

Theme: **Reforming our Stewardship by God's Grace**

Text: Romans 11:33 – 12:8

Season: 18th Sun. after Pentecost, Stewardships Sun. #1

Date: October 8, 2017

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as your life is transform by God's Grace, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today, we begin our stewardship program of being **Transformed by Grace, Faith, and Love**. This week our focus is on transforming our lives by God's Grace to be stewards of God's love, peace and joy.

Friends, whenever we talk about grace and giving, we have to talk about God. Grace begins with God. Grace is the gift He gives to us undeservedly. It is unmerited on our part. But you know God is not only gracious, He is giving. In fact, He is the greatest giver ever. John 3:16 tells us, **"For God so loved the world that He gave is only Son that whoever should believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** God gave His Son and that is an expression of His love. When He wanted to tell us how much He loves us, He didn't send us a letter, an email, or put something on Facebook, He sent His Only Son. His Son who was perfect in every way to become for us the perfect sacrifice so that we could have His rightness. The Apostle Paul is talking about the gift of God's grace as he says in chapter 11 of Romans, **"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen."** (Rom. 11:33-36) God's grace, it's far more than we can understand and it far more than we will ever be able to repay yet He continues to give it to us day after day, but how do we receive God's Grace?

It was one of those years when the Rocky Mountains got between 20 and 30 feet of snow and in January the temperatures dropped below zero and stayed there. Because of the snow and the wind blowing the snow many people were suffering because of the loss of electricity. So, on one sunny calm day the Red Cross was able to get the use of helicopters to fly in supplies. After a long, hard day, as they were returning to their base, the rescue team in a helicopter saw a cabin nearly submerged in the snow. A thin wisp of smoke came up from the chimney. The men figured the people in that cabin were probably critically short of food, fuel, and medicine. Because of the

trees though they had to set down about a mile from the cabin. They put their heavy emergency equipment on their backs and trudged through snow on snowshoes to reach the cabin exhausted, panting, and perspiring. They pounded on the door and a thin, gauntly mountain woman finally answered. The lead man panting said, "Ma'am, we're from the Red Cross." She was silent for a moment, and then she said, "It's been a hard, long winter, Sonny, I just don't think we can give you anything this year!"

We all have become accustomed to people's relentless asking for money. The salesman who rings at the door, the computer recording on the other end of the phone, the appeal letter in the mail, the panhandlers on the street corners, and the various organization outside the Walmart or supermarkets selling various items all seem to be out to get our money. We even brace ourselves to say "no," when somebody approaches claiming to want to help us, because we have become suspicious. There has to be an ulterior motive we think.

The Apostle Paul tells us, **"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."** (Rom. 12:1 – 2)

What is God's motive for your life? God's wants to put His grace into your life so that you can live in the love, peace and joy of God now and for all eternity. God gave His Son to be the living sacrifice for all your sins to make you holy and acceptable to God now and for all eternity, so what does that mean for your life? What does God's grace mean to your life? It means a transformation from sinner to saint by God's Grace.

We don't deserve God's love and mercy, but by His grace, He gives us all things. Grace changes everything. All that we are and have are evidences of God's grace at work in our lives. Knowing that both our physical and redeemed lives are gifts from God makes us want to give Him thank, service, and praise. God's grace, which made us a new creation, gives us the ability to serve others, to be a witness of God's Grace to others, to give ourselves to others and this happens all in the process of doing the work of the Lord by sharing His love, peace and joy with others. It's God's grace that gives us the power to do our best in doing His will. God's rich supply of grace is our power source. God not only forgives and saves us, but He also gives us strength

for service to Him. By ourselves, we are powerless. In our humanity, we are weak and foolish. God pours out His grace on us because He loves us, calls us, and gives us His work to do and the desire to do it. Our stewardship of God's Grace does not originate with what we do for God, but with what God has and is still doing for us. Our stewardship begins with God giving us grace and then with us responding by giving back to God what He has first given to us.

So how much of every day do you live for God? We can live every day for God by remembering that we are stewards of all of His gifts. We are all stewards by creation and by our recreation in our Baptism. As God's stewards, we are managers not owners. God is the owner. We just confessed a few moments ago that we believe in God the Father, almighty maker of heaven and earth. God is not only the maker of heaven and earth; He is the owner because He has never given up His ownership.

Being steward's means that we've been entrusted with life and life's resources. We've been given the privilege of responsibly and joyfully managing all of God's gifts for Him. We can do that because we are stewards who have been transformed by God's grace. We have been changed. We've been changed in heart and mind from sinners to saints. We are no longer the same person we once were. The Apostle Paul says that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. He says this about the grace that God has given to us, **"For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, through many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."** (Rom. 12:3 – 5)

Being transformed starts with thinking of things of this world differently. Having a different mindset and different attitude results in behavior that is pleasing to God and in accordance with God's will. In accordance with God's will, we are givers not just takers. Giving now becomes a privilege rather than a problem or obligation. We want to give willingly and cheerfully and God gives us ways of doing that as we share His grace.

A pastor friend of mine once told me about a time when his church received a \$100,000 check from a member who never attended church. The pastor's secretary said that the man considered his gift as his dues paid up. The pastor later met with the man and returned his

\$100,000 check. The pastor told the gentleman that “God doesn’t want your money; He wants you.” Friends, God doesn’t want our money; He wants us. When we refuse to give ourselves, we are withholding from God what belongs to God.

When we give ourselves, we give our time that was first given to us. Time gives us the opportunity to serve God by serving our fellow man. Have you ever wondered why God allowed you to keep on living after He had saved you? We are still here today because God has a purpose for us. God has things for us to do. Many people don’t know their purpose in this world and yet the Apostle Paul explains it this way, **“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them; if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”** (Rom. 12:6-8)

Dear Friends, the word generosity in this passage comes from the root word that means “single.” The basic idea is that of a single-mindedness of purpose is the whole reason for our given. It points more to the attitude of the giver rather than the amount given. The ultimate source of the single-minded generous spirit is the grace of God that has been given to us. Generous givers aren’t born that way. That kind of attitude is the result of being reborn or being changed, which is transformed by God’s grace. The grace of unmerited love of God that brings salvation to the sinner also inspires a new life of service that includes unselfish, generous, cheerful giving of what God has first given to us. To be able to give cheerfully and generously is a gift of grace. The Apostle Paul tells us, **“I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified . . . In all things, I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’”** (Acts 20:32 & 35)

Let the grace of God through the Holy Spirit transform your lives so that you may find even more blessings from God as you share with others what God has first given to you to share, His love, peace and joy. Amen.