# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“The Farmer Knows”**

**2 Corinthians 9:6-8**

**November 3, 2019**

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in the city of Corinth in which he addressed the severe financial hardship Christians in Jerusalem were experiencing, due in part to being persecuted for their faith. He had made an appeal to the Corinthian church to take up a collection for those in Jerusalem, and in this part of his letter that we are about to read he is encouraging them to give generously because their Father in heaven is a generous God. I invite you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

To illustrate God’s will for the way in which we give, Paul chooses the analogy of a farmer going out to sow his crop. When the farmer does this, it appears as though he is throwing it away. He scatters seed out upon the ground, and he cannot gather it up again. He has given up control of it and it looks as though it is lost to him.

But it is not lost, and that is the point. Let it fulfill its appointed purpose, going through the process of having been buried in the ground in order to one day come forth having produced much more than that single initial seed. That is what God has designed for our giving – that is the process that he has ready for us if we are willing to engage in it. “Give and it will be given to you,” says Jesus in Luke’s gospel, “pressed down and running over. For with the measure you give, so it will be measured to you.” Or, returning to Paul’s analogy, if the farmer sows sparingly he will reap sparingly. But, if he sows generously he will reap a generous crop.

Many get nervous about this. Giving in order to be given more sounds like selfish giving. Yes, it is possible to twist God’s principle of giving into selfish giving, thinking that God is somehow saying that his generous response to your gift is to take the gift itself and multiply it. Give x dollars and he will give you five times x or ten times x in return. But nowhere in the Bible does it say that this is how God will be generous with those who are generous. How God’s generosity comes to you when you give is up to God. I once heard the story of a man who received a letter which claimed that if he sent $100 to the organization, their ministry would benefit and God would give him five times in return. He wrote back to the organization and suggested that they send him $100, and God would bless them five times over. For some reason they removed him from their mailing list.

No, we don’t give in order to enrich ourselves. We give because God has first given to us and he asks us to share with others a portion of what we have received. When I was a pastor in Austin I had the opportunity to lead a Young Disciples’ time. I gave each of the children a plastic bag containing ten dimes and told them that the money was theirs just for coming to church that day and joining me on the Sanctuary steps. Having emphasized that they could do whatever they wanted with their money, I then told them about a ministry our church was involved with that cared for orphaned children in Lima, Peru. I asked if they would be willing to share some of their dimes to help with the project. Being children, what was going on in their hearts and minds was clearly mirrored in their body language. Some looked right at me, smiled and nodded, indicating that, yes, they would share. Others looked down at their feet and held on to their bag of dimes a little tighter. Then I pointed out to them that the most important thing I wanted to teach them was not that they should give some of their money to help children in Peru, which is a good thing, but to remember where the money they were holding in their hands came from. It was a gift, given by me to them. I was not going to force them to share it, but as the giver of the gift I was making the request that they consider giving some of it for a good cause. It is the same with God. He gives us much more than a few dimes. He gives us everything we need with plenty left over to share with others. So, when he gives us something and asks us to share, it is only right that we take some of what he has given and use it to help others.

God cares about what we do with our money. Not because he cares about money, as such, nor because he needs our money, but because what we do with our money shows what we believe God is doing with us. If we believe that God will provide for our needs, like the Bible promises, then we will be free to give generously and with cheerful hearts.

Our church has been sharing the love of God here in the Lewis-Clark Valley for well over one hundred years. Our desire is to continue doing so for as long as God wants us here, and your generous gifts of money, time and talent are the seeds that God will use to enable this ministry to continue to bear fruit. If you are a regular part of the ministry of this church and have completed the financial commitment card for the coming year, thank you! If you have not, I ask that you prayerfully consider doing so. Using the cards in the pews, you can make your response this morning, placing the card in one of the boxes at the rear of the Sanctuary.