

Sermon 2015 Consecrated Steward 2  
Text: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15  
Theme: Giving With a Cheerful Heart

**Any of you who have seen my yard know that the Lord did not bless me with either the resolve or the interest in a lawn. However, I do try to keep some grass alive. Every spring I go out and try to plant more grass seed in all the bare places and the places overrun by weeds. I dump grass seed liberally in hopes of one day having a lawn instead of a semi bare weed patch. But what if I were to count out grass seed and plant only, say, 10 seeds in each area, what kind of results would I get? It would look like a few wisps of green on bare soil. On the other hand, if I generously spread the seed, I can joyfully look forward to a full lawn.**

**St. Paul said to the Corinthians,**

**“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” St. Paul is telling the Corinthians about giving. Paul is saying there is fulfillment and joy in giving to God and he wants us to experience that joy.**

**God is the source of all that we have. We acknowledge that God is really the owner of everything and he has made us managers or stewards.**

**St. Paul writes:**

**“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....Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also**

**supply and increase your storage of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.”**

**Notice that word “grace.”**

**“God is able to make all grace abound to you.” It is through God’s grace that He gives us all that we have. Grace is the “undeserved love” that God gives, but it is also everything we need to maintain this body and life. We are given that grace in our Baptisms, and we reflect His gifts in our lives. That is why we give. We give because God first gave.**

**When you understand that all giving comes from God, it is hard to be a disinterested giver who only gives from what he has left over or even a dutiful giver who gives out of guilt. You become a joyful giver who delights in giving, just like God. One example of that is James L. Kraft, creator of Kraft Foods. He was broke, peddling cheese from his wagon in Chicago back in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and he decided that he was going to focus on giving instead of earning. He began giving 25% of his income to God. It worked out pretty well for him and he continued doing this for the rest of his life. He once said,**

**“The only investment I ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord.”**

**Of course giving to God is not an investment with the expectation of a certain outcome, but an investment knowing that whatever the outcome, it will be wonderful because God is in control. So giving is done happily, cheerfully. Paul writes to the Corinthians:**

**“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give; not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. . . . You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God”**

**If we are not giving cheerfully, God does not want our gift because giving is not for God, but for us. We are the benefactors of giving to God in multitudinous ways. Let me give you a specific example. It is your anniversary. You take your spouse out to a nice restaurant. The two of you are enjoying a nice romantic time together when your spouse looks into your eyes and says, “I want to thank you for this time together. It is so thoughtful of you.” And then you say, “Why, don’t think a thing about it. I’m just doing my duty!” How’s that going to fly? We don’t want someone we love to give us anything because of duty. We want it given out of love. It is no different with God.**

**It’s not an easy thing to keep our motives in check, is it? Think of the many possible motives for giving: Sense of responsibility. Guilt. Compassion. Self-satisfaction. Love. Fear. Commitment. Public praise or acknowledgement. Thanksgiving. Reward. The reality for us is that we are constantly at war with our sinful nature, and it’s truly impossible for us, on our own, to be “holy” in our motivation for giving.**

**There’s also the other side of the coin, so to speak, isn’t there? I’m talking about the reluctance to give. There is a huge plumbing problem in American churches. The pipes are stopped up with “Me-ism.” People are blessed with resources from God but are confused about why He gave**

**them those resources. They might think, “Hey, maybe it’s so I can have a bigger car, a longer vacation, or a nicer house.” God’s not against us having those things and enjoying them—unless we are no longer seeking first the kingdom of God and are simply using God for our own selfish purposes. What are our priorities? We can measure our priorities by what each of us does with the money and possessions we have in our control.**

**The truth is that God created and designed us in His image to give, not to hoard or squander. We are following our sinful nature when we are mainly prone to keep and not give. A heart that hoards is not a happy heart. It’s not a trusting heart. At the end of the day, it is poorer, not richer.**

**So what are we to do? Of all the examples of God’s grace, the one at the center is His sending Jesus into the world to die for our sins. When we could not do anything about our sinful condition, God gave His very best: He gave the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to pay for our sins. That is the greatest example of giving the world has ever seen. Look to the cross of Christ; keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the perfecter of your faith. Consume his Word. Feast on his body and blood. Trust in the hope you have in Him and Him alone, and you will find the joy of salvation that leads to Christian giving and the blessings that true giving brings.**