. It's about God's glory, to serve others, for eternal investment, on the basis of Jesus!"**