



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, June 27, 2021

Responding Generosity

By Daniel H. Wilcox

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

8:7 Now as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you--so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

8:8 I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others.

8:9 For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

8:10 And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something--

8:11 now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means.

8:12 For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has--not according to what one does not have.

8:13 I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between

8:14 your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance.

8:15 As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."

John Wesley, the Methodist movement's founder, when approached by an indigent woman requesting alms, gave her what he had and then realized that he was left with very little. At that moment, he chose to be a better steward of God's resources since he had recently purchased pictures to adorn his residence. In his sermon, "The Use of Money", Wesley recommended this advice to believers; "Gain all that you can, save all that you can, and give all that you can." Wesley's desire for better stewardship to relieve the poor guided his maximization of earnings and his frugality of savings that would enhance his capacity to assist the needy.

Apostle Paul commends the church at Corinth for its willing generosity, not in regards to the amount, but to the earnest eagerness in their charity. Giving responds to giving as believers appreciate that God has given us Jesus Christ whose sacrifice on Calvary generously ransoms us from sin. This gift further affords us hope of life through faith in his and our resurrection. Though Christ was rich and we were poor, he gave his all that believers might be rich in grace and mercy, giving his body and blood in accordance with his divine mission of redemption. Paul reminds us that resources are obtained for the needs of the community, in particular, the faithful. One's present abundance may serve the needs of another's present lack and another's future abundance may serve one's future lack. The entire community should abound in the abundant life of God by sharing with each other the bounty of God.

Let us, by the grace of God, share generously what we have with others that through us, God blesses all.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture, share a time/instance when you have trusted the act of giving as a guiding principle? How did this experience make you feel or direct you?

PRAY: Almighty God, you made us in your image and breathed in us a spirit of generosity that is both gift and response. Move us, we pray, to give as we have received - abundantly, generously, and joyfully, that our common ministry may ever bear witness to your unfailing grace. In the name of the three in whom we are one. Amen

ACT:

1. During the Kingdomtide season, determine how to enhance your giving to the church and the needy by using Wesleyan financial principles found in his sermon, "The Use of Money" for the next four weeks. Journal your experience and reflect on your spiritual journey. Do what you can to protect the health of others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, and prayerfully considering getting the vaccine when it is available—See: <http://www.amehealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

Song:

We Give Thee But Thine Own
AMEC Hymnal, #645

1. We give Thee but Thine own,
Whate'er the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.
2. May we Thy bounties thus
As stewards true receive,
And gladly, as Thou blessest us,
To Thee our first fruits give.
3. O hearts are bruised and dead,
And homes are bare and cold,
And lambs for whom the Shepherd bled
Are straying from the fold.
4. To comfort and to bless,
To find a balm for woe,
To tend the lone and fatherless
Is angels' work below.
5. The captive to release,
To God the lost to bring,
To teach the way of life and peace—
It is a Christ-like thing.
6. And we believe Thy Word,
Though dim our faith may be;
Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord,
We do it unto Thee.

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.