



Week 1 Preaching Resources: A Legacy of Blessings - "I Know Who I Am"

Scripture Passage: 2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Focus Statement: Through Jesus' gift of salvation, we are called to *live into our legacy* of giving generously of the grace we have received.

ME: Share a story about what motivates you to give or donate to causes that you care about. Perhaps there was a person who you wanted to emulate, a campaign that stirred your heart, or an ethos of an organization that spoke to you.

WE: Invite others to reflect on moments when they were excited to support a cause, mission, or organization. What motivated them? Was it a person? A sense of honor? Their love for the cause? Their sense of who they were as a person, family, or organization?

GOD: In 2 Corinthians 8:9, Paul speaks of Jesus' generosity in providing our salvation; thus, all we have is through Jesus. We are stewards of the riches of a redeemed life. We have been "made rich" by Jesus' generosity and now it is up to us to use the riches of our lives responsibly and in a Christ-like, self-giving way.

In chapter 9, Paul is applauding the great ministry the Corinthian community is doing by stirring hearts to a new life in Jesus Christ. Paul is speaking to a group of Christians who are in a position to continue to help other growing Christian communities. In what may seem a "strong arm" tactic, Paul reminds them with great candor that their resources are meant to be shared to the glory of God.

As Paul urged the church, God is calling us to remember that we have received grace to become agents of grace. Because of our faith in Christ's legacy, we are moved to look beyond ourselves and see others with the heart of God.



YOU: Share a story of generosity within the life of the church. By your baptism, you have been joined to the family of God - a connection that has shaped and continues to shape how you respond to the world. What role does the legacy of your family or church play in how you share what has been given to you? Knowing that you are a part of the family of God, a family that has been known for its generosity throughout the ages, how might that legacy inspire you to live a life that is generous with others? Could this legacy lead you to see giving as something you want to participate in rather than something you begrudgingly do?

Consider creating a “generosity tree” before, during, or after worship: You could draw leaves on a tree and have each person write the name of someone from whom they learned generosity... Or you could have people write the name on gift tags and hang them on a tree.

WE: We are not in competition with other churches. We are not about shaming others into giving. We are about living as people who have been redeemed by grace and sharing the blessings that God has given us. What might change if we were to be more mindful of who we are as God’s people and joyfully live into that legacy and life of generosity?



Week 2 Preaching Resources: Blessed People Bless Others - The Grace of Increase

Scripture Passage: 2 Corinthians 9:6-10

Focus Statement: All that we are and all that we have come from God. We are stewards through whom God is blessing the world.

ME: Share a time when you had to carefully budget your resources because you were concerned that you might run out. Perhaps there was a time you were running low on gas or time and had a long list of errands to run. How did you decide what got done and what didn't? What might have changed if you had an unlimited supply of each resource?

WE: Our perception of supply impacts the way we use our resources. Think about times that you experienced economic hardships, over-scheduled weeks, or even the great toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipe shortage of 2020. How did that impact your willingness to share these resources? How would you have shared these items differently if you knew that there was an unlimited supply?

GOD: #blessed – What does it mean? The language of blessing can be tricky because it can lure us into the belief that people with material wealth are more favored by God than those without an abundance of financial resources. Even more disturbing, we could be led to believe that material wealth is solely for our enjoyment. This is not what Christ models for us, nor is it how Christ spoke of blessings.

This text invites us into relationship with God, each other, and with our community by putting our trust in God. We need not wait for the perfect year or the perfect dividend check. It moves us from a fear of scarcity to believing that God will provide for our daily bread. A reluctance to share with a generous heart suggests a refusal to trust that God is all sufficient and gracious. Last week we talked about knowing who we are (living into our legacy), this week's focus is on knowing whose we are, those who belong to God and therefore can give freely from that relationship because we don't rely on ourselves – we are not self-made.



So, when you hear we are “blessed to be a blessing,” we acknowledge that we are blessed *so that we may bless others*, and to share God’s love and hope. You may have heard the saying “hurt (adj) people hurt (v.) people”. Blessed people bless people, too. Out of God’s blessing, we are called to be a blessing to others. The more you give, the more you receive. This is not about a transaction or a formula to “get rich”; it is about an overflowing and multiplying of blessings through faith in what God will do. When we give from a position of trust in God’s provision, our “harvest will increase” in ways that can be surprising and fulfilling beyond the financial. Generosity itself enriches.

All that we have and all that we are is a gift from God. This text calls us to share. No matter what we sow, God is going to bless it and multiply it beyond our wildest imagination.

YOU: Think of the blessings that you have received from God in your life. These might be gifts of love, time, abilities, relationships, resilience, space, or material items such as belongings or financial resources. How are you sowing these seeds of grace? Are you sowing as if you will run out, or are you sowing as if God will continue to provide for every good work? Do you hold back because you don’t believe that God could use your gift, or do you trust that God can take your mites and make them mighty?

Consider making time in worship to do “cardboard testimonies”: each person receives a piece of cardboard/paper and writes down a blessing they’ve received on one side and the problem or need that blessing answered on the other. Everyone holds up their blessings as a visual representation. You could invite a couple of people to share or post the blessings on wall or bulletin board. This could also be turned into a small group conversation.

WE: Help your congregation to imagine a God sized vision: What if we were to sow abundantly, trusting that God will continue to provide the seeds of grace and bless and multiply the faithful planting of those seeds by the community of faith? What would change in your community if people lived as if God would continually provide individuals with the resources they need and multiply the resources that were faithfully shared with others? Who is God trying to bless through the blessings you have been given?



Week 3 Preaching Resources: Overflowing Blessings

Scripture Passage: 2 Corinthians 9:11-15

Focus Statement: When you release the blessings you have been given, they will overflow into the world in indescribable ways.

ME: In Laura Numeroff's beloved children's book, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, the author playfully explores the unintended consequences of giving a mouse a cookie. Taking this playful approach, share your own story of the positive unintended consequences an act of generosity might have in people's lives.

Some possible lead-ins might be:

- You pay for someone's meal at the diner
- Someone doesn't have enough money for their groceries, and you make up the difference
- You sit with someone after they receive difficult news

WE: Encourage the members of your congregation to think of a time when they were the recipient of generosity. How did it make them feel? What did they do in response? When we give to people, causes, organizations, it's tempting to just focus on the gift and forget about the ripple effects the act of generosity can have. Think of the last act of kindness or generosity that you did. What were the immediate benefits? What do you imagine were the unintended consequences of that action - the ripple effects, if you will?

GOD: Paul is helping the people of Corinth find their motivation to create their own legacy of generosity for future generations. It's not just about "paying the bills" or "making ends meet" (i.e., "supplying the needs of the saints"), it's about an overflow into the world that speaks our thanksgiving to and glorifying of God. This generosity also creates a community (koinonia) of support between different groups that is indescribable – beyond human understanding.

God's revelation of love transforms the heart and propels us to authentically give of ourselves to impact the lives of others. The manifestation of God's grace in our lives causes us to give with overflowing generosity. Notice how Paul



says, “through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ...”. This is the kind of test that reveals how the Corinthian church lives up to its confession of the gospel by putting their money (and other resources) where their mouths are. It is not a test designed for people to pass or fail, it’s more like taking a sample of something to test that it is what it claims to be. In the life of faith, our words and actions match up.

By grace, God gives a lens of faith – a different way of seeing and approaching the world - that inspires generosity to transform lives. We are actively participating in God’s act of grace in the world. Our acts of grace bring God glory and inspire others to be the light in the world.

YOU: A simple gift of \$20 seems like so much more when you consider the message your generosity shares. Suddenly you’re giving so much more to the community, its people, and to the work of God’s salvation. As you think about the unintended consequences of sharing God’s blessings with others, how does that change your perspective and motivation? What message do you want to share with the world about God’s generosity, provision, and grace? How might your generous act bring glory to God and be a messenger of God’s grace and love? What would it look like to consider a 1 or 2 % increase in your giving toward or beyond a tithe in response to who and whose you are?

Consider inviting people to this action or planning a group walk: This week walk around home, church, community, what is the evidence of someone else’s generosity? If you or someone connected with them is someone you know, send a thank you note.

WE: Each and every one of us has the opportunity to be agents of God’s grace when we commit ourselves to being faithful stewards of God’s abundant blessings and sharing them generously with the world around us. How many people are sitting near you right now? Consider all the blessings that God is sharing with the world through their lives right now.

Thinking of the unintended consequences that just one act of generosity can have, imagine how many messages of hope could be shared if everyone here shared a blessing with one person. How many people might come to know God? How many people would have good news to share with one another? What legacy could you leave behind to inspire future generations of generous givers?