II Cor. 8:1-7; II Cor. 9:6-15; The Attitude and Action of Giving (Part 1) I. The Foundation for Giving II. The Character of Giving III. The Extent of Giving

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how much money do you have? Asking that question is a good way to shut down any conversation- no one likes to talk about their finances except with their own financial advisor. This past week I was working on our FAFSA information, and I had to answer questions about how much money I have in the bank, what assets I own, and what investments I have. Our view and use of money seems so earthly- so carnal. As Christians, we would rather not think or talk about it. But the Bible is not afraid to put this subject before us. Today- both this morning and tonight- we are going to be focusing on our view and use of money. The fact is, Jesus often used money to illustrate a spiritual truth. Many of Jesus’ parables used money to teach an enduring truth. But Paul uses a parable about a farmer who sows and reaps in our passage to teach us how to use money. A foolish farmer holds the seed and refuse to let it go- because if you do not let it go into the ground you will not be able to reap a harvest! You have to give it away in order to get a reward! Added to this, I am planning on teaching a Church Officer Training Course in a few weeks. In my preparation for that course, I came across a very helpful pamphlet on being a generous giver. One of the key roles and responsibilities of our deacons is found in their calling to encourage generosity within the church and to manage well the gifts that are placed in their care. So with this in mind, today we are going to be focusing on Attitude and Action of Giving. We will consider this them: Jesus Christ teaches us to view and use money with an eye towards eternity.

**I. The Foundation for Giving**

In our first point, we consider the foundation for giving. Why should we give to the church- or why should we support the ministry with our money? Well, the starting foundation given to us is this, everything belongs to God. The earth is the LORD’S and everything in it as Psalm 24 puts it. And since everything is the Lord’s- everyone and everything belongs to Him and He has the right to determine its proper use. It is God who gives seed to the sower and bread for food as 9:10 puts it. God provides food for the birds and clothing for the grass- and He has also provided for you. But He is pleased to use people- His children- to support and sustain the local ministry. In addition to the created right of use, our God also has the redemption right of use. We have been purchased by Jesus Christ. As the song puts it- take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee. We are consecrated for sacred service- having been created and redeemed by our God. This applies to the entirety of our lives and it includes all that we have. To say this another way, our talent, time and treasure all belongs to the LORD. Our ability- our God given interests and desires. Our days- the moments of our being. And our income- the money that we make and the possessions that have been placed in our care. We are stewards- the dollars we have in our bank account. The car we drive and the home we live in have all been given to us. As stewards we are to care for that which has been placed in our hands. The cattle on a 1000 hills belongs to Him. So what we do with our lives- how we use the gifts that God has given us- is to reflect this truth. He is the rightful owner- He is the master and we are the servants. We want to be a good steward and caregiver- for what do we have that has not been given to us. Luke 16:10- whoever is faithful in little is also faithful in much. If you have been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you true riches? You cannot love two masters- you cannot serve God and money.

Next, we see that what you do with your money is a testament to what lives in your heart. How you use your treasure proves what lives within. What do you love? Look at what Paul says in II Cor. 8:8. Gratitude is to prove your love is genuine. What you do with your money proves your love for others. So what you do with your money proves what and how you love. Loving God first- you will seek to use your money in a way that keeps God first and avoid the idolatrous use of treasure. Loving God first by supporting the church so that pastors can preach- and missionaries sent- so that everyone might hear the good news and give God the glory He deserves! Loving your neighbor as yourself means that you will use your money in such a way as to benefit your neighbor. Not only refusing to harm your neighbor, but positively seeking to benefit your neighbor. In the simple ways of paying your bills on time so that the worker can be paid a living wage. And on down the line to generously helping your neighbor who has no food or clothing by providing for those needs as you have opportunity. Although we may not think this way- Paul says that how you use money is a key way to prove that your love is genuine. Words are cheep- it is easy to say that your love your neighbor. But to put meat on the bones you have to back up your words with action. Love not in words alone, but love in deed and truth as I John 3 puts it. So the way in which you use money proves who is your master- who do you love? You cannot love God and love money. But if you truly love God, you will also love your neighbor and use your money to benefit them. The next foundation of our call to be generous in our giving is rooted in the example of Jesus Christ. And what you do with your money is to reflect the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As 8:9 continues, Jesus who was rich in the glory of heaven become poor for you. He took on the form of a servant- as Phil. 2 puts it- and considered the needs of others before His own. Jesus become poor in order to secure true and lasting riches for us. By His sacrifice He secured perfect righteousness, glory and peace for us. Now then, since Jesus was wiling to give of Himself- to give up His very life for our sakes- we ought to give of ourselves for others. Specifically- we should be willing to give of our talents, time and treasure for the benefit of the church. What Christ has done should then be reflected in what we do for others. If Jesus came to serve us- we should serve others. If Jesus was willing to give of His time for us- we should give our time up for others. The fact is, we have been so blessed! We are so rich- not just financially. We are so spiritually rich- what a heritage of faith has been passed on to us! Out of our riches, we ought to give! To share with others out of the riches that we have received- just as Jesus shared His own life and riches with us! So the foundation of generosity is found in creation and redemption. Rooted in our identity and calling as created and redeemed people. Our God does not call us to do anything that He has not first done for us! Particularly today- as we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Jesus gives us life- He has given us His body and blood! The most precious gift that could be given- His own life- was shared with us! It is this sacrifice that moves us to be grateful! As Jesus has offered Himself to us- so we ought to offer ourselves to other. Not exactly the same way- but we are called to make a sacrifice! We are to offer our lives as a pleasing sacrifice of praise- and in our tithes and offering we are giving- sacrificing- for the good of others. To be clear- the call to support the church is a sacrifice! You will be living on less than you once had. It is also an act of faith- as you trust that God has and will provide.

**II. The Character of Giving**

Now that we understand the foundation of the call to give, in our second point we will consider the character of the giver. Prosperity gospel says- give to the church and God will be happy with you. Nor do we give in order to earn or merit anything from God as we saw last week. I just saw this again this past week- a TV Evangelist named Jesse Duplantis said that the reason Jesus has not come back yet is because people are not giving enough money to church. Mr. Duplantis is a scammer- a TV personality that twists God’s word and bring shame upon himself. There is no connection in the Bible made between giving money and the return of Jesus. God’s timing is not our timing- and it is shame when people try to use the Christianity to get rich. Godliness is not a means of financial gain as I Tim. 6 says. So any supposed pastor or TV personality that uses the Bible to line his own pocket is a heretic- a false teacher. Mr. Duplantis is greedy and a lover of money. God does not manipulate people into giving. Rather, God reveals the character of the giver. Our reading from II Cor. 8-9 encourages generosity and reveals what a generous person will look like. First of all, in II Cor. 9:6-7 we find that the attitude of a giver that pleases God is this. He is cheerful v. 7 says! Generous in every way as v. 11 put it. When it comes time to give, He is glad and happy to do it! Joyful- literally prompted by a merry heart! His fist is not forced open- the money is not being wrestled from his hand. He gladly puts the money in the plate and happily sends his offering on its way! God loves a cheerful giver! Now how do you move from a reluctant, hesitant and complaining attitude to a cheerful one? Here again, the answer is found in thanksgiving! The more you focus on what you have- and what God has given you- the more cheerful and generous you will become! If you focus only on what you want and what others have, you will find that discontent and greedy desires only fills your heart! But added to that, thanksgiving and gratitude are the expected, normal response of someone who has been saved from death and granted eternal life! Since we have been born again by the Spirit- since we have been justified and adopted by the Father- since we have been loved and died for by the Son- how can we help but be a thankful, grateful and even generous people?! Do you remember what happened after the Israelites had been brought out of Egypt and it was time to build the Tabernacle? They were given the opportunity to give in Exodus 36 and they were so thankful- so generous- that Moses had to tell them to stop contributing! They had more than they could use! Can you imagine- having to tell the members of the church to stop giving so much- we have more than we can use! Again in I Chronicles 29- this time with the building of the Temple. They people and their leaders rejoiced and gave abundantly- with their whole heart they offered freely to the Lord! Freewill offerings were brought in because the people were filled with joy- they were happy to participate in the building of the temple! One more- this time in Acts 4- after Pentecost there was not a needy person among them in the church at Jerusalem because those who were land owners sold some of their fields and brought the proceeds to the apostles. These landowners were happy to contribute- they freely and cheerfully gave for the sake of those who had needs and the church was provided for! As you can see, those who understand what God has done and what God is doing are not forced to give- but rather he cheerfully and generously supports the church! So what reason do you have to give? What is the motivation for your support of the local church and ministry of it? Those who have no desire and are not committed to giving do not understand grace. For freely we have received- and freely we are to give as Mt. 10 puts it. Chrisitan giving is a matter of the heart- of our priorities. Those who have received grace will act upon their faith- they will be cheerful and generous. The tithe is not a God-tax that we are charged! Rather it is to be viewed as a privilege- a thankful response! Giving brings joy to the giver- and glory to our God!

As we now come to the table, we are reminded that our generous host calls us to come, take and eat! We have food and drink provided- nourishment that we did not earn and cannot pay for! If our God has so richly blessed us- let us respond with joy as we cheerfully give our all to Him!