

**SERMON NOTES:** 10/08/23

**SCRIPTURE READING:** 2 Cor 9:6 - 12.

**MESSAGE:** Serving Through our Giving: A Thankful and Generous Heart.

Last Sunday, we started this series on stewardship by looking at the basis of our giving from the story of the children of Israel. We saw God preparing them to enter the promised land by instructing them to destroy altars built by the Canaanites and then build alters for God where they would worship him. We saw the many ways of giving and sacrifices that God recommended for their worship.

Today, we gather here to reflect upon the profound connection between our giving and a Thankful and Generous Heart. The act of giving is not just a financial transaction; it is a powerful expression of our faith and a reflection of the transformation that occurs when we allow God to work within us. In **2 Corinthians 9:7**, we are reminded that we should give what we have decided in our hearts to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." i.e., giving from a place of generosity and a thankful heart.<sup>1</sup> Giving has not been easy, but we must always trust God with all that he has given us. Why? The answer to this is not in the head but in the heart, as shown in the following illustration by pastor Billy Strayhorn.

According to a story by Pastor Billy Strayhorn, generosity was once illegal in Santa Cruz, California. As in, it was illegal for someone to put money in other people's parking meters without their permission.<sup>2</sup> The generous practice called "plugging coins" was considered an illegal act by the Santa Cruz municipal code. Interestingly, the fine for a parking violation was **\$12.00**, while the penalty for "plugging" was **\$13**.

Mr. Twister, whose real name is **Cory McDonald**, is a professional clown and balloon twister who had spared many car owners in Santa Cruz, California, the misery of that twelve-dollar parking ticket by putting quarters in their expired parking meters. After several warnings, Mr. Twister was ticketed for his random acts of 'illegal' kindness but did not stop doing good.

Friends, Mr. Twister's generosity was not from his head but his heart, which challenges us today as we think of our giving to God. How generous are we, and what hinders us?

Paul, in today's scripture, shows us that God is not in the business of compelling givers.<sup>3</sup> He seeks cheerful givers like Mr. Twister, who knew that God's grace increases all the time when we give generously. However, just like Mr. Twister had challenges, all who want to give encounter some hindrances.<sup>4</sup> Some are real, and others may be in the mind. One of the biggest challenges to giving is the feeling of inadequacy. We all feel the current and anticipated pressure from all the bills and financial commitments. We worry about droughts, crop failures, ballooning gas prices, and low prices for our crops. We are

also concerned about our dwindling church attendance and lost income because those we looked up to are not there anymore. It is easy to be lost in fear when we keep our eyes and minds focused on challenges and not on God. In verses **7 & 8**, Paul tells us that we should give with the heart, not our minds, when he says, *“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart”*<sup>5</sup> while assured that *“God is able to make all grace abound to you.”*

**Conclusion:**

Brothers and sisters, as we reflect on **2 Corinthians 9:6-12**, we are reminded that generosity is not merely a financial act or requirement; it is a spiritual principle that governs our lives as Christians. Are you sowing sparingly or generously? Friends, when we sow generously, we reap bountifully in God’s time.

Let us prayerfully consider how we can sow generously in our lives—whether it be in our time, resources, or love—knowing that as we do, we participate in God's divine plan of blessing and abundance. Like Mr. Twister, let our grateful heart and generous spirit cause us to constantly seek opportunities to give. Remember, **Prov 22:9** says, *“The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.”*

May we experience the blessing of abundance so that we embrace the call to be cheerful givers, confident in God's promise to multiply our harvest and bring glory to His name. **Amen.**