

“Moved by the Extravagance of God in our
Lives!”

2 Corinthians 9: 6-15

It is the most wonderful time of the year! No, I'm not talking about that it is almost Christmas. Please we still have Thanksgiving to go. Nor am I talking about the fact that at this point in the year, our attention is mainly captured by visions of gathering around the table with the people we love, visions of being surrounded by dishes and dishes of wonderful food, and yes that all too real hope that this year, everyone will get along. All great visions, but there is something else that makes this the most wonderful time of the year. At this time of year, we all seem to try and slow down a little bit, try to gain some perspective and thank God for all of our many blessings. Well, I did say, we try. This is the time of the year when we realize that as part of our journeys of faith, there is an invitation, an invitation to center ourselves on the understanding that all things flow from God's good grace. It is at this time of the year when we try to make a conscious effort to take the time to reflect on what we are thankful for as children of God. It is at this time of year that we are really reminded that giving thanks is central to who we are as people of faith, when we are reminded that we are called to live lives with a sense of gratitude, knowing that all we have, and all that we are is based upon our dependence of God. It is a time when we are reminded that as we give our

thanksgiving and praise to God, we are called to show our appreciation for these many blessings with lives that reflect thankful living. Don't get me wrong.

I know that this type of behavior is a part of our daily calling as people of faith but it seems like at this part of the year, we are more intentional about it. It is more in the front of our minds. It is more a part of the way we live out our calling. This emphasis on thanksgiving and praise seems to be more a part of our daily lives than usual as people of faith.

That's why our text is such a great text for today. It reminds us thanksgiving and praise is not limit to just one day. They should be a part of our daily lives. Now, I know this particular text may not seem like the right text for Thanksgiving Sunday. It is not full of the usual thanksgiving type images that we are used to hearing and seeing on this particular Sunday. Usually on Thanksgiving Sunday, we hear a reading from the Psalms, a reading that usually remind us of God's abundance, because well, let's face it, the Psalms usually talk to us and reminds us of God's abundance. But that is not necessarily true of our reading for this Sunday. This Sunday, we get a word from 2nd Corinthians that is probably more appropriate for a stewardship moment than for Thanksgiving Sunday.

And in case, you are wondering, no I haven't forgotten what day it is. We are looking at this text because it calls us to move beyond the words of thanksgiving and praise and begin living lives of generosity and gratitude which reflect our

experience of God's extravagant grace, not just for one day but for all days.

Let me explain, in our text today, we get part of a letter that Paul has written to the church in Corinth. He sends it along with Titus as a way of reconnecting with this church after such a long time. In this letter, Paul is not shy about admitting that this letter is an appeal for funds. That's why we get such a strong stewardship vibe from this reading. Because it is there. Paul states his purpose up front. But, unlike well-known attempts to stewardship where there is arm-twisting, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, Paul doesn't want to guilt the Corinthians into giving. He wants them to give freely and for them to give what they are comfortable giving to the cause. Seems like a refreshing approach right? So instead of guilting the church or giving them some sob stories that he half made up, Paul gives them a pep talk about God's grace. He reminds them to be grateful for all that God has done and continues to do for them as a community of faith. Paul says that in response to such an amazing gift like God's extravagant grace the only way to respond to such a gift is to sing praises of thanksgiving and live lives of thank filled living!

Paul wants the community at Corinth to think about the times when God's grace filled their lives and blessed them in unexpected ways. In all those times, Paul reminds them that this community of faith didn't receive those blessings, didn't receive God's grace because they earned it or because it was a reward for giving the most of their resources. God's grace is not their reward for being faithful. God's

grace was given and is given because God wanted to give it. God wanted to bless them in those unexpected ways. And God continues to want to share God's grace with them in unexpected ways. But Paul also wants the Corinthians to understand that this grace is not just for them. This same grace has been and is given to all of God's creation. It is not just limited to the faithful found in Corinth. God has showered all of God's children with the gift of grace, a gift that sustains, a gift that transforms, a gift that frees us to become the people that God created us to be. God's grace is a gift that words cannot describe or even capture the amazing experience and it is offered for all of God's children. It is a gift that is freely given because that is what God wanted to do. God has showered and continues to shower all of God's children with this blessing, something Paul has experienced and understands completely!

Paul also understands that although there are no strings attached to God's grace, there is the hope that it will have ripple effects on the world because it is through God's grace, that all of God's creation does and will experience healing and wholeness. In fact Paul reminds this community of faith that from the very beginning God has thrown caution to the wind and has given to all of God's children with reckless abandon, in the hopes that, this grace will fill the world, transform the world, bring healing and wholeness to the world. From the very beginning of time, God has been extravagant with all of those who are in God's care, who are wrapped in God's love, and who are filled with God's blessing.

From the very beginning of time, God has been generous and supplied the needs of God's children, no ifs, ands, or buts! It truly is the gift that keeps on giving! And the only way that we as people of faith can respond to such an amazing, to such an extravagant gift is with thanksgiving and praise. The only way we can respond to such a gift is by living lives of thank filled living, lives that reflect and share that very same amazing, extravagant grace with all of God's creation, no ifs, ands or buts, with no exclusions and with no limits either.

Through lives of thank filled living, we can and we do respond to the gift of God's grace by waking up each morning, thankful that God has given us this day to experience the blessings of God. Through lives of thank filled living, we respond to God's grace by saying thank you to God for the food in our pantry. We respond to God's grace by saying thank you to God for our families and friends. We respond to God's grace by saying thank you to God for all the unexpected blessings that fill our lives. God has been extravagant with us! We have been and we continue to be showered with God's grace each and every day of our lives. And because of that, we sing songs of praise and thanksgiving for such an amazing gift! And if that wasn't enough, what makes this even more of an amazing gift is that we know that we didn't earn it and yes, let's face it, even we will admit, that on certain days, we know we don't deserve it! So we respond to this amazing life giving gift the only way we can. We live lives of thank filled living, knowing that our lives have been so transformed by God's grace and that through that gift of grace, we will never be the same.

We sing songs of thanksgiving and share the good news! We share God's good news with all of God's creation.

And, you know, the best part of all is that we know we aren't responding because we have to or because we are guilted into doing so. We aren't responding because we are fearful of what God will do to us if we don't.

We respond because we know that we are blessed beyond our imagination! We are blessed because we are claimed and named as God's very own. We are blessed because God sent God's own Son so that we might have new life. We are blessed because we are surrounded by a community of faith who will walk with us, who will support us, who love us. We are blessed because we know, we know, we are loved by a God who throws caution to the wind and gives to us in reckless abandon!

We respond to such reckless abandon the only way we know how: we sing songs of thanksgiving. We sing songs of praise. We sing songs of amazing grace and thank our God for all of our blessings!

And here is something else that Paul reminds the Corinthians that we tend to forget. When we sing our songs of thanksgiving and praise, our voices are joined with the chorus of praise from all of God's creation, giving, thanking, and praising God for all that God has done. And that chorus becomes louder and louder until all that can be heard is joy and praise. No cries of sorrow can be heard, just songs of healing. No cries of hate can be heard, just songs of love.

No cries of injustice can be heard, just songs of grace. No cries of hopelessness can be heard, just songs of hope and peace. That's what happens when our song joins the chorus of all creation. Our voice becomes stronger and the refrain of joy becomes louder until all that can be heard is thanksgiving and praise.

When we respond to God's gift of grace with lives of thankful praise, we become even more connected with all of God's creation. We become even more aware that these blessings of grace cannot be contained or saved for just a chosen few. They must be shared with all of God's children.

As people of faith, we can only respond to such good news by sharing God's grace with those in need, with those that are hurting, with those that are lonely, with those that are suffering. We must share the extravagant gift that was first shown to us with all of God's creation because we know that through our lives of thankful praise, that through our acts of justice, our acts of peace, our acts of mercy, our acts of hope, more and more acts of great praise and thanksgiving will be lifted up to God. We know that more and more of these amazing blessings will be experienced. We know that more and more of God's grace will be shared with all of God's creation until there is healing and wholeness for all.

And the choruses of thanksgiving and praise will multiply! It will become a joyful noise for all of God's creation! It will become strains of good news that will

drown out the cries of hurt, the cries of sorrow, and the cries of pain that fill our world today. And that is the promise of the Kingdom of God!

The good news for us this morning is that we know as children of our God, our God who has thrown caution to the wind and has given to us with reckless abandon, we know that our spirits of thanksgiving and our lives of thankful praise are promises to help us overcome our sufferings, help us overcome our struggles, and to help us overcome the hardships we face. We know that our God has not left us alone. Our God is there supplying all our needs. Our God is there walking with us through the darkest valleys. Our God is there, holding us in the palm of God's hand.

We are not alone. Our God has thrown caution to the wind and has given to us with reckless abandon! So now let us shout with thanksgiving. So now let us sing songs of God's great harvest, a harvest of justice, a harvest of peace, a harvest of righteousness, and most importantly a harvest of grace. So now let us sing our praises to our God, knowing that our songs of thanksgiving, knowing that our lives of thankful praise multiply the blessings of our lives even more!

Our God has been and continues to be extravagant with the gift of grace. Our God has thrown and continues to throw caution to the wind and gives to us with reckless abandon! Our God has given us an indescribable gift for which we are thankful each and every day of our lives!

Today and all days, We sing with thanksgiving and live lives of thankful praise because we know that we are witnesses to the extravagant gift of God's grace and that through our praises of thanksgiving, we worship and thank we now our God for God's indescribable gift!

May we all live lives of thankful praise and may we always lift our songs of thanksgiving to our God who throws caution to the wind and gives to us with reckless abandon! Amen.