



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon- Thanksgiving Sunday

*God loves a joyful giver!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in 2 Cor 9, 6-15:

- <sup>ESV 6</sup> The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.
- <sup>7</sup> Each one (must) give(s) as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all contentment in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.
- <sup>9</sup> As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."
- <sup>10</sup> He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.
- <sup>11</sup> You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.
- <sup>12</sup> For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.
- <sup>13</sup> By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others,
- <sup>14</sup> while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.
- <sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!
- Let us pray: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Open the doors of our hearts and minds, enlighten us with Your Wisdom which will make us truly thankful and empower us to sow abundantly! Amen.*

### • Dear beloved of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

- In the preface to the Lord's Supper we hear that *"it is truly good, right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, for the countless blessings You so freely bestow on us and all creation."* We do so every Sunday. Furthermore, one Sunday is assigned to especially make time to give thanks to God and to consider how we become thankful in our hearts and how this can spread to others.
- As we have heard in the Epistle reading this morning (2 Cor 8, 1-15) Paul was

operating in and recommending a typical “synodical” type of structure between the earliest congregations. If one congregation managed to gather more than necessary they would help other struggling congregations, like in this case the congregation in Jerusalem. That was the project Paul was encouraging them to fulfil: the mother congregation Jerusalem suffered persecution and difficult times and thus depended on the other congregations to help her.

- It is noteworthy how sober-minded Paul deals with this. He does not want a congregation to give so much that they suffer whilst the recipients begin to have abundance. Rather, those who have abundance may supply. They have the freedom to help those who didn't manage to gather in enough at the time. He was following God's idea when He fed the Israelites with the manna in the wilderness. Everyone would receive enough. No congregation would have any leftovers, but equally no congregation would have any lack.

- As a synod, we are heading back in that same direction. That is what the so-called Solidarity Fund will be used for. Receive of those who have abundance to help those who are in need. Paul does not force anyone. There is no tithing command from his side. It's a free will offering! It's not the amount that counts the most, but whether the congregation wants to help and does so cheerfully. Small amounts can also be a witness of the fact that God's spirit of a willingness to help others governs decisions in the congregation.

- This is where the Gospel plays a major and crucial role. Paul reminds them of the fact, that Jesus had become poor so that they all became rich. Namely, they willingly desired to help each other. That attitude was a fruit of the Gospel. They were not only concerned about their own congregation, they desired to help others. And when times were tough, they would accept the help of others. They were not too proud to accept support. This applies to us as well. For this system to work, congregations must have the Gospel in their hearts. They must treasure the Gospel, else they will not be able to trust God that He will provide through others. This treasuring of the Gospel has to come from hearing the Gospel itself,

in its depth.

• This takes us to the point Paul wants to make: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. Whoever sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Each one gives as he has decided in his heart, willingly, cheerfully, not with regrets. There is no law which binds us on how much we have to give. The sky is the limit, so to speak. Give so much that you have joy in your heart about the gift. God wants cheerful givers! He does not want complaining nor sighing givers! The condition of our heart is important when we give. That is, at best we are motivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified to give with joy. The Gospel assures us of the very good intentions God has with all of us. Doubts are not based on anything realistic. As God has given His Son to sacrifice Himself for our sakes, His good intentions are crystal clear. He has gone all the way to give us complete certainty. There is no realistic room for any doubts. This is the source of giving thanks, cheerfully, with joy in our hearts!

• If however the congregation still lacks material blessings, we have our brothers in Christ whom God has blessed too, to help us out. Maybe in the next year roles are switched. One thing remains constant: God loves the joyful giver! In the end all of this increases thankfulness in ALL hearts, those who receive and those who give!

• And we trust in God that He will provide using His people to help each other. God is the one who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food. He controls the weather. He can increase the harvest if He wants to. This is true both for the physical and for the spiritual domain. In Christ physical and spiritual are united.

• And so we see a wonderful thing, the Gospel does affect our physical existence too. Not only the spiritual existence. God looks after us holistically through the power of the Word of the Cross that saves us in both spirit and body!

• And more! There is more! Those who want to give and do everything they can to help others, they will eventually be filled with gifts of God so that they indeed can help others, which will lead to an abundance of joy, in those who receive and especially in those who give. So, the Gospel is crucial in igniting and making new

hearts who care for others, who desire to help other congregations so that thanksgiving and joy is multiplied, and that, in dreadful times, in times where the world is dark and becoming more and more greedy grabbing for everything they can lay their hands on.

• Paul uses terms like 'Grace', 'Service', 'Blessing', 'Sacrifice' and 'Willing Participation' to describe this collection amongst the congregations. A theology of collection is revealed in these passages. God's Grace begins and blesses this deed of Christian love. When a congregation gives to other Christians, God takes it as a confession of faith towards the Gospel and as an act of thankfulness towards Himself which indeed results in more and more thankfulness towards God amongst the receivers! Ultimately God is praised. God is honoured by receiving and giving, by receiving the right spirit and material gifts to hand out!

• In amongst this spiritual act driven by the Gospel, congregations and people are helped tangibly. Therefore, it is the Gospel which succeeds in creating the Love of Christ in us to help one another in both spirit and body! This is the kind of love and grace and charity which binds us together.

• So, being a synod, being on one road together in Christ, functioning in this way, has everything to do with the Divine Service. Of first importance we receive what we need from God in abundance and His gift drives us to extend it to others, and they extend it further and in the end a never ending chain of thanksgiving abounds which is truly out of this world.

• You are welcome to participate in this wonderful thanksgiving of God.

• Alleluia, Amen.

• Glory be to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

• *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. [NKJ 2 Cor3:14.]*