



RETURNING

LESSON 9

“At Our Savior’s Way Lutheran Church, we value returning God’s blessings.”

GETTING STARTED:

What is the craziest thing you ever did for love?

DIGGING DEEPER:

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 *For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

Question: Have you ever loved so much that you felt compelled to get involved in an activity, or to give of yourself to help someone or accomplish something? Share your experience.

Love and giving are inseparable. There is an expression, “You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving.” The good news of the gospel is that we have a God who is in love with us. And because God loves us, He willingly paid an infinite price for poor worthless sinners like you and me.

John 3:16 *God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Stewardship is our loving response to God’s love for us. It can be defined as “the free and joyful activity of a child of God and God’s family the church in managing life and all life’s resources for God’s purpose.” - LCMS Stewardship Ministry

The Macedonians set an example of giving for all of us.

2 Corinthians 8:1-4 *And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of their most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.*

Question: What words in I Corinthians 8:1-4 describe the Macedonian's giving? What made their giving so extraordinary?

2 Corinthians 8:5 *And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.*

Question: What does it mean when it says, the Macedonians first gave themselves to God? How can a person give themselves to God? And why is giving ourselves to God the beginning of a life of generosity?

2 Corinthians 8:7 *But just as you excel in everything in faith, in speech in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

Question: What does it mean to excel in the grace of giving?

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

Question: Is giving to God an obligation or a compulsion? What is the difference?

Question: Why does it say that a man should give what he has decided in his heart? Why doesn't it say as a man decided in his mind?

Question: "God loves a cheerful giver." Why is it important to God that we give freely?

Question: What promise does God give to us about generosity in life?

APPLICATION:

We should not be surprised by the Macedonians desire to be generous. Even those who are not Christian recognize the good feelings experienced by those who give to others. What is radical is pleading for the privilege to give and not waiting for the appeal to come in the mail or the plea to come from the pulpit. This is what God calls us to do, to seek out opportunities to help build His kingdom, and then to deny our own wants to make it happen. Christian giving begins with a change in our hearts. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” and where your heart is, there goes your treasure. The Macedonians gave out of the gratitude of their hearts, where they stored all that Christ had given to them. Pray that God would fill you with His Holy Spirit that you might have a heart filled with His love that compels you to live generously.

CHALLENGE:

This week put into action these four steps toward living a more generous life:

First, give yourself to the Lord and trust His heart to supply for all your needs.

Second, take a step toward generosity. The Biblical tithe is 10% of what we earn. If you are giving 2% of your income ask God to help you to give 3%.

Three, consider making changes in your life style that would make you a wiser manager of the gifts God has given you. Give something up.

Four, follow your heart and do your best.