

Money Myths 3. Giving results in a lack of resources

2 Corinthians 8:1-7 & Mark 6:31-44

Martin Luther, the great German reformer, wrote: “I have tried to keep things in my hands and lost them all, but what I have given into God's hands I still possess.”

Some fear that if you give away, you will not have enough left for yourself. But it is a myth to say that giving results in a lack of resources. Some of us never add the supernatural into the so-called economic realities of life. This is myth No. 3. Remember the first two? Only people with money should give and it is unpleasant to give. This week, giving results in a lack of resources. Jesus Himself said, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your lap. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38). Listen to the

message of the Macedonians in our text from 2 Corinthians which we have read each week. "In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor. 8:2). Some of the richest people we know are poor, and some of the poorest people we know are rich! Some have what money can buy, and some have what money cannot buy.

Jesus destroyed myth No. 3 one day in Galilee when He took a little lad and a little lunch and taught us all a lesson. The boy left home with all of the potential of the world that day and didn't even know it. His giving started a chain reaction. He gave to Christ. Christ gave to the disciples. The disciples gave to the crowd. The crowd gave back to the disciples. And all because the boy gave "beyond his ability" (2 Cor. 8:3). He "abounded in riches." I can remember this Gospel story being

presented to me when I was a student by a minister in a sermon as an encouragement to share what small things we might have in our life that the lives of others might be transformed. And I could not get beyond the fact all the way through the sermon that I believed the minister had misread the story. The feeding of the five thousand is about the nature of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, and not a morality tale on the benefits of share and share alike. It's only with reflection that I have come to realise that both these understandings and maybe more are legitimate within this remarkable story: because Jesus is the son of God, offering to him will transform for the better the society in which we live. Could you imagine the young lad looking around at the large crowd as the day wore on, noticing that nobody else had a packed lunch with them that day. I imagine he might have become very hungry all of a

sudden and the temptation would have been to scoff the lot before anyone else noticed! But what a pity if he had done so. No, his small meal was offered to Jesus through the facilitating of the disciple. Notice it was ultimately offered to Jesus, not to the crowd. The crowd could do nothing with something so insignificant. It had to be offered to Jesus before it could be of any benefit. Likewise for us today, we are thinking about our response to Jesus, not about our responsibility to the church or to anyone else. So often, when the kirk needs money it's for a specific task, like the replacement of the church roof / carpet. And appeals are made to that end and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. The fact that we are secure and dry and comfortable this morning is due to the faithful giving of so many here. But stewardship is not about fundraising. It is about responding to our God, who in

Jesus, came to us in humility and poverty. Where do we get our motivation in stewardship? Paul relates it in the context of these verses when he says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

Our Lord laid aside His glory and became poor. He laid aside His glory and stooped down to earth. He veiled His deity in a cloak of humanity.

Paul said, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." He did not leave heaven gritting His teeth nor clenching His fists. It wasn't obligation that caused Him to give. It was grace! The soldiers did not drag Him up the Via Dolorosa screaming and kicking. No, they led Him like a sheep to the slaughter. No wonder Paul concludes this passage on giving in 2 Corinthians by saying, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15).

It is a myth to say that giving results in a lack of resources. Many who are here today can attest to that very fact. The fact is often that our lack of giving is what results in our lack of resources. God will never allow us to be the loser when we are faithful to His Word and obedient to His will. There are many modern money myths from Corinth that need to be expelled.

All of us should give, not just some of us. If all our members gave, gave anything, our church income would increase. If all our members took seriously the goodness of Christ shown to them and responded appropriately our church income would increase dramatically. And in giving we find our joy because in giving we connect with the love of Christ which brings meaning and purpose into our lives. It is truly more blessed to give than to receive. And then giving results in us finding all that we need.

"In Other Words," a publication of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, recorded a story about Sadie Sieker, who served for many years as a house-parent for missionaries' children in the Philippines. Sadie loved books. Though she gladly loaned out some, others she treasured in a footlocker under her bed. Once, in the quiet of the night, Sadie heard a faint sound. After searching all around her room, she discovered that the noise was coming from her footlocker. When she opened it, she found nothing but an enormous pile of dust. All the books she had kept to herself had been lost to termites. What we give away, we keep. What we hoard, we lose. These are the realities and the challenges that are before us as a people living together in accountable relationships. Let's celebrate the abundance of our God by generously giving back. Amen.