



THE CHURCH OF THE  
**ADVENT**

**The Grace of Generosity**

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 8:8-15, 9:6-15

**Summary:** In chapters 8-9, Paul reminds the Corinthians of their commitment to give an offering to fellow believers in Jerusalem who were poor. Here we see how generosity is yet another example of how true spiritual power often looks like weakness.

First, the motivation for Christian generosity comes from the love and grace of God that overflows into our lives and spills out onto the lives of others (8:8-9). This challenges those of us who are tempted to emphasize the importance of social activism, regardless of the motivation. Doing good works apart from the overflowing love and grace of Christ can lead to the spiritual dangers of pride, self-righteousness, cynicism, and exhaustion. This also challenges those of us who see any kind of social action in the church as evidence of theological decline. Spiritual maturity is always manifested in concern for the poor (8:7).

Next, the posture of Christian generosity matters a great deal. In 8:13-15, Paul says that the Corinthians' generosity should be characterized by fairness. Because we are all one in Christ through the gospel, there is a profound equality, solidarity, and reciprocity between rich and poor. The posture of Christian generosity is not: "Good news, I am here to give you what you need." It is: "I am broken, and you are broken, but the good news is that God has sent the true manna from heaven, Jesus Christ, and we both need him."

Finally, the purpose of Christian generosity is ultimately about the glory of God (9:11-15). Christian generosity meets material needs to point people to the only One who has met our deepest spiritual need by being infinitely generous with us. Jesus gave up everything so that we might become spiritually rich through him (8:9). There are many religions that say God cares for the poor, but only Christianity says that God became poor for us. Christian generosity is not simply about giving your stuff away, but about giving your self away to the one who gave himself for us.

**Questions:**

1. What experiences in life have taught you generosity? Who has modeled it for you? What impact has that had on you?
2. As a group, brainstorm different kinds of generosity. What are other ways that we can be generous beyond finances?

3. Think about different motivations you've had when it comes to being generous. To what degree has generosity been a heart-level issue for you? What has God shown you in that and how is he leading you to grow?

4. What could the principle of fairness and reciprocity look like in practice for individuals? Churches? Institutions, governments, and businesses? Share any good examples you have seen or heard about.

5. Is there anyone in your life currently that God is calling you to be generous towards? What kind of generosity does that entail – money, time, skills, relationships, material goods, etc.?

**Pray:** Spend time praising God for how his poverty in Jesus Christ has made us rich beyond comparison. Pray for the freedom to have hearts that overflow with generosity because of how deeply we have experienced His love and grace. Ask the Lord to shape our generosity as a church with a posture of fairness, reciprocity, and solidarity with the poor.

**Do:** Ponder to what degree your monthly finances are shaped by the generosity God has shown you. Be spontaneously generous with someone this week. For further study, read *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert.