

2 Corinthians 9:8-11

God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work. ⁹ As it is written:

He scattered; he gave to the poor.

His righteousness remains forever.

¹⁰ And he who provides seed to the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed for sowing, and will increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be made rich in every way so that you may be generous in every way, which produces thanksgiving to God through us.

Dear children of God by grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus,

You can have too much of a good thing, right? Too much candy will leave you with a stomachache. Too much water will drown you. Too much money might adversely affect your priorities. Too much stuff might feel suffocating.

While a lot of things are bad in large quantities, God’s grace, his undeserved love for us, is not one of those things. Not only is it wonderful to have an over-abundance of God’s grace, but an honest self-evaluation will also make it clear that we NEED that amount of grace.

In our lesson for this morning, Paul is writing to the Christian living in the Greek city of Corinth. In the verses just prior to our lesson, he had just encouraged the Corinthians to be generous in their giving, supporting the work of the church and their fellow Christians. But where would they get the resources to do that kind of giving? Why would they want to do it? Paul gives the answers in our lesson for this morning.

Sermon Theme: God’s Overflowing Grace Leads to Overflowing Thanksgiving

- 1. God’s grace offers us complete forgiveness**
- 2. God’s grace moves us live lives of thanks**

Paul says, **“God is able to make all grace overflow to you.”** And what are the results of this superabundance of God’s grace? **“In all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work.”** All, all, all, every. Paul is very all inclusive here. When God is involved, there is nothing lacking. Everything we need is here and provided.

Consider this past week. How many times were you hungry? Not the kind of hungry that says it’s almost time to eat, but the hungry that says, “I wish I had food but there is none. I’ll just go to sleep and hope for the best in the morning.” How many of you found yourselves this week with nothing to wear—not because you hadn’t done laundry but because your last pieces of clothing were ruined and unwearable? How many of you slept under the stars, not because you chose to go camping or “rough it” for a few days, but because you had no access to a roof to put over your head? All things, all times, having all that you need...

God provides. He provides through your family. He provides through people who care about you. He provides through your hard work and skills. He ensures that you have what you need, even if it means working a miracle to feed a crowd of thousands with a small lunch. God has the power, the will, and the

follow-through to make sure you are well taken care of, having everything that you need for your body and life.

But that doesn't even touch the real overflow of God's undeserved love for us, does it? Why do we call God's love undeserved in the first place? What makes it that God technically shouldn't love us? It's that we have sinned against him. God demands perfection from us and we have been far from perfect. Even one sin means that God should turn his back on us, and yet we sine a countless ways each and every day. We are unkind to the people in our lives. We leave good things that we should do undone. We think horrid thoughts against other people. We prioritize other things in our lives over God and his Word. On our own, we could not be more the opposite of what God expects that we are.

God opened the floodgates of his grace when he sent his Son, Jesus. Jesus was the fulfillment of every saving promise that God had made to his people throughout history. Jesus, being both God and man, was able to take the full debt and weight of our sins on his shoulders and take it all away. Jesus lived a perfect life in our place and died the death of hell on the cross that we all deserved. Because of that, even though we deserved to die an eternal death in hell for our sins , we will live in the perfection of heaven forever. Jesus' death removes our guilt; his life has been credited to our account. That is God's overflowing grace in its clearest form.

How do you respond to something like that? What do you do about that? How do you show your gratitude to God who hasn't just put food on your plate and clothes on your back but has given you heaven instead of your well-deserved hell? Paul helps guide us. After assuring us that we will overflow in every good work, he says, He scattered; he gave to the poor. His righteousness remains forever. **“And he who provides seed to the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed for sowing, and will increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you may be generous in every way, which produces thanksgiving to God through us.”**

The verses from Psalm 112 that Paul quotes here feel like they're describing God, right? **“He scattered, gave to the poor; his righteousness remains forever.”** But in context, do you know who those verses are talking about? Verse 1 of Psalm 112 says, **“How blessed is a man who fears the LORD. In his commands he delights greatly.”** The rest of the Psalm continues to describe this person. These verses of generosity are not describing God's generosity, but the believer's generosity. And their generosity is spurred on by the fear, the respect, of the Lord. It's driven by God's grace. As that grace overflowing, the Christian's generosity, their thanksgiving, overflows as well.

How do you show your thanks to God? By being generous with what he has given you. Do you have food to spare in your home? Share it with those who have less! Do you have financial resources beyond what you need? Share them with those who have less!

Maybe today is a good time to take stock of your generosity. How overflowing is your thankful generosity to

- Your family after a long day at work?
- Friends who might at times get on your nerves?
- The person who always seems to need help but never offers assistance in return?

It is really easy for us to become jaded in this life. Everyone is trying to take advantage of everyone else. We can all think of those phone calls or emails looking to scam us out of some money for supposed car warranty extensions and reshuffling our credit card accounts. We don't want to be naïve about the times and places we live in, but at the same time, we don't want to become cynical either. Find ways and organizations that will do well with your resources, who will get them to people who are truly in need. Help your family and your friends, your coworkers and your fellow Christians at church. In doing so, you also become the way that God provides daily bread for others.

We have special opportunities right here in front of us to assist others through the WELS Food Pantry in Appleton that we collect food for each month. We have the WELS Relief group that helps others around the world during times of crisis. We have our regular offerings at Church which are used to do ministry here at St. John and we have our Mission offerings which help to get the Gospel preached around the world. This is not just money in an envelope or an electronic withdrawal directed to St. John, this is God giving us opportunities to let his love move us to love others. Our gifts of love and generosity can come in so many different ways.

We do some of this work together because it is more efficient for a group of believers than just one or two individuals. We do that work as a congregation and as a synod, our larger church body. Look at our offerings – for Missions, for FVL, for doing local ministry at St. John. There are so many opportunities for your overflowing thanksgiving to spill over and share God's overflowing grace with others. Consider the new or bigger ways you can support our congregation's work, either in an increase in your offerings to support that work and meet the financial realities of our ministry or perhaps an increase in time to volunteer and help the work of our congregation or school.

But we have a treasure worth far more than any amount of food or clothing or even piles of money. We have the gospel. We have the assurance of God's overflowing grace. We have all that we need for our eternal life in heaven. And that, too, is something we can and need to share, and this doesn't even need any of our money or wealth. We can invite someone to church. We can give them a basic summary about Jesus. We can even ask a stranger sitting next to you on an airplane if they know they'll be in heaven. Maybe they'll think we are kind of weird; maybe it'll make the flight uncomfortable. Who cares? This overflowing grace is too great, too important, to be bogged down worrying about those silly things. Be bold in our sharing. Be bold in our thankfulness! Be bold in our generosity!

There are many ways that you can help support the work that we do together, not to build ourselves up but to share this overflowing love of God with a world that desperately needs to hear it. We have a God who has provided for us everything that we could possibly need, both in our physical lives and in our eternal lives. May God bless your overflowing thanksgiving, your generosity to all, as you seek thank your Savior who has given himself for you! Amen.