

Lamentations 3:22-24 + II Corinthians 9:10-15

What will your Legacy Be?

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There are many ways a sermon on a day like this can go wrong. In fact, a sermon can go wrong on any given day, but especially when talking about faith and money. The most common way it goes wrong is when people hear guilt and shame rather than grace and gratitude. Neither guilt nor shame are helpful emotions, though, like weeds in spring, they always return when talking about money.

So let me be clear at the beginning. Everything that is good in our life springs from the well of grace - God's undeserved and unmerited favor - and the only appropriate response to this grace is gratitude. Karl Barth said it beautifully: ***Gratitude follows grace as thunder follows lightning.*** So this morning I hope that the overflowing grace of God will be your deep joy and gratitude will flow from your heart as naturally as thunder follows lightning.

Barth, we know, borrowed from Saint Paul who is emphatic about God's goodness toward us. "God," Paul says, "will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times, so that many will thank God for your gifts which they receive from us."

What most of us do is measure our resources against our expenses, then determine what we can do when faced with invitations to give. We conclude we are not rich and have little to give away and perhaps long for the day when we could do more. That is our common story. Saint Paul says there is a different way. Paul begins with God and God's capacity to do far more than we imagine. Much like the passage from Lamentations: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies are new ***every*** morning. Therefore I will hope in God." Having grounded everything in God's capacity to give, Paul then makes the move toward us: ***God*** will make ***you*** rich ***enough!*** Don't you love that word enough? Enough means just that; not more than you need nor less than you need. But just enough so that you can be generous with others at all times!

Think about that for moment. Rather than measure your resources against your expenses to determine your giving which always leaves you shorter than you would like, Paul says begin with God - give thanks for what you have, which always make you rich just enough to share with others. It's a way to live that is focused on God's grace and gives birth to gratitude and generosity.

A Haitian farmer who by all measures is poor told us that proverb when we visited with him a couple of weeks ago. He said "The one who never eats alone, will never go hungry." It was his way of saying when you share what little you have you will always have enough for yourself.

Saint Paul is saying: when your heart is rooted in God and you trust in God's faithfulness, you will always have enough to share. And notice what happens when we share what we have. St. Paul says, "***this service you render not only meets the needs of God's people, but also produces an outpouring of gratitude to God.***"

When you and I share what we have with others, it creates a groundswell of gratitude in the hearts of many, who in turn share what they have with others. Our sharing becomes part of a much larger work of God among people in the world.

Don't you want to be part of such a movement of God?

Now to the question of the day: What will your legacy be? Or perhaps better: what do you want your legacy to be? It's a question that is based in the present but points to the future of Saint Mark for generations to come.

A couple of weeks ago in Haiti while visiting among the disabled residents of Wings of Hope, I happened to glance on the wall of the new building. There, to my surprise, was a plaque recognizing Saint Mark for our contributions. That is a legacy of our service to others. One week later I was at a conference at Wheaton College where I discovered the museum founded by Marion Wade for the papers of C.S. Lewis and - to my delight - the original wardrobe Lewis used when writing the Chronicles of Narnia. That is a Legacy of Mr. Wade that will be joy and learning for generations to come. What will your legacy be?

Our Legacy Campaign will set aside 10% of our contributions for mission/service. This desire to serve others with our money is deep in the core of Saint Mark. I am pleased that it remains a core component of this campaign. We also want to ensure that children of the future who fill our Sunday School classrooms will benefit from a building that is beautiful and fully adequate. Saint Mark is known for opening our facilities to the community. This campaign will ensure that we can continue that sharing not for ourselves alone but for the glory of God and the love of our neighbors.

I'm excited. God will give you enough to share with others! Trust God in your giving. When you do, gratitude will abound to the glory of God!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
To God be the Glory.
Amen.