

Well, let's take our Bibles and turn to Second Corinthians, chapter 8 and 9. It wasn't planned this way, but I'm actually going to speak on giving, because we're in a series of grace. Remember, we have looked at the issue, total grace? That grace is not a starter kit. You don't get saved by grace and then, you know, you move on to something else. We're saved by grace. We live by grace. We're kept by God's grace. We're enabled by God's grace. When we get to heaven, it will be because the grace that has brought us safe thus far is the grace that will bring us home. It's all grace.

We've been looking at different aspects of God's grace and we're looking at another one this morning and next Sunday morning: the grace of giving, or what I call sacrificial grace. The grace of giving. The grace of God should prompt us to be generous. That's what we're looking at this morning on a message I've called "Happy to Give."

Take your Bibles and we'll read just the opening five verses of chapters 8 and 9 in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. You're probably thinking right now, "Oh, now. Not another message on giving." Well, I've only preached one in the last year or so and I think this message will put giving in a whole different light. We tend to isolate it and Paul's going to put it in the context of God's glory and the gospel and the sense of God. I think it's going to be refreshing. It's going to be challenging, no doubt.

Listen to Paul as he writes to the Corinthians. Here's what he says. Chapter 8, second letter. "Moreover brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God." You may be seated.

I was just in Texas last week, in the Big D, and so I want to begin the story this morning with something about the biography of Sam Houston, who has been described as the father of Texas. He led the Texans in the fight against General Santa Anna and the Mexican army at the Battle of San Jacinto. The defeat of Santa Anna led to the establishment of the state of Texas.

Like all frontiersmen, Sam Houston was a man's man. In fact, he was fierce. He was a fighter. He was Scotch/Irish by ethnicity. He was a hard worker. He had political ambition. Like many of those frontiersmen, he liked the bottle a little bit too much. In fact, he was called the "Big Drunk."

His second wife was a believer, Margaret. She was a Baptist by conviction and she was working on her husband. It took a while, but in November 19, 1854, Sam Houston makes a public confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, at the age of 63. If you read about his baptism, it's quite interesting. He's baptized in the chilly waters of the Little Rocky Creek. He was baptized by Pastor Rufus Burleson, who was the pastor of Independence Baptist Church and the President of Baylor University. When he was going down into the water, Pastor Burleson noticed that he still had his wallet in his pocket, so he suggested that he might hand his wallet over to someone who was witnessing the baptism. Sam Houston famously replied, "It needs baptizing, too." So historians tell us, "One of the greatest religious leaders of early Texas baptized the greatest political leader of Texas, wallet and all."

I love that image, the image of a baptized billfold. You see, in surrendering your life to the Lord Jesus Christ that will always involve the act of consciously putting your pocketbook at His disposal. I don't

think I need to tell you this. We know this in theory, but we don't often practice it. In belonging to Jesus Christ, everything that belongs to us automatically belongs to Him, as Lord and as Master of our lives. That's just true in general, anyway. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. What have you received that you were not given? Job 41, verse 11 tells us "All that is under heaven belongs to Him." Proverbs 3, verses 9 and 10, tells us that we need to honor the Lord with our possessions. What we do with our money is a reflection of our devotion and dedication to Jesus Christ.

Now, if what we have is His, that would remind us that everyone of us is God's money managers. I don't know if you've got a money manager. You say, "I don't need one, because I don't I don't have enough money to manage." Okay. I get it. But some of you might have a money manager, but do you realize you're a money manager? Whether that's \$50,000 a year or \$500,000 a year, that's God's money and you manage it while you're here, for His glory. You're what's called the steward of your time, your treasure and your talents.

And you and I need to grasp that afresh, myself included. The money that we receive, the money that we spend, the money that we share, is His money. Now if I've convinced you of that, here's something to think about. This is going to be the pivot point in the sermon. What we have is His. Everybody agree? What do you have that you haven't received? What we have is His, because what we have He gave. Follow me so far? Watch where it goes. What we have is His, because what we have He gave, so what we have we must give as He directs us, since it's His.

Now if that's true, and it is true, let's turn to Second Corinthians 8 and 9. Let's think about this idea of the baptized billfold. Let's think of this idea of stewarding our money, managing our money for God's glory. I want to suggest to you, and we'll look at it this week and next week, Second Corinthians 8 and 9 is extended teaching on the act and art of grace giving. It's probably the most clear and compelling and comprehensive passage anywhere in the New Testament and, I would even suggest, the Old Testament, for that matter, with regards to the grace of giving.

Now let me put the text in it's context. Let's think about the history behind it. The history behind these two chapters is the fact that Paul, during his missionary journeys, was collecting money for the saints in Jerusalem, because the church in Jerusalem was poor. If you go to Acts 11:27-30 you'll realize at one point there was a famine in Judea and it was hitting the saints in Judea and Jerusalem. If you go to First Corinthians 16:1-4, Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, he talks about the collection for the saints. When you tie that to Romans 15:25-27 and Galatians 2, it's a collection for the Jewish saints in Jerusalem.

Paul's going to Gentile churches in Macedonia and then Corinth and other cities and saying, "Guys, would you give to the saints in Jerusalem?" Paul's got a bit of an idea behind this. He's thinking this is a great bridge building project, because you read the book of Acts, the Jewish believers were struggling with where the Gentiles fit in. That's what the Council of Jerusalem's all about. You know what Paul's saying, as he does in Galatians 3? "There's neither Jew nor Gentile in Jesus Christ." Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if the Gentile believers bailed out the Jewish believers and we build a bridge here and we show that we're one in Christ? That's kind of the history behind this. Paul is gathering a collection and it's not only practical in its purpose, to relieve them in famine, it's theological in it's purpose and it will promote unity.

Now it's interesting ... Look at verses 10 and 11 of chapter 8. He'll say this: "And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began," which would take us back to his first letter,

this collection that they had already contributed, or were beginning to get together this collection and has promised to help. So he admits that. He says "You know what? You're doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; but now you also must complete the doing of it."

So what's the background to chapter 8 and 9? It's a collection for the saints. It will relieve their famine and their need. It will promote unity and, you know what? They started to get involved a year ago and Paul's reminding them, "Hey, this needs to come full circle. Do what you said you were going to do. Get that collection. Let's send it to the saints in Jerusalem." That's the history behind it.

But there's a theology behind it, as we look at this text in its context. What is the theology? It's the self-giving of God, through Jesus Christ and the gospel. That's what's prompting Paul's call to give. Behind their giving to the saints in Jerusalem stands God's giving of Jesus Christ. Can I show you this?

Scroll down to verse 9. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." And he's talking about the poor saints in Jerusalem who need to be enriched. Why should they do it? The gospel. Hasn't God enriched you? Hasn't God given you His grace in the poverty that was your life before Jesus Christ? Grace and the doctrine of grace prompts and is the driving force in Paul's appeal.

Let me just show you it again. Look at verse 1: "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God." Look at verse 6: "So we Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well." Look at verse 7: "But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace." What grace? The grace of giving that was displayed generously by the Macedonians. He'll go on to talk about the grace of God in Jesus Christ in verse 9 and, if you scroll to the end of chapter 9 and verse 15, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."

So the history is a collection for the poor saints, the unifying of the church and the fact that the Corinthians need to finish what they started. But the theology that's driving it is, "Hey, guys. Why should you be generous? Why should you heed my appeal to help the brothers and sisters in Israel? Here's why. Because God has been so gracious to you."

Now that ties into our study, right? Total grace. We've look at saving grace, serving grace, singing grace, sharing grace, strengthening grace, suffering grace. Here's sacrificing grace, where we sacrifice to relieve God's people, locally and globally. Where we finance global missions. Where we support God's servants and we do it because grace prompts us to do it.

One of the effects of the gospel is that it pries open our hands and hearts to give to others. Jesus says it is more blessed to give than to receive. See, grace is not something we believe in. It is something we experience and live out. One of the ways the grace of God will display itself in our life is in generous giving.

So let's look at this passage. There's two chapters. We'll kind of hop, skip and jump across them. My initial outline is the motives of grace giving, the manner of grace giving, the multiplication of grace giving, the message of grace giving. We're only going to do one and a bit of those this morning.

What about the motives of grace giving? We're going to answer the question "why." Why should you give to the Lord's work? Why should you be a generous Christian? Why should you be known for your liberality to people in need, the gospel endeavor. I've got three reasons that jump out in the text. Let's start to work our way through them.

Number one, the praise of God. The praise of God. Why should you give? Because God gets glory when you give. God gets glory when you give. And what's true of giving is true of living. It's true of forgiving. It's true of anything in our life. Whatever we do, we do it to the glory of God . First Corinthians 10:31. "Whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, remember to reflect God's character. Put His glory on display.

You get a similar thought in Colossians 3, verse 17. We're made in the image of a gracious God. We're made in the image of a generous deity, therefore, let's reflect His glory in our giving. Let's honor the Lord with our possessions. Proverbs 3. Verse 9. And you're going to see this in the text.

Let's look at chapter 8, first of all. Look at verse 19 and the reference to the glory of God. Paul's speaking about the administration of this gift and how it ought to be handled. He wants certain guys to do it so there's integrity in the process of taking this collection to Jerusalem, but I want you to notice, in verse 19 he says that they ought to do this "to the glory of the Lord Himself."

Scroll down to verse 23. Similar thought with regards to the management of money. It ought to be aboveboard. There ought to be accountability. There ought to be integrity. Paul says why: so that as the gift is taken through the messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ, indeed, might take place.

Scroll down to verses 11 and 12 of chapter 9. He anticipates the gift going to Jerusalem and here's the fallout of it. While you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God, for the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while through the proof of this ministry they glorify God for the obedience of your confession of the gospel of Christ.

What's the point? When that money gets to Jerusalem, people will be relieved, mothers will be made happy, children will be fed, families will be helped. There'll be a smile on their face. There'll be a sense that they can get through the famine and they'll start giving thanks to God for the generosity of the Corinthians. God's going to get the glory. I think you've got my point. You want a motive to give?

If you give generously and give well, God gets glory and Jesus gets praise and I think that's what your life's all about, isn't it?

We don't have time to take a deep dive into this, but what does it look like, in some ways, to honor God with your money? Honor God with your possessions? Bring glory to God with your possessions? I just wrote down a little, [inaudible 00:16:11] bullet points for you to think about.

Number one. Make your money honestly. If you're going to honor God with your possessions, make sure you've worked hard and your money's honest. You haven't stole it. You haven't robbed somebody of what's duly theirs. You know? You're not making your money under the table. Make your money honestly.

Hold it lightly. Make it honestly, hold it lightly. What does that mean? Well, it's not yours, for starters. So don't on too tightly. If God wants to direct you to give it to someone or give it to something, you ought to do it, because you're holding it lightly and you're not trusting in uncertain riches.

That's another reason you've got to hold it lightly, because if you hold it too tightly and money becomes everything to you, it starts becoming your God and you start putting your trust in it, finding your joy there and your security there. That's bad for you spiritually. I Timothy 6 warns you, "Do not trust uncertain riches."

Make it honestly. Hold it lightly. Budget it appropriately. When your wage comes in, budget it. June and I have operated mostly on a budget called the 70/20/10 budget. We've got to pay our mortgage. We've got to pay our bills. We've got to take care of our girls on 70% of our income. Then we've got to save 20% because cars break down, girls need clothes and clothes and clothes. You know, you might want to go on a holiday. Might have a medical bill. All jokes aside, you get it. You need 20% money there for some discretionary spending or some savings that start to build up or you build it into your retirement. Money managers will tell you, you ought to be saving about 20% of your income for retirement. And then there's 10% that goes to the Lord and that's just a starting place. We've been able to do more than that at times, but nothing less than that.

I like that budget. Seventy, twenty, ten helps. But that's a good management of money. If you manage your money there's always money for the Lord and extra for others.

Make it honestly. Hold it lightly. Budget it appropriately and give it generously and spend it wisely. Remember what is a necessity and what is a luxury. God has given us all things to enjoy. Luxuries are not evil, but they're not always necessary and especially if somebody is suffering you could help or the Lord's work is impoverished while we're all buying ourselves luxuries rather than necessities. You get the point. Praise God with your income. Glorify Him. Baptize your billfold, so to speak. Bring it under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Number two. The poverty of God. Here's another motive. Here's another reason to give generously. Here's another reason, as Paul will tell the Corinthians, to excel in giving. Here's the reason. The impoverishment of Christ through the incarnation and His humiliation on the cross.

Look at verse 9. I've quoted it, but it's a wonderful verse and we often hear it preached by a Billy Graham or a Greg Laurie or an evangelist, and it's a great text, but we've often taken this gospel text out of its context. Paul's preaching the gospel here. Paul's bringing us to the cross. Paul's having us think about the incarnation, the virgin birth, all of that. For what reason? So we'd give more. So we'd kind of loosen our purse strings. What does he say? He's prompting them to give to the church in Jerusalem. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, for though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." He'll pick that theme up in chapter 9, verse 15. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift." Best gift that was ever given: Jesus Christ. My salvation.

So here we have this idea. Having talked about the glory of God as one motive, Paul, interestingly, gives us another motive when God in Jesus Christ sets aside his glory. How glorious is that? Humbles Himself, adds humanity to His deity, comes in the likeness of a man in the form of a servant. Becomes obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2, verses 5-11. Though He was rich, rich in glory, adored by angels, He became poor. Born into a poor home. Worked in a carpenter's shop alongside

Joseph. Throughout His ministry He had very little in terms of earthly belongings. In fact, the Bible says of our Lord Jesus, that the birds of the air have nests and the foxes have holes, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. Jesus didn't have a 401K and He didn't have a house, let alone two houses. In fact, when He died, He died naked on a cross and Roman soldiers gambled for His garments.

Though He was rich, but for our sake He became poor, that we in our poverty ... What does that mean? That means spiritual poverty. If we're going to get saved we've nothing to offer to God. Even our righteousness, our good works, our good deeds, they're filthy rags. They're like a dirty diaper. Literally, that's what that phrase means in the Hebrew. Or a cloth that's been stained by a woman's menstruation. Literally the idea, in Isaiah, that's what your good works look to God. Like filthy rags, stained cloths.

You've nothing to offer God. If you're going to get saved, God's going to have to do it. And you know what? He did it in the coming of Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself, was made poor that we in our poverty might be made rich. We're rich this morning. I'm not talking about the nice car you drove in. That's a blessing. That's cream on the cake. That's a cherry on the ice cream. I'm talking about what you have in Jesus Christ. Forgiveness. The gift of the Holy Spirit. The hope of heaven. Now we understand all of that. What you have is a glorious thing.

That's why I love Adrian Rogers. He said this. "You'll see how rich you are when you add up everything you have that money cannot buy and death cannot steal." I think he said somewhere else that there are some people who are so poor, all they have is money.

I like the story that comes out of Old England about the tax assessor who'd go through the villages of England, back in the early days people would get taxed on their property and their silverware and their tableware. This assessor comes to this old cottage and he asks the man what he's got that could be taxed. The guy said, "You want to know my possessions? Number one, I have everlasting life. Number two, I have a mansion in heaven. Number three, I have peace that passes all understanding. Number four, I have joy unspeakable. Number five, I have divine love and it never fails. Number six, I have a faithful wife. Number seven, I have healthy and obedient children. Number eight, I have loyal friends. Number nine, I have a song in the night. Number 10, I have a crown of life waiting for me in heaven." The tax assessor looked at him and said, "Man, you're rich and the best of it all is, it can't be taxed."

And so are you. Hm. And so am I. So am I. And you. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus. And when you know that, it makes a difference when you walk by a box on the Lord's day and you write a check and you swipe your card for the Lord's work.

Here's a point. Given that Paul's argument is this, primarily when it comes to giving, we give in the light of divine love, not human need. I'm not discounting human need. Paul will go on to talk about the need of the saints and the need to identify with them. But the point is this, what drives us to give? It's not human need. It's not the emaciated face of a child or the dirty look of the poor or the need to support a missionary and bring the gospel into fresh territory. That's not what motivates us. It's the cross. It's the grace of our Lord Jesus that motivates us.

Here's a third reason. Not only the praise of God, not only the poverty of God in Christ, but the people of God. The people of God. Look at verse four. Paul says that the Macedonians he's using here as an example, they implored us. They were begging to give. Oh, may their tribe increase. Where are those

Christians today? Begging to give, "for I bore them witness, that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing" (verse 4) "imploping us with much urgency, that we would receive the gift for the saints in Jerusalem." Notice this, "and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Fellowship and finances. Paul ties a knot between them here. Fellowship and finances. They financed the church in Jerusalem out of a sense of fellowship. Koinonia. Sharing. Oneness. Partnership.

You realize that there's a connection between coins and Koinonia. Finances and fellowship? Because right here this morning, we're one big family. Now we're not all going to go back to the same house. We don't all live in the same zip code, but we're one big family. We're the saints of God in Anaheim Hills. We're connected to a worldwide family of saints in Ireland and England and Scotland and Germany, Mexico, and all over the world. We have to have a sense of belonging to that family. When we have a sense of belonging to that family, we'll give to that family, both locally and globally. That's the argument here.

The analogy is this. Every time I got a paycheck, whether it was as an engineer, as a police officer or now as a pastor, immediately I realize that paycheck's about June and it's about Angela and it's about Laura and it's about Beth. It's about our family, because I work to provide for my family. I want to give them as good a life as I can. I want to meet their necessities. That paycheck belongs to someone other than me, although it's in my hand, because I belong to something bigger than me. It's called a family.

Paul's saying you need to have the same thought when you grab that paycheck. You've got a spiritual family as well as a physical family. The saints in Macedonia believed that they should give to the family over in Jerusalem, out of the fellowship of the saints.

See you and I need to grasp this. You get the same idea in Philippians 4:15-18, where Paul acknowledges the sharing of the partnership, or the fellowship of the Philippians in giving to him once and again, to meet his necessity.

You go to Acts 2:44-45 and Acts 4:32-37 and you'll see how the family of God in Jerusalem took care of itself. Those who had gave to those who didn't have. And by the way, it wasn't an early form of communism. It was never forced. It was always voluntary and spontaneous. But it was driven by an obligation to take care of the family. New Testament fellowship, life in the body of Christ, has economic implications. That's what this text is telling us.

I like the story of the guy who looked up at the usher who had the collection place in his hand and he was going through the church and the guy looked at him and said, "Well, I support I could give \$5 and not feel it," to which the usher replied, "Why don't you give \$50 and feel it?" And we ought to feel it. There ought to be feeling to our giving. But here's the kind of feeling it ought to be. Adrian Rogers again. So quotable. He said this. This is worth writing down and praying over. "Don't give until it hurts." Have you ever heard that statement? "Oh, give until it hurts?" No, here's what Adrian Rogers says. "Don't give until it hurts. Give until it feels good." That was what was going on here. They urged us, they appealed to us. "Give us a chance to give." And what was driving the church in Macedonia? Love. Feeling. Compassion for the saints in Jerusalem. Don't give 'til it hurts. Give 'til it feels good. And that feeling is a love for God's people and His work in the gospel.

For the time that remains, let's go to what I call the manner of grace giving. Here I'm starting probably one of seven or eight points, which we'll finish next Sunday. We're going to look at the high. We've

looked at the why. Why should I give and why should it be generous? Why should it be gracious? Because God's glory is bound up in it. The gospel of Jesus Christ prompts it. Love for the saints makes it necessary.

But what about the manner? Then how ought you to give? What way should you give? Well, there's several of those. I'm just going to do one this morning.

Grace giving is costly. You knew that was coming. Grace giving is costly. I mean it's got to be, because if the cross is the model, costly giving is the outcome, because that's how God loved us. He spared not His own Son, delivered Him up for us all. "For God so loved the world He gave."

So let's look at verses one to four. Let me read them, make a point, kind of wrap this up in the last ten minutes or so here. "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For we bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they give freely and liberally to the collection for the saints."

Notice "out of their deep poverty." The Greek is they're at the bottom of the barrel. Didn't have a lot to work with. Rock bottom poverty. But it's down there in rock bottom poverty they rise up in joy and give liberally. So here we have poor saints giving liberally and today we have generous saints giving poorly. Something wrong with that. The glory of God has fallen among us. The gospel of Jesus Christ doesn't mean as much to us. And the love of God's saints is weak, because if that's all there, you're going to give generously. They reach down deep and give liberally. Their politics and their lifestyle might have been conservative, but their giving was liberal. We need some more liberals in the church. Liberals like this.

I want you to notice what Paul says. "I bear them witness that they give according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability." Do you realize there's three levels of giving? Beneath your ability. According to your ability and beyond your ability. Where are you at this morning? Where's June and I at? Is it beneath our ability? Far less than what we have? Is it according to our ability? It's a good representation of how God's prospered us. Or, is it above your ability? They were above their ability.

I like what Randy Alcorn says about that in his book "Money, Possessions and Eternity," a very, very good book, by the way. What does it mean to give beyond our ability? It means to push our giving past the point where the figures don't add up. It means to give where the bottom line says we shouldn't. It means to give away not just the luxuries, but some of the necessities. It means living with the faith of the poor widow. For most of us, giving according to our means would really stretch us. Giving beyond our means would appear to break us, but it won't, because God is faithful. That's the point here. We ought to give generously.

Remember that scene back in Exodus where the tabernacle's being built? Moses tells us the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. The people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work. I can tell you there's very few pastors who have ever lived to experience that, any church that's lived to experience that. You know, we've got so much more. Don't give to us, give to somebody else. Or whatever the case might be.

Remember David, back in the Old Testament, Second Samuel 24:24, where he wants to build an altar and worship God? He is given a piece of ground by a Jebusite, a threshing floor, for free. What would we

say? "David, don't look a gift horse in the mouth." But he says to the guy, "I can't take that" and he gives him fifty shekels, which is quite a bit. And here's why he does that. Here's what he says. "I will surely buy it off you at a price, neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." David said, "I've got to pay something for this, because I understand that worship ought to be costly. I'm not going to build an altar on ground that cost me nothing, because that means the offering cost me nothing and I'm not doing it."

And yet that's where we're at, too often. Proverbs 3:9, "honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of your labor." God deserves the first fruits. The best. He's the priority. But you know and I know in my life, at times, He hasn't got the best, He's got the leftovers. The leftovers of what He gave? And that's just not the way it ought to be.

Michael Youssef tells a humorous story about a lady who calls the hotline at Butterball Turkey Company. You know Butterball turkeys you get a Thanksgiving. You know what? It's said that they receive hundreds of calls from people every Thanksgiving who ask about how to thaw their turkey, prepare their turkey, roast turkey. One year a woman calls and asked, you know what, and says, "I've still got a turkey in my freezer. It's been there a good while. I'm just kind of wondering if I can still use it." The person on the other end asks, "How long have you had it?" She says 23 years. That would be one tough bird. Twenty-three years. The lady says, "You know what? You could probably still cook it, believe it or not, even after two decades, but," she says, "It's going to have a distinct freezer taste." And she said, "I recommend you discard it and buy yourself a new turkey." The lady says, "You know? That's what I was thinking. Well, we'll just donate the old turkey to the church."

That's a true story. Talk about leftovers. And we laugh and it's humorous, but you know, the joke's on you and the joke's on me. I wonder what that old turkey looks like in my life, where the Lord hasn't been given what He should have been given.

Which should remind me as we close, I notice again ... I kind of missed this point. Their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. Don't miss that. What is it saying? Simple, but you'll want to run past it. Their economic hardship didn't stop them giving. We hear this all the time from families that are stretched, or you've heard it. "Well, I'd love to give more, but you know I can't afford it. The budget just won't allow that to happen."

But it seems that those in Macedonia didn't allow their economic hardship to stop their giving, because giving is not a matter of resources. It's a matter of heart. It's a matter of commitment and compassion. Giving is comparative. The bigness of the generosity of your gift is not measured by what you have and what you give. Giving is comparative. They were poor, but Paul says that gave generously.

How does the poor give generously? Well, you can't be talking about amount, because they don't have a lot to give, the poor. But yet, he says it was big. How can something that's small monetarily be big spiritually? Because giving is comparative. It's because when God measures our giving He doesn't just look at the monetary amount you give. He looks at how much you had to give in the first place and how much you kept after you gave. That's what strikes Paul about them. They were, remember the Greek? Rock bottom poor. And yet they gave liberally. They're down at the bottom of the barrel, but they gave liberally. So you have to assume it couldn't have been a big amount, but it was big in terms of measuring it as a grace gift.

You know the story, as we wrap up and the team comes up. Luke 21, the story of the widow's mite. Did you forget that story, where Jesus is standing across, looking at people put their offering into the treasury? Here's a thought: Jesus sees what you give this morning. Jesus sees what you haven't given for a month. He sees it all. And that's the Jesus who made you rich spiritually. I wonder how He's feeling.

Well, in Luke 21, we read this: "And Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a poor widow putting in two mites." You know? Hardly two pennies to rub together, but she gives them. And He said this, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all, for all these give out of their abundance." Stop. So Jesus is saying, "If you just look at the gift, they give more. They give a thousand bucks. They give ten thousand dollars. She gave a couple of quarters or a silver dollar. But hold on," Jesus says. "They give out of their abundance to put their offerings before God. She gave out of her poverty." That sounds like the Macedonians, right? She gave out of her poverty. Put in all the livelihood she had. She didn't have much, but what she gave was all, which made it bigger.

Think about that. Quantitatively, a gift may be big, like \$100,000, \$50,000, \$10,000, \$1,000. Quantitatively, a gift may be big, but quantitatively a lesser gift of \$50, \$100 or \$150 may be bigger when you understand the context out of which it was given. Out of poverty, not out of riches. Giving is comparative.

That's why I like what R. G. LeTourneau says. Remember LeTourneau? Built all these big earth moving machines? Made a ton of money? Early in his career he pledged to God that he would, if possible, give away 90% of his income and live on 10. And he did it for 33 years, no matter how rich he became and he became rich. He gave 90% of it away, because here's what he said in explaining what he did. "It is not a question how much of my money I'm going to give to God. It is rather how much of God's money I'm going to keep for myself."

That brings us to where we started. What we have is His, because what we have He gave, therefore, what we have we ought to give as He directs us, because it's His. And we ought to give for His praise. We ought to give in the light of the cross. We ought to give because we love God's people and we love the gospel. We love missions. We love the kingdom.

If we're going to give, a place to start is at the foot of the cross, where you give sacrificially and costly and remember that giving is comparative. It's not just what you give, it's out of what context did you give and what did you keep after you give?

Let's pray. Lord, we do want to honor you with our possessions. We do want to reflect your glory in our giving. We do want to let the world know that grace is operative in our life, that we're rich in the things that money cannot buy and death cannot steal. Help us to realize this morning this innate partnership we have with every single Christian we know. They're the family. When one part of the family's hurting, we need to help. We need to get the family message out. We need to support the family house. We need to support the servants of God in that house. Help us to think that through, and Lord, help us to give generously.

May our giving cost. Too much of our giving, sometimes mine included, has still left us pretty comfortable. I'm not sure how many of us can talk about giving that's made us uncomfortable. Help us to get to that place. Help us to fight the materialism that is this place called Orange County. C.S. Lewis

reminded us that prosperity has a way of knitting a man's soul to the world. Help us to break free from that. Help us to live as true Christians. Help us to remember what the early apostles said. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk." So we ask and pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.