



## **SERMONS**

### **Living Beyond These Walls**

### **God's Inexpressible Gift**

#### **2 Corinthians 9:6 ff**

November 22, 2020

Rev. Dr. Mark J. Toone

How many know what a “bell lap” is? A bell is rung to announce the start of the final lap of a race. Well, my Sweetheart church, we are in the bell lap of Beyond These Walls. Over 30 years Chapel Hill invested \$17 million in facilities that served not only our needs but those of our community. We built a gym when there was no public gym. We build a sanctuary when there was no public space for large gatherings. We built a Gathering Place when there was no public space for large receptions. We built them, shared them, paid for part of them...and took out a mortgage on the rest...praying that those who came behind us would help pay off that debt.

At the high point, our mortgage was \$9 million. But we are in the Bell Lap...the literal last few weeks before Chapel Hill will be debt-free and we will be able to move beyond these walls and into our region with an unprecedented wave of generosity. Just this week I spoke with a board member of Habitat for Humanity, asking what it would take to resume Habitat builds on this side of the bridge. I doubt there has ever been an organization that invested a half million dollars annually in our communities. But when we finish our Bell Lap...and pay off the remaining debt...that is exactly what we will do.

From a high point of \$9 million, last week I announced our debt was down to \$380,000! You were jubilant! One woman said, “I finished my BTW pledge...but I want to give more. I just love this church.” Another man called the Finance Office and said, “I’ve been worshiping on-line since March. I’ve never set foot in your building. But I want to make a gift to Beyond These Walls.” Another woman who spent hours searching for auto insurance to save herself \$730 a year... got inspired and wrote a



\$730 check to BTW! And because of this kind of generosity....the Bell Lap number is not \$380,000 anymore. As of now, it stands at... \$296,675.

So...as we approach the finish line, I want you to listen as Paul roots us on. (2 Cor 9: 6-15)

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver....He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God....Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

People get twitchy when you start talking about money. Especially if they feel manipulated. But I love the tone of this passage as Paul teaches us how to be generous. You want to know what real Christian generosity looks like? Here it is...in a few short words. The Christian gives bountifully, willingly, hilariously and thankfully. First, the Christian gives bountifully. Listen again to verse 6.

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 2 Cor 9:6.

Paul uses the image of a farmer sowing seed. If a farmer wants a huge harvest, he doesn't plant the seed this way. (One by one.) He plants seed THIS way! (Pretend to cast) He flings handfuls...lavishly...across the field. When the Holy Spirit inspires generosity...it is not grudging or miserly. Holy Spirit-giving doesn't parcel it out one seed at a time. Holy Spirit-giving is reckless. Extravagant. Bountiful!



Second, the Christian gives willingly. Verse 7. "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion...9:7"

We saw this theme last week, too. Paul would not command the Corinthians to give...because Christian generosity cannot be compelled. It is a Holy Spirit-inspired impulse. Don't give because you have to give. Give because you cannot NOT give! THAT is Christian generosity.

Third, the Christian gives hilariously. "...God loves a cheerful giver. 9:7"

Do you see that word "cheerful?" The Greek root word is "*hilaros*" ...from which we get "hilarious!" Christian giving is hilarious! We know the Holy Spirit is inspiring our generosity when we can write a big, fat check...and find ourselves giggly with delight! The trick, then, is to keep giving until you giggle!

Christian generosity is bountiful, willing, hilarious...and finally, thankful. Three times a word for "thanks" appears in this passage. But here's what's interesting. Paul isn't thanking the Macedonians for their gift. He isn't thanking the Corinthians for their gift. Paul is thanking God...for their gift? Why? Because it is GOD who has inspired their giving, provided their gift and God who produced the fruit resulting from their gift.

You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God...Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift. 9: 10-15.

The only reason the Corinthians can be generous...is because GOD has blessed them. GOD deserves thanksgiving! The real endgame here is not that Corinthians will



supply the needs of the saints in Jerusalem. The REAL endgame of their generosity is that praise and thanksgiving is directed back to God...the giver of all good gifts.

Last week, I bragged on you for your generosity. That's OK. Paul bragged on the Macedonians. And later, on he bragged on the Corinthians, too. But we dare not stop at patting ourselves on the back. Paul reminds us that ultimately, our giving...our generosity...ought to turn our hearts back to the giver of all good gifts. We have what we have...every one of us... because God in his kindness has given that to us. Whenever we respond generously... bountifully... willingly... hilariously...at its heart, this is an act of worship and thanksgiving to our generous God.

For the last three years, I have watched you give exactly this way...all for the purpose of taking the gospel Beyond These Walls. One way we are doing that is through church online. Since we launched church online back in March, we have had a total of 167,923 of our online content...and hundreds of you are sharing these services with your friends. One woman shared our services with her neighbor who then began attending online, having not attended church in years. A member of our school board told us how she shared one of our services with the whole school board to entreat them to be courageous. And we've had numerous stories of people who are now attending in person because they first checked us out online.

In this day of COVID, sharing services with your friends is perhaps the MOST effective way to introduce them to Jesus and his Church. We want to create the most "sharable" online experience we can. So, beginning next week, we are shaking things up. We will continue to live stream our services on Sunday, but... instead of making these services available on demand, we will launch an online-only service, with the same message, the following Tuesday evening. This service will be designed specifically for an online congregation, making it even more sharable than our existing livestreams.



That's where you come in. Church online is most effective at reaching people Beyond These Walls when you, the people who are already a part of the church, share services with friends. So, one way for you to scatter seed Beyond These Walls, beginning Tuesday Dec 1, is to share our services with at least one friend every week of Advent.

Here's another: Port Orchard! One of our most ambitious *Beyond These Walls* dreams was to become a church-planting church. It is the ultimate expression of "beyond these walls" because to plant new churches means to give extravagantly. You are broadcasting your very best: money, pastors, elders, members... for the sake of a new harvest elsewhere. We have never planted a new church...but we feel called to do so now. We started with Port Orchard because we had a footprint there and Pastor Megan felt called to lead the charge. It was a step of faith. We began to sow seed in Port Orchard BEFORE we had finished Beyond These Walls...because we were confident in your generosity.

Of course, COVID delayed our Easter 2020 launch date...but only delayed it! Port Orchard is launched and going strong. I've asked Pastor Megan, our lead pastor in PO, to share how our seed-casting is already bearing fruit...and why we have good reason to feel hilarious about what the Lord is doing 20 minutes north of here!

*[Megan] This was the right text at the right time for me personally. I want to give testimony today to how true verse 11 is - "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God." We at Chapel Hill Port Orchard have been enriched in every way these last eleven months.*

*When we thought we could launch at Easter, God gave us a really great relationship with South Kitsap High School - so great, in fact, that people who had been there for years could not believe that we were being offered to worship in their auditorium. God enriched me with friends like Dave Wilson on our Launch Team who were prepared to bring a trailer to the school every Sunday morning at 7am and stick around until it was*



*packed back up again at 1pm so that we could worship together. Laurie Bowers and Kim Rosenthal were prepared to turn this cafeteria into four kids' rooms so that we could share Jesus with boisterous, curious kids. We were ready to lavishly share the Good News of Jesus in South Kitsap, and God provided everything we needed to sow the hope and joy of Jesus there. Then the shutdown. God's lavish provision has continued.*

*Many of you have asked where I've been since COVID got going. We've been hilariously giving our time and seeking to share Jesus in all kinds of different ways to Port Orchard. I feel like I do when I'm in the garden plots of our new homes—I'm not sure what's going to grow, so I just plant it all and see what comes up. Consistently, we've been able to bless Coffee Oasis with meals and school supplies thanks to Lisa Vitcovich and Grace Neil who have made sure the food many of you have given makes it to teens experiencing homelessness. The Neils and Margaret Morris are at the skate park every Thursday connecting with people of all ages. Personally, I find that people have been more transparent with their needs this summer...whether it's a friend at the gym willing to talk about experimenting with tarot cards, looking for journaling exercises, married couples I am meeting with to talk about the increased pressures. COVID has not slowed down the awareness of the spiritual hunger in Port Orchard, and our team has been there to listen to be generous in every way to share Jesus.*

*We as a Chapel Hill family have recognized during this season a critical place to express the hope of Jesus - online. Even as Chapel Hill Gig Harbor also seeks to go Beyond These Walls with new and innovative online ministry, so, too, we've been a little nimbly and scrappy in Port Orchard trying some things out on YouTube. You can go online today to [youtube.com/chapelhillportorchard](https://youtube.com/chapelhillportorchard) or Facebook and see 60 videos where we creatively are sharing Jesus in the language and culture of Port Orchard. Over 1700 people watched one of our "Tell Me Something Good" videos. Mega kudos to our five college students who joined us this fall to help us think creatively! You'll see*



*Daniel Arachikavitz a lot there...he moved during this crazy season from China to discern if he might be called to be our next Chapel Hill church planter.*

*There is fertile ground in Port Orchard. God has - as this passage says he will - made us all sufficient in all things so that at all times - even in COVID - we may abound in the good work of sowing, sharing the hope of Jesus in Port Orchard. We don't do this to give ourselves a pat on the back, but to raise our hands back up in glory to God saying God—you are worth this! You receive all our love, all our gratitude, all our joy, all our praise.*

*Thirty-one people have committed to launch Chapel Hill Port Orchard. They are our Launch Team. Their commitment is to pray, give, serve, and bring their friends. It's not a commitment they've made lightly, and it's one that this season has tested. I want you to see them and pray for us as you see their faces. We are meeting weekly Tuesdays at 6:15 from this Tuesday on through, Lord willing! I want to invite you to send your South Kitsap friends our way! This is who we are and what it looks like to come to worship in Port Orchard.*

[Mark] I am so thankful for Chapel Hill Port Orchard. Thankful for those called to plant this work. Thankful for those called to support this work. And most of all, thankful to God! Without God's blessing, we can do nothing. Without the outpouring of God's Spirit, we are powerless. Without the warmth of God's love, no seed will come to fruition. But by God's grace, we expect a huge harvest, Amen?

I want to anoint Megan and Larry...and pray blessings upon their launch team. As a reminder, Megan is STILL a Chapel Hill Pastor...but in Port Orchard, not Gig Harbor. We won't see much of her around here! And Larry is the Chapel Hill Executive Pastor over both campuses. He's here most of the week...but will be in Port Orchard most weekends, worshiping with his family and assisting in the launch of this new work.

*[Megan] I don't want to let you all off the hook! You can be church-planters, too! We at Chapel Hill believe that everyone can take a next step to walk with Jesus - the steps*



*are to Worship, Serve, Connect and Reach. Here's your church-planting challenge. I want you to join us for one day in Port Orchard in the next six months and do all four - worship, serve, connect and reach. I've provided a really fun guide to Port Orchard for you and your whole family. It's things like our favorite parks and restaurants, how to jump in with Coffee Oasis and what we want prayers for. Go ahead and scan it now, and come sow some seeds of hope with us in Port Orchard.*

[Mark] I love how Paul ends this passage: "Thanks be to God for HIS inexpressible gift." Every good impulse we have is in fact a response to God's greater good impulse. We love because he first loved us. We serve because he first served us. We give because he first gave to us...his very, very best. If you want to participate in this bell lap...if you feel called to give bountifully and willingly and hilariously and thankfully... you may do so on line. You'll see the links on your screen. Or, you can drop your check in the box in the back. Thank you...and "Thanks be go God for HIS inexpressible gift."