

Christ the King  
November 22, 2015  
2 Corinthians 8:1-12  
Rev. George Ferch

Dear sisters and brothers in our victorious King, Jesus Christ,  
Last July, I was one of 389 voting delegates at the 63rd WELS Biennial Convention at Michigan Lutheran Seminary. From the opening worship through the closing service, speakers reminded us that God reconciled sinners to himself through the perfect life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection of his Son, Jesus. This merciful Savior has led millions of souls through the Holy Spirit to trust his forgiveness, and to serve him and others in thankful love. Alleluia!  
We are in Christ one with God and one with each other. We are one in purpose. We delegates received updates from our ministry leaders, heard eye-witness testimonies from missionaries, and reached decisions regarding the work we perform together for Jesus. I know you too thank God for our many blessings and the work we are privileged to do for him!

How can we continue to work together to financially support our gospel endeavors in North America and around the globe? It all starts with the right heart. There **God Enables Us to Excel in the Grace of Giving.**

First, God motivates us by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul encourages us Christians to “excel in the grace of giving.” The apostle isn’t urging competition for the top spot. The word translated “excel” literally means “overflow.” Be like the flowing well on 116<sup>th</sup> St. that constantly provides water. “The grace of giving” God gives describes our attitude towards giving, not the amount of the gifts.

Overflowing in the grace of giving isn’t something that comes naturally. Our Old Adam hates God and loves things. We are by nature stingy, and envious. How lost we were! We had no idea that we were like the rich fool of Jesus’ parable who was not rich towards God, only rich toward himself.

As Christians we daily fight our Old Adam’s faulty motives when we do give, like self-righteousness, guilt, peer pressure, or going through

the motions. We don’t always have the right attitude towards our offerings. That is why we need God’s grace of giving. This grace prompts our offerings by the undeserved love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who became poor though he was rich.

As King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus lived from eternity in a continual state of unbounded wealth. He lovingly chose to live as a man who was poorer than the birds of the air who had nests and the foxes who had holes. Jesus willingly allowed himself to be despised and rejected by men, and damned by his heavenly Father to pay the guilt of our sins. What a sacrifice the Lord made for all us sinners.

In turn, by impoverishing himself our Savior gave us wealth that has no bounds – free forgiveness for all our sins; peace with God, perfect help whenever we call on him; a living hope into an inheritance that can’t perish, spoil, or fade in heaven.

When we remember how Jesus washed away our sins in baptism, and when we receive forgiveness by absolution and through Christ’s body and blood in Holy Communion, the grace of the Lord Jesus expands its influence in our hearts. That heart influences our giving. At the same time, our living and reigning King makes sure that our cup overflows so that we have all that we need for life and for his kingdom work.

**God also encourages us in the grace of giving by the example of our fellow believers.**

Consider the churches in Macedonia. God enabled them to excel in the grace of giving in spite of the most severe trial and extreme poverty. Combined with overflowing joy in Jesus who rescued them from their sins even this resulted in rich generosity. They couldn’t help but give because of the grace God had given them.

The Macedonians decided entirely on their own to participate in the offering for famine-stricken believers in Judea. They pleaded to share in this service to the saints. They gave themselves first to the Lord and offered their lives as living sacrifices.

They weren’t the first to do so. King David, the Israelite leaders, and the people willingly and generously brought gifts to the LORD for his temple. We used their example as the basis for our Building Devoted Hearts for Jesus campaign. Zacchaeus’ gave half his possessions to the poor. The widow who gave everything she had to live on. The

Christians in Corinth were the first to participate in the special offering for the saints in Jerusalem.

I've been encouraged by such people when dealing with my own selfishness and when responding to critics of Christian stewardship encouragement. We need and have the examples of the generosity of our fellow Christians. As Jesus, the grace of God enabled them, so he will enable you to express your thankfulness!

**God Enables Us to Excel in the Grace of Giving by** expressing the thankfulness of our own hearts (6-8,10-12)

By God's grace, he's enabled the saints in our congregation to give 12% of our General Offerings towards our church's gospel endeavors through our CMO. Then there are donations that support our local, regional, and special church body programs. We continue to support our operating budget and the building fund. God be praised for the ways he's enabled us to express the thankfulness of our own hearts!

In addition to this regular, ongoing support, the members of our church body are being asked to consider special gifts to retire our synod's debt of \$4.7 million by the end of June, 2016 – two years ahead of schedule. Please consider making an offering in the special envelope you received today. We'll be able to move forward in ministry as a synod when regular and special offerings come in strong. God knows what endeavors we will be able to maintain and possibly expand as a congregation.

In this age of materialism, it's wonderful to hear that God gives us the "eager willingness" and the "completion" of our offerings, and that "the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have." Therefore, we give to the Lord cheerfully, trustingly, joyfully, and gratefully.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for enabling us to overflow in the grace of giving. May your kingdom come and your will be done in and through us! Amen. <SDG>