



Scripture:

Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written:

‘They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures for ever.’ [Psalm 112:9]

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, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.’ (2Cor.9:6-11 NIV)

Introduction

This is our 4th sermon in the ‘T-Pegss’ series and what follows is a summary, both from my own thoughts and from notes I took during the sermon that Angelee delivered to LPBC.

Context – A generous church & an agricultural picture

The setting for Paul’s words of encouragement was to the Corinthian church already known for their generosity, despite the first line of our reading today. We come into Paul’s words to them part way through and he has already praised them for their service to the Lord’s people and eagerness to help others. (See 2Cor.9:1-2)

Using parallels from agriculture Paul paints a picture where the act of giving is likened to sowing a crop in a field. What is sown through giving is not, as we might expect, lost to the giver because it reaps a harvest, both with those to whom it is given and to the giver, for they receive blessing from the Lord. (See verses 12-15 for example)

The blessing is emphasized through Paul’s reference to Psalm 112, ‘they have freely scattered ... their righteousness endures for ever.’ Paul wants the Corinthian church to become part of the ‘they’ to whom God gives the blessing of being made righteous, accepted by God. The Psalm does not speak only of the past, but of a future promise that is enacted in the present day – to all generations. Put another way, those who give join in the history of God’s generous people and in his own ongoing generosity.



Not a 'contract' or to trade with God

Paul is not saying that if we give only a little, we receive only a little; far from it for God blesses abundantly. No, it is not the amount at question but the state of heart from which a gift is made. Paul's puts no pressure on them to give a certain amount, but to give as their hearts lead, asserting they are under no compulsion but, whatever they decide to give, to do it joyfully.

The wording that Paul used is set in the context of raising funds for brothers and sisters in the churchⁱ across Macedonia (See chapter 8 & 9:1-8). However, his word choice does carry additional meaning for the giving of time and of talents (skills).

This needs a little more explanation:

Combined with Paul's assertion of giving cheerfully and generously we can understand that giving is not merely something the rich may do, whether in true generosity, because of a faith rule (which is to give under compulsion), or even to salve one's conscience.

- For all in the family of Jesus, giving is a way of response to his love for us.
- God has already provided the ultimate blessing before we have given, of an inheritance in his eternal Kingdom!
- As a response, why would we not give of ourselves and from the resources which he provided to us in the first place?

Paul's word choice indicates that we give not only from the finances God has provided to us but of ourselves. It is an expansion on this theme of giving. As such everybody is included in having the ability to give; whether financially, of making time to help others and in using any skills we possess.

The next sermon considers that wider aspect of giving through serving. For now, it is enough to highlight the challenge set before us:

We cannot earn righteousness by giving but it is a poor and miserly soul indeed that does not respond to God's mercy and blessing where he has already given a home, waiting for us in His eternal Kingdom. (See chapter 5 of Paul's letter).

Therefore, will we respond in generosity of heart, to give back to the Lord?

ⁱ all those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour are brothers and sisters in his family; they are faith family members