

An Abundance of Thanksgiving

2Corinthians 9:6-15

Thanksgiving Eve, November 21, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

God is able to abound to you.

God is not only able to abound to you, He has and does abound to you.

All of His abundance toward you is grace.

Let us make an accounting of His grace.

It begins with your salvation. God abounded to You when Christ came to You. When Christ came to you He was by nature wealthy, but He came to you in poverty. Christ was wealthy because He is the maker of all things. He is in possession of all things. As the maker and possessor of all things none compares to Him in wealth. But when He came to you He came in poverty. The Christ had nowhere to lay His head. That means that while He seems to have been in possession of a house in Capernaum it is most likely that he was simply residing with Simon Peter. He owned no home. He resided with Joseph and Mary and they were not wealthy. When they offered the purification for Mary's childbirth in the temple, Joseph and Mary gave the smallest and least expensive gift that the Law of God allowed. Joseph was a stonemason or carpenter. He was part the new working class in the Roman Empire. He got paid very little. In our common parlance, he got paid minimum wage. If the Christ followed His guardian in his profession until the Christ began His public ministry, then the Christ was poor. He made minimum wage. Then once He does begin His ministry, He is moving around in Galilee and other places. He stays in homes that are not His own. When He travels to Judea there are people who will not receive Him even though Ancient Near Eastern hospitality demanded it. He had no place to lay His head. He had no permanent residence once He began to preach. He came to you in poverty though He was rich.

In that poverty He made you rich. He made you rich in grace. It was in that poverty that the Christ obtained His righteous life. It was in that mean way of living that He obtained His sinlessness. He was sinless to begin with, but He also obtained sinlessness in the life that He led. He then took that life and offered it in sacrifice to take away your sin. In this way He has made you rich. By taking away your sin, He has made you righteous. You are totally and completely righteous in the sight of God. With the righteousness that Christ has given to you, you have obtained the ear of God. He will listen to the righteous. Since Christ has made you righteous God will listen to you.

Furthermore the righteousness of Christ that He has given to you removes your death. It grants you resurrection from the dead and everlasting life. There is now nothing in this life which you absolutely have to have now that you have received the righteousness of Christ. Even if something in this life should take your life, the righteousness of the Christ will raise you from the dead and give you everlasting life. You therefore do not owe anyone. You are beholden to no one. Christ has purchased you for God and you belong to Him.

And finally under the blessing of the righteousness of the Christ God has blessed you with all of the other blessings that you have. He has blessed you with the abundance of food that you enjoy. He has blessed you with the abundance of the clothing that is yours. Consider the fullness of your closets and behold the blessing of God upon your life. He has given you the abundance of your home and of all of the things that are in it. God has granted you the abundance of land if you own it and of the equipment to work it. He has granted you the abundance of the necessary things to perform the vocations that He has given to you. God provides you with the abundance of the things for your children. I myself have more than the parsonage can realistically hold. He has granted you the abundance of your friends and all of the kindness that they give to you. He has granted you the abundance of your family and of all the service that they render to you. He has granted you the abundance of your vocations, not only those vocations which provide a living for your life, but also the meaning that you derive from those vocations and those vocations which are the meaning unto themselves, but provide no paycheck.

And all of this He has done only out of fatherly divine, goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.

And with the abundance of His grace He has provided the motive and with the abundance of His gifts in this life, He has provided you with the means to be generous.

The motive for generosity is thanksgiving. In thanksgiving to God you share your blessings with others. In particular you share your blessings with fellow believers in Jesus.

In some ways it is unfortunately that we do not refer to fellow members of our congregation as "brother" and "sister." There are a few of you that use those terms. I use them with my brother clergy, but God refers to all of us as His children and Jesus as His Son is our elder brother. In several places in Holy Scripture Jesus call us His brothers, meaning His brothers and sisters. We all have one Father. We all have one source. One God created us and one God redeemed us.

That means that every fellow member of the congregation is a brother of Christ and a son of God. Whether they be male or female does not matter, they are the brothers of Jesus and the sons or children of God.

That means that if we want to give thanks to God we give first to our fellow believers, especially those who are fellow members of the same congregation. It is with the members of the congregation that you sing God's praises together. It is with the members of the congregation that you confess your faith together. Other congregations do not share our confession of faith and even among those who do we are not routinely worshipping with them and saying the confession of our faith together. We are saying our confession of faith together with other members of this congregation. We stand together and say, "I believe..." It is with the fellow members of the congregation that we receive God's Word. When God delivers His Word to us it is in the context of these pews with these people. And the most important thing is that we eat the Lord's body and drink the Lord's blood together. We eat the same body. We drink the same blood. By eating the same body and drinking the same blood we are part of the same body and share the same life. What Jesus does for me at the Sacrament of the Altar, He is also doing for you and so we are brothers. We are the same before Him.

And so when we love God we show that love by loving His family. It is hard to love God in any concrete form. What shall we give Him that He does not already have? So we sing our praises to Him and we pray our prayers, but even in prayer it is more about how He loves us than it is about how we love Him.

And so God has provided us with a means for loving Him. He has provided us with His family. When your son or daughter is blessed by someone else, you know that the love that they show to your son or daughter extends also to you. You are blessed when your son-in-law or daughter-in-law lives faithfully with your son and daughter and see the service that they provide your son and your daughter. When they show love to them, they are showing love to you. The same is true with God. When you show love to His family, His children, you are showing love to Him.

In the abundance of the grace that God has given us in the Christ, we love Him. We love Him by loving the fellow members of Immanuel Lutheran Church. You are the body of the Christ. You are in fellowship with each other. You share a common confession of faith. Therefore your fellowship expresses itself in granting love to one another. That love is expressed by giving gifts to one another especially to those who are in need. That is why some scholarships for advanced learning are called fellowships. They are called that because God calls those gifts which we give to each other because of our common faith, fellowships.

And thus is the motive.

And with all of the abundance that God has given to us is the means. We cannot love the fellow members of our congregation unless God has blessed us. Therefore we cannot love them without God loving us. Therefore we cannot love God by loving them unless God loves us.

And so when we do give to the fellow members of our congregation, if the fellow members of the congregation are astute enough to understand our confession of faith, they will know that you did not give to them, but rather that God gave to them because He provided you with the motive and the means for doing so. In perceiving that God has given to them, they will give thanks to God. They may say thanks to you readily enough because you are the one delivering God's gifts on His behalf, but they will over all thank God for the kindness and love of the community that He has established.

And when you are in need they will give to you. When they do give to you, if you are astute enough to know the confession of our congregation's faith, then you too will know that the motive and the method of their gift toward you came from God and therefore their gift came from God. And you will give thanks to God. Oh, you will thank them true enough, but you will thank them as God's instruments, not as God Himself. You will give thanks to God.

And so the way that God has set things up there is a double thanksgiving. Whenever anyone receives blessings of body and soul from God, they give thanks. And then they love others with those blessings and those whom they love give thanks.

And in this double thanksgiving even prayer itself is wrapped up in thanksgiving for prayer assumes that God Himself is a cheerful giver.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.