

How Grace Reshapes Our Finances

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[0 : 00] So what I want us to do now is just to move on from that and just to go into what we call our pastoral prayer. So this is really where I want you to pray with me. I'm not just praying at you or I'm praying to God, but I want you to pray with me so that we ask our gracious God to work in our lives, in our city, and in our world.

So please, would you bow your heads and just pray with me now. Now, gracious Father, thank you that today is another day, another morning where you show us incredible grace. Thank you that before the world was created, you were and are and will be a God of infinite grace. Thank you that you are enjoying the deepest love with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit together in intimate, self-giving, joy-filled, beautiful communion before anything else was created. Thank you that all creation and all the beauty we see in all that is the fruit of your joyful generosity. Thank you, you could make everything just a factory standard, but you delight in handcrafting every fingerprint, every snowflake. You rejoice in giving us fresh grace day after day after day. And Lord, for some of us who are going through hard times now, some of us who are distracted, some of us who need comfort and healing and hope, thank you that you loved us so much that you gave, that you gave your only Son.

[1 : 38] And because you've given us everything that we need at the ultimate cost to yourself, so we want to lean on you today. We want to trust you today, that you will provide for every need that we have, spiritual, emotional, physical, relational, because you're a good God.

And Father, I just pray that you would help us in the world that we live in. Lord, everywhere around us tells us to trust in ourselves, to be self-absorbed.

Father, we pray save us from not being thankful. Save us from comparing ourselves to everyone else. Save us from feeling entitled when we are recipients of far more than we could ever deserve. Save us from holding on to our resources out of fear that we'll not have enough for the future. Make us a thankful, joyful people. And Lord, would we be like those people in other countries who see how great the treasure is to know you above all other things in our lives.

We just want to pray, Father, for our brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering in persecution. Pray for those in China and those in Turkey that we've heard about and across the Middle East.

[2 : 51] We pray, Lord, that they would not just have an easy life, but we pray that you would be supremely beautiful in their eyes. That the beauty of Jesus would drive out the fear of man.

Give them courage to stand firm in you. And would those who persecute them see something more beautiful, a witness to you that would lead them to repentance and faith.

We pray for the church in Hong Kong. Pray for Kevin this morning as he speaks at Emmanuel English Church. Would you anoint his lips, Lord? Would there be deep unity in the gospel among the churches in Hong Kong?

We want to pray for the local Cantonese speaking church here in Hong Kong. I pray as I think about Living Grace Christian Church in Yamate. Thank you that you're drawing newcomers to them, Lord. We just pray for them as a church that every person there would see themselves as a disciple maker on your mission. We pray, Lord, that they would have boldness to proclaim the mission you've given them as they take a mission trip to Macau coming up, Lord.

[3 : 52] Would your grace abound to them, we pray. And Father, I also want to pray in our own community, and I want to thank you so much for the Mandarin community group in our church, Lord. I thank you so much that you brought Echo's mom to faith in you during the trip, Lord.

Thank you that's only your grace. And we want to pray, Father, for Echo and Z as they lead that group, and for every member in all the struggles and the challenges that they go through in

everyday life, that they would know the height and the breadth and the depth and the width of your love for them.

And they'd deepen in their knowledge of your love. And they would have spiritual wisdom to know how to serve and love one another and to reach out to those around them. Lord, would we be a church which knows how incredible you are and lives banking our lives on you and seeing your faithfulness day by day.

In Jesus' name, amen. Can I invite Justin to come and read God's word to us? Amen. Amen. Amen. The scripture reading comes from 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

Please follow along in your bulletins or on the screen. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia.

[5 : 20] For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed and a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

And this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urge Titus that he had started so he should complete among you this act of grace.

But as you excel in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you, see that you excel in this act of grace also.

I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, by his poverty, might become rich.

[6 : 34] And in this matter I give my judgment. This benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work, but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness, your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.

As it is written, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. 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.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

[7 : 58] As it is written, He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor, His righteousness endures forever. 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.

By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift. This is the Word of God. Thank you so much, Justin. That's great. Let me just put this down.

Great. So we're going through this series, this kind of challenging series on money and resources. And we're doing it because we know that in Hong Kong, this is something that everyone talks about, but no one really wants to talk about in the church.

[9 : 23] And what we've been looking at is actually how money, as Ed shared earlier, is one of the greatest idols that we look to to give us status, to give us comfort, to give us power, to give us all the things that we think life is found in.

And yet we've seen, actually, that God has got a totally different way of looking at the world, and He wants us, with every part of our lives, including our wallets, to be people who worship Him in all of life.

And so what we're looking at, today we're going to finish this series, and we're going to finish by looking at the Apostle Paul, and what he says to the church in Corinth.

And some of you may be aware that the Apostle Paul was a church planter. He was an evangelist. He went everywhere throughout the Roman Empire sharing the gospel.

Many of you may not know that Paul was also a fundraiser. That actually, one thing that Paul saw was actually the gospel in a world that was divided between Jews and Gentiles on one side, the rich and the poor.

[10:31] They would never hang out with each other. That there were these divisions, just like in our society, there were divisions that classified people in different categories. And what Paul saw was when Jesus died on the cross, what He did, He broke down the barriers, and He brought together a new community made up of every race, every tribe, every social economic group.

And as he went around proclaiming this, he was convinced that this wasn't just a theoretical message. That as new churches started, he also saw that in Jerusalem, there was a Jewish church which was poor.

And then around as he went into the Greek-speaking areas, and he came to places like Corinth, he realized it was a wealthier place, filled with non-Jews.

And for him, as he went around, and he saw that actually, the church in Corinth had a little bit more cash going than the church in Jerusalem. And he was convinced, in fact, he gave his whole life to show that actually, the grace of God doesn't just bring you into Christ's family.

It also means that now, you are unified with your brothers and sisters across the world, so that actually, the love should be poured out, even crossing boundaries, from the Gentiles in Corinth to be given to the Jews in the city of Jerusalem.

[11:54] And as people see this counter-cultural gift that he's calling them to give to support those churches, that's a demonstration of the gospel.

And actually, this passage here, that we're looking at, is Paul basically trying to speak to this church in Corinth, which is more wealthy, and trying to persuade them to give to this project to people that they've never met.

To people that they'll actually probably get no immediate benefit from. They're from a different ethnic background. It's nothing that anyone around them would ever tell them was a good idea to do.

And so what we're going to see is how, as Paul, say, this is actually how the gospel reshapes entirely the way that you as the church live differently from the people around you.

And so, that's what we're going to look at. We're going to look at four things. And the first thing we're going to look at is about this idea of giving and that the foundation of giving is grace.

[13:03] So we're going to start in verse 9. And it says, You know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, You know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not new to you. You know the gospel. You have heard this message again and again. And sometimes when you've heard a message, you kind of tune out after a while.

But he says, This is what you know. You know that while Jesus was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor.

And you want to think, how was Jesus rich? Well, Jesus had complete financial freedom. Did you know that?

He wasn't waiting for his MPF to come through just to retire. He had all the resources of heaven. He owned the cattle on a thousand hills.

[14:00] He owed all of creation, belongs to him. He doesn't need anything from anyone. And more than that, he also has the highest honor, the highest status, and he also has this communion with his Father and the Spirit together of just such deep, intimate love that they're completely self-sufficient in every single category that you could ever think of.

They don't need anything. And you know when you don't need anything, what we normally do is we withdraw into ourselves and put down our shutters and then just live happily by ourselves, don't we?

But Jesus didn't. You see, what he says was that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, and he's speaking to specific people in the church in Corinth, he's going to say, for your sakes, Watermark, for you, Justin, Julie, Ellen, for you, he became poor.

Out of the overflow of his riches, he came down to earth and you know what people said? They said, oh, we'll follow you and Jesus says, the Son of Man has got nowhere to lay his head. He came and he came as the King of Glory and that nobody recognized him. They ignored him. They rejected him. They even came to a cross where he was stripped, naked, humiliated, and killed.

[15 : 25] And yet he said, I did that for your sakes, for you. Why? So that people like us who are poor could become into a relationship with the rich one and have access to him and all that is his.

You see, you know, the fundamental issue with poverty isn't actually about how much money you've got in your bank account. Did you know that? It's actually far more about the access that you have and the opportunities that you have to particular relationships in your life because relationships can give you access to resources.

So, for example, that's why if you're a student and you feel like you don't have much money in your bank account, you don't classify probably as the poor because probably, for most of you, you may have access to your parents and your parents can keep giving you more money if they need to.

So, what the, and you know, the poor don't have relatives to bail them out. They aren't in the right social circles to access certain jobs, to access certain education, to access certain knowledge.

And what Paul is saying here is each one of us, because of our sin and our rebellion against God, we were the poor because we were cut off from access to God himself.

[17 : 00] And yet, God himself and his richness has overflowed to bring you and me into this relationship so that we can get all of his grace and abundance flowing to us.

and it's nothing we deserve. That is the grace that he's talking about. That, he says, if you get that, if you get that truly, that is going to fuel your life in a different way and that's going to be the pattern of your life in a different way.

And so, Paul is then going to get very, he says, that's the foundation of everything that I'm going to share with you, Corinthians. because now he's going to get practical about this collection that he's trying to collect.

So, he then says, second point, that grace, if you get how much Jesus has loved you, if you get it, grace leads to action. And this is verse 10 to 15, chapter 8.

He says, a year ago, you started to do this work but also to desire it. So now finish doing it as well so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by completing it out of what you have and not out of what you don't have.

[18 : 12] And so, Paul is saying, okay, if you understand this message of grace, he had written to these Corinthians about a year ago and he told them, hey, can you start putting aside some of this money for this collection?

And they had responded with excitement. They'd said, yeah, they weren't pressurized into it, they weren't guilt-tripped into it, they'd said, yeah, let's do it. But now a year has gone past and that kind of initial excitement has died.

You know, they're kind of getting a little bit of cold feet at this stage. And isn't it just really interesting that how much of our giving is actually based on emotional appeals?

Like, even in modern society, isn't it, they show you a picture of a poor, starving child and therefore you give just out of emotion? Or, you know, we do ice bucket challenges and things like that where we all get really excited for a short mile, but how lasting is that in our hearts and in our lives?

Like, how many people, do you remember the ice bucket challenge? Yeah? Like, how many people are still, like, really supporting ALS? Right? Do you see, like, we have this, and so our society is more, it's more gives out of emotion-based and out of grace-based.

[19 : 29] And for the Corinthians, they were not feeling the emotion at this time because now didn't feel like such a good time to be able to give because maybe they promised quite a bit before, but now some other stuff has come in, their school fees have increased, maybe inflation's gone up, and they're looking at the amount and they're going, oh, that's actually quite a lot, I don't think we can afford that.

And so they're going, hey, maybe next year, when we get a bonus next year, then we'll be able to give, but maybe not now. And Paul says, listen, God is not about making your life hard.

He's not trying to make you poor while the church in Jerusalem gets rich and has jacuzzis in their houses. He's looking at your heart and he's saying, just give according to whatever you have, don't give according to what you don't have.

But he says, don't wait until you think you've got enough to give. Don't wait until your bonus comes. If you're a student, Kevin mentioned this last week, don't wait until you think, okay, when I start earning, then I'll give.

Because listen, when you start earning, then it becomes so much harder to give. He's saying, now is the time to give whatever you have to give.

[20 : 44] And if you don't feel like giving, he says, don't wait for generosity to kind of fill up inside of you and then I'll give. No, he says, actually just start giving whatever you can and then pray that God would actually start changing your heart so you actually, you desire to give it like the Corinthians have begun to desire to do so.

Because you find it's like brushing your teeth, you know, you never want to do it but actually once you start doing it and then you stop brushing your teeth, you miss it, right? That's what he wants to do in us.

So grace, if you get how much Jesus has loved you personally and us as a church, it leads to action. But thirdly, grace leads to a harvest.

I'm going to spend a bit longer on this. It says, as we go into chapter 9, verse 6, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

And later on, he then says, whoever supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

[21 : 56] Now he's using a farming analogy. He's talking about seeds. I brought some seeds with me. Let's put it over here.

Whoops. There you go. So, he's talking farming. We're not farmers in Hong Kong, but I think we probably can get the analogy. He's saying that God in his grace didn't just give you salvation.

You know, the word grace in Paul's day was not a spiritual religious word. It was a normal word. It was used for any ways that actually the gifts that were given. And so he says, God has given you not just his son, he's also given you stuff.

He's given you seed. And just like a farmer has seed to sow, now why does a farmer go out to sow seed? Okay, anyone?

That's not a rhetorical question. Harvest. Good. Someone has done geography or whatever it is.

Okay. Yes. Even in Hong Kong we understand that, right?

[23 : 02] We've seen it on TV. And yes, the farmer sows to get a harvest. Now, a farmer still has to feed himself so the farmer can keep some of the seed for himself to be able to feed him and his family.

But he's saying, if you sow a little bit, how much harvest are you going to get? A little bit. This is not complicated.

Okay. Okay. Paul at times is complicated. He's not complicated here. Okay. So he's saying, actually, if the more that I keep just for myself, what happens to the harvest?

It's less, right? And so actually, the more that actually I'm hoarding thinking I've got to keep it all for myself, actually the less that the fruitfulness of your life is going to grow.

And so what he says is, the more seeds that you sow, what's going to happen? The more harvest you will have. Okay, good. I think we're getting there now, right?

[24 : 05] And so what he's saying is, like, we get this. Okay. And he's saying, actually, that when you give generously out of your heart, what God is going to do, he's not trying to say, okay, I want to make you poor so you have no seed for yourself, but he's saying, actually, the more that you can be lavish in giving, the more harvest will flow from your life.

And he's saying, that actually, God will then multiply your seed. He will provide for you so that you have more to be able to give. But what we tend to do is we go, okay, that sounds like a little bit of a manipulation technique.

Maybe I'm not going to have enough. I've got all these plans for all the things that I want to spend my money on, right? And there's school fees, there's this, there's that, there's Air Jordans I want to buy, and there's all this stuff that I'm thinking.

And so, what we think is, oh, I've got to sacrifice all of that and I'm going to lose out on life. Because what we believe is actually that we don't have a gracious, generous, faithful God.

because sometimes we feel in our hearts, we actually think that if I give in some way, that God really deep in our hearts, we don't say this, but actually we believe this, that deep in our hearts that God is really a stingy father who doesn't really care for us, who doesn't really love us so much.

[25 : 34] And Paul wants to say, do you know the grace of the Lord Jesus? That he's given everything for you. And he doesn't want us to give just to burden us. He wants us to live generous lives that will become cheerful, joy-filled givers.

Because you test his faithfulness like Kevin was talking last week and you see that God is faithful in abounding a harvest in your life. Now, when I was at university, I felt God challenge me in this area and there was a particular missions organization that I felt he was calling me to give and to give far more than I would ever normally give.

And so I wrote this check and I was a student at the time and I wasn't a wealthy one for 500 pounds. I was like... And as I was writing it, I was kind of like, am I just being an idiot here? And, you know, I didn't know whether I was being an idiot, but I felt like God was calling me to do that. He doesn't always call me to do that. But then three weeks later, I received a letter from an aunt, a very distant aunt of mine.

I don't even know if she's an aunt. I think she's one of those relatives you're not quite sure where to categorize. And she'd only ever occasionally communicated at Christmas and given, like, I think the most generous was 20 pounds.

[27 : 03] Which actually, in those days, was not bad. But then I got this letter and inside this letter she said, hey, I've been going through some stuff in my accounts and I've been...

And I just wondered if you'd like this. And I opened the envelope and there was a check for 2,000 pounds. And I went, my goodness me. Now, why am I sharing you that story?

I'm not sharing it, so you go away calculating, okay, I put 1,000 in the offering, that means 4,000. No. You see, I gave not expecting anything back.

I gave because God had called me to give. Not out of guilt, not out of any kind of manipulation. But what I saw was that God is gracious and faithful in ways that I didn't even expect Him to be.

And what He gave me, and I knew that from that He increased my faith to believe that actually God can always provide for me. Maybe it's not going to be exactly in that way.

[28 : 10] In fact, I've never had that exactly the same thing happen again. But He gives us in so many ways so that we can have more seed to sow into other people's lives again.

So generosity can flow to more other people. Paul says it like this. He says, God is able to make all grace, all grace, that's a lot of grace, abound to you.

Abound. Is that a little? No, abound is a lot. So that having all sufficiency, now that word means all contentment, all you need, not all you want, by the way.

He's not saying the Ferrari's coming, right? But having all that you need, all contentment, at all times, that's a lot of the time, in all things, that's a lot of things, that you may abound in every good work.

You see where it's going? It's going outwards. And then in verse 11, He says this. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

[29 : 23] Now this is an interesting passage. Do you know what He's actually saying here? I'm going to be a little controversial maybe.

God wants you to be rich. Did you know that? His call for generosity is because God wants you to be rich. In fact, let me even make it stronger.

Jesus died so that you can be rich individually and as a community. Isn't that exactly what He said in chapter 8 right at the beginning?

He said, for your sake He became poor. Why? So that through by His poverty you might become rich. Now some of you are getting a little nervous at this point.

Before you think I'm preaching the prosperity gospel, I am preaching the prosperity gospel but not the prosperity gospel that says give your money to the church and God will triple what you want and what you give guaranteed.

[30 : 33] That's not what I'm preaching because think what is your definition of rich? If you're anything like me the first things that come into my mind are like millions in your bank account, two Ferraris on your front drive, a personal yacht, right?

That's what I think when I think the word rich. Anyone like me? Do you know that is the most narrow definition of rich you could ever imagine? Like just think about it.

How many wealthy people, Fiona used to work in a law firm with some very high wealthy individuals who were getting divorced. Let me tell you, when you get to know people's lives there is so much tragedy and poverty in their hearts.

Like so many wealthy people are lonely, insecure, fearful. Often the pursuit of wealth destroys the very relationships that we crave. Money and possessions by itself isn't rich.

You know, Hong Kong is one of the wealthiest places on the planet and yet it's one of the most stressed. That's emotional poverty, right? Our relationships are strained.

[31 : 45] That's relational poverty. We live for stuff that never satisfies. That's living with purpose poverty. I know you could go on and on and yet Paul wants to bring us just like actually when we were in Turkey we saw these people as Ellen and Phoebe were sharing who had left everything who saw much they had left and yet you saw in them this faith where you went away saying wow we have so much they have so little but they are so rich.

in faith. And Paul does the same thing here and I'm going to flip back right to the beginning of chapter 8 verse 1 because he's going to give an example of what it looks like to be rich.

He says in a severe test of affliction their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

Times are hard for the Macedonian churches these are a little bit north in Greece they're being persecuted on the outside and suffering poverty on the inside like many of the Turkish believers and poverty is not pleasant the Bible doesn't make poverty ever a goal that we should detain but here what they're doing you know when you're going through a hard time where do you tend to focus? just on ourselves right? If you're like me that's what we do and they're normally going hey now's not a good time to help out just wait for a little bit later but because they knew the richness of their father who was so generous and they knew who could provide for them that he was faithful Paul says they had abundance they had wealth they were poor but they were rich and you see what they were rich in?

[33 : 45] they're rich in joy you know they're going we've only got two dollars and like one we've got to keep for our family but can we possibly Paul like is it possible for us to be able to have the grace that's what the word favor mean the grace the privilege of being able to share with our brothers in need because we see what a joy that is and they're going hey let's see guys is there any other way that we could kind of I know we've not got much but could we just give anything more maybe we can go busking on the streets I don't know what can we do so that we can actually bless these guys there's going to be an opportunity cost if we actually miss out on this chance to sow grace to our brothers and sisters in Jerusalem I don't know whether like when you get a pay rise the first thought in your mind is wow what an opportunity I can to save or spend more or wow what an opportunity that I can give more but that's the church in Macedonia and Paul is saying it's not about the amount of money because like they're poor

I mean they're not giving exactly very much at all but he's looking at the heart and he's saying they've just understood grace and it's just flowing out of them in a powerful way you know I grew up in a family which was tight on finances and I learned to count my pennies and when it comes to giving gifts I'm usually thinking how cheap can I go before I look cheap you know that but I went on a mission trip to India and I met some nuns in desperate poverty and yet they were filled with this incredible joy and they'd cook us breakfast and I found out they were actually cooking pretty much most of what they most of what they had so they were actually taking less for themselves so that we could enjoy it and I was feeling a bit guilty about that because you know we have so much but actually for them it was a joy it was a privilege and I realized wow in so many ways

I'm actually so poor and these guys are so rich because they've understood God's grace and Paul himself this is amazing Paul is blown away by this as well and he says they gave they didn't give out of guilt they didn't give even because Paul told them to give they give first to the Lord they first said God what's going to please you we actually want to obey you and then out of that they gave do we want to be a rich community okay good I was worried there for a minute I thought we might have to go a little bit longer do we want to have a greater impact in other people's lives than just eating the own seed for ourselves God wants to change our hearts not so that it's guilt driven but so we become cheerful givers in all of our life grace leads to action grace leads to a harvest grace leads to

thanksgiving he says for the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God ultimately a generous heart is not just about you having a richer life or even about other people being blessed through it it's about the glory of God it's about

God is glorified when his people are so satisfied in him that they can hold loosely the stuff that they have and be generous with it when they see that God is calling them and they see needs around and as we are thankful for God's grace in our life that overflows and what Paul is saying here is when the Corinthians were to give to their needy brothers and sisters what would be happening there was God has given them grace he's given them spiritual grace he's given them physical grace and actually as his grace then comes and works in their heart and changes their heart it then overflows with them giving a gift of grace to this people in Jerusalem and when they receive the grace what happens will happen to them is they will realize in a deep way wow our God is so gracious through you and so as their faith increases it releases them to thank God that they can see their God provides and he's provided through the Corinthians and what that does it creates them to then pray for their church over there so deeper unity amongst these people who would be divided normally occurs and through that you say only the gospel can do that and Jesus gets all the glory you know my wife is expecting in October that's the right response and a number of you have actually been just really generous towards us in offering us baby stuff they've promised it so I'm I'm expecting it you know Paul said action no but actually one of the things like I was just talking with Fiona just the other day and she was she was saying actually you know the amount of money that we could save from that how about if we actually then use that to be able to to give to some missionary friends in France so that we can bless them and so as I was thinking about I was thinking that's so much what this is that actually as somebody shows generosity us then we can show generosity to somebody else and then they through their ministry will be speaking and releasing grace into other people's life and as you see that the impact of someone's generosity right the way over in Hong Kong can impact all the way into France and in somebody's life that I have no idea who they are may result in praise and thanksgiving to God isn't that amazing to be part of something so much bigger than yourself that's the harvest God's talking about so what do we do about this do you see when you get grace it changes everything and first I think as I've just thought about this and realized for myself but none of us are as generous as we should be

[40 : 35] I mean let's just let's just be real and maybe it's not just financial it's maybe other areas none of us are rich in faith and love and joy as God wants us to be and so we need to repent first God I often live as if you're not as gracious as you really are I need to repent you're not as generous and I haven't I haven't proved you as faithful by being giving so that the seed of the harvest can come but the amazing thing is this and this just blows me away you know when it says the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ you know it when did he give his grace to us through dying on the cross while we were still poor you see Jesus meets us right where we are with all of our fears all of our insecurities all of our questions that we have some of you may have a lot of questions he knows where we are right now as a church as individuals for some people

Jesus may be going to you like the rich young ruler give everything away but I suspect for most of us that's not what Jesus is saying Jesus is actually probably just saying I want just to take one step if you're like me I want to change from zero to a hundred overnight and I want everyone else to change the same but God's not like that he's so gracious with us he's so gentle with us he leads us step by step so at the end of this series as we've been talking about the grip of money on our hearts I want to ask you what's the area that God is calling you to respond in what's the area that he's highlighting in your life he's not going to give you a hundred things he'll probably just give you one thing it may be a very small thing it may be that you actually just need to start talking about money with your spouse or with your community group it may be that actually he's calling you to buy fewer clothes and give the money away it may be just calling you to find out about the needs that are around because when you find out about needs then you can be thinking about them and praying about them and asking God how do you want us to be generous but grace leads to action and God does not want us to go away from this series just saying oh that was a nice series and I'm personally convinced but God does also not want you to go away inspired for 24 hours on an emotional base okay I need to give and then three days later it's like gone

Jesus wants to meet you where you are today and to bring you to a pattern of your life where there is regular consistent wholehearted life transformed bit by bit transformation of your wallet

transformation so that grace and generosity is characteristic of us as a church and so I think the first place that we start I'm going to close with this is to identify who God is calling you to give to there are a thousand charities out there who ask you for your money there are so many needs out there we wonder oh like do I just give out of guilt but actually I think God wants to cultivate a heart of generosity in four things here these are four things the Bible calls us to give to the family the local church other gospel ministry and mission and the poor and the needy maybe you're already giving to a lot of different ways maybe you need to just talk with Julie or Jeremy or one of the mission partners that we've started this funds that we're talking about have you got the other slide the three funds that we're looking at as a church compassion for the needs of those within the church missional justice for those outside the church and the supporting of mission work that's going on around Asia maybe you need to just find out from the Filipino community or from other communities just what are the needs how can I start praying but let me finish by saying this some of us are very generous financially but we often struggle to give with our time because time is very precious but you know

Jesus didn't just write a check to us he didn't say hey there's your needs let me send you like a little gift in an envelope Jesus came and he didn't stay distant from you he didn't stay attached from you he knows about where your heart is and he came down to you to cross every barrier so that you might be his wherever you are today he's not a stingy God he's a gracious God he comes to you today so may we be that rich church may we be a church that knows how gracious he is let's pray what I'd love you to do is just think for yourself I don't want you to think out of guilt I don't want you to think out of just even a pressure but say God what are you calling me to do how do you want me where in my heart do I see you as a stingy God where are you calling me to step out in faith and maybe you would like to come up for prayer like just during this time we're going to play the next song maybe you just want to respond actually by coming up and asking for prayer prayer this is a hard topic but Jesus is so glorious he can provide for everything father we pray for our hearts thank you that you are generous to us thank you for all that you've given us thank you we don't have to live guilty lives but you want us to live generous lives please show us what that means please help us not to live under a pressure but actually out of a joy to trust you and prove you faithful to prove you generous to prove you more abundant than we could ever imagine would that be what characterizes us as a church
I pray in Jesus name Amen