

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED

II CORINTHIANS 9:10-15

THANKS, AND MORE THANKS

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown

*And increase the fruits of your righteousness,
while you are enriched in everything for all liberality,
which causes thanksgiving through us to God.*

*For, the administration [the carrying out] of this service
not only supplies the needs of the saints,
but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,*

*While, through the proof [examining] of this ministry they glorify God
for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ,
and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,
and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.
Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*

“Make Your Dollar Do More!” It’s a slogan used to get people interested in business propositions, credit card applications, investment opportunities, etc. However, Thanksgiving Day is not about your dollar doing more, but about your thanks doing more. THANKS, AND MORE THANKS to God!

In our text, Paul starts out, *Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown.* In farm and ranch life everyone knows that the Lord plays the major role in our food supply. Food does not come from the store, from the butcher, or even from the rancher and farmer himself, but from God. In fact, God provides the seed to plant the crops, and provides the grass in pasture and hayfield with its ability to grow anew each year, so that there is a harvest. Year after year God provides harvest for the nourishment of man and beast. It all began with God’s design at creation. *God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day (Genesis 1:11-13).*

Thus today we say, “Thank You, dear Lord. Thank you for the harvest given to us again.” Here, in our area, we know that the year could easily have been a Loss with capital “L.” We say, Thank You! And Thank You for preparing and “seeding” the way for next year.” So how do we multiply this Thank You into More Thanks?

But first note in our text Paul speaks of how God also *increases the fruits of your righteousness.* “Fruits of righteousness”—a spiritual harvest—growth in our faith in Jesus the Redeemer, and growth in our life of devotion to Him. Each year, greater trust in Jesus than the year before; each year we greater appreciation for our daily forgiveness, each year more opportunities to hear and learn the Word of Salvation, each year more opportunities to live lives of devotion to Him as we mature spiritually. How do we multiply this Thanks, into even More Thanks?

Answer: Paul mentions the circumstances and a particular act of “righteousness” which the believers at Corinth were involved with. They were bringing gifts for the needy believers, the needy “saints,” in Jerusalem—people whom they had never met, who lived some 800 miles away. The Corinthians had already made plans a year earlier to present a gift of assistance to those in Jerusalem, to be transported by Paul and his missionary companions. If they were concerned about how much they would be “short” after giving to these needy brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, Paul says, the same Lord who gives you physical and spiritual harvest, will continue to provide. *You are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.* Paul says, as you bring your gifts of Christian love, God will continue to “enrich!” you. He will abundantly provide, so that you can be even more liberal, single-minded, generous, in helping the fellow Christians in Jerusalem *which causes thanksgiving through us to God.* Paul says those, whom you help, also render their thanks to God! *The administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God.* Paul says, As you thank God for His blessings to you, and then as you share them and supply the needs of these “saints,” believers, they also render thanks to God. Thus, thanks is multiplied. THANKS, AND MORE THANKS!

It's easy when helping others, to focus on how much "I'm going to be out," Focus on how much these gifts to these believers will generate yet a second round of thanks to God, for the things He gave to you first and which you already received with thanks. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul says *Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10).* It isn't just Christians we help. We help all men alike. If, this winter, fire sweeps through part of Lemmon, I'm convinced you would lend a hand to help all, whether Christian or not. But especially lend a hand to Christian people. And especially to those who are of our own St. Luke's household of faith. The same is true with disaster relief around the world. We help all. But we especially want to help those of our sister CLC congregations and foreign church bodies in fellowship with us. These Christian recipients will multiply your thanks to God for what He has already given you. *For, the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God.*

It is your privilege to help. You will not be cut short. The Bible says, *"Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days (Ecclesiastes 11:1).* That which you give to help others may seem like it is money or goods lost to you. But it's not. It will come back, in ways that you may not consciously notice. In that same section of Ecclesiastes, we read, *"He who observes the wind will not sow. And he who regards the clouds will not reap (Ecclesiastes 11:4).* If you are looking for the exact best way to use your blessings to help out others, or the exact best way that will leave you the most, it won't happen. Just give from the heart.

Earlier Paul wrote, *He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver (II Corinthians 9:6-7).* If you are stingy in your assistance to others, you will find a lot of stinginess in life. If you are happy to help, you will find a lot of the same extended to you.

What lies behind all this help and this thanks being given to God? Jesus! God reached out to assist you in His Son Jesus. Christ was not stingy when it came to "saving your hide." He sweat blood in Gethsemane. He gave His back to the whip before Pilate, His head to the thorns of the crown, and His hands to the nails. He still said, Father forgive them—which includes each and all, which includes you and me. When those, whom you help, ponder and examine the proof and the cause for your service and ministry to them, they see Christ in your heart! *They glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men.* They praise God for the love of Christ in your heart.

They thank God for your liberal gift. The word translated "liberal" here is interesting. It does not mean "left-wing." It doesn't even mean "generous." The Greek word means "with a single purpose." Giving with a single purpose. Just giving for the sake of giving help to another. The others, then, give thanks to God in Christ. Do you ever have double motives in giving? Sometimes. And that is hardly generous giving. It is selfish giving. "I will give to get!" "I will give because I will profit somehow--I will give and accomplish a second thing." If someone would examine or "prove" such a gift, would they see the love of God in Jesus in your heart? I think not. On this Thanksgiving Day, be mindful that your gifts to help others are done in love for Christ. These gifts multiply thanks to God.

And by their prayer for you, they long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Your Christian love for others develops a longing and love in their hearts for you, whether they know you by face, or by name, or not. It's God's family acting together multiplying Thanks for God!

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! His gift to you takes your breath away. His gift cannot be put into words. It's indescribable! In response, give to the needs of others, liberally, with singleness of purpose, all because in Christ you and everyone else are saved, all because in Christ, God has loved you first.

Multiply thanks to God. THANKS AND, through others, MORE THANKS! A blessed Thanksgiving!

So be it! Amen.

Pastor Kanzenbach----