

A Cup of Generosity

Pastor Dana Karen Reardon

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia, for during a severe ordeal of affliction their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the favor of partnering in this ministry to the saints.

2 Corinthians 8

Has all this inflation made you nervous and maybe made you think about pulling in and not being quite so generous so that you will have enough for yourself? I think that's only natural but often when we think about something being natural, it's really sin. By our own nature we don't tend to do good. But when the spirit gets a hold of us it can do great things through us.

I used this example of the churches of Macedonia because they were also going through a really tough time and could quite naturally have pulled in and said, "We need to take care of ourselves", but they didn't. They continued to give generously to the churches in Jerusalem who were being persecuted.

It takes a lot of faith to do this kind of giving. During the Great Depression the percentage of giving to charities was higher than almost any other time in American history which when I first read this surprised me because so many people were hurting. From what I know of human nature I would have expected giving to be greater when things were going well for most people but that is not the case. What that tells me is that God has moved people to give when there is need and to share not only of their abundance but of what little they have.

*One of my favorite books, *The Soul of Money*, has a story about a woman in a small, poor church in Harlem saying, "Money is like water, some of us get a river and some of us get a trickle but whatever we get we pass it on." I'm not sure if I got the quote exactly right but I know this sentiment. Giving and receiving is what we do as followers of Christ.*

If you are one of those people who has gotten nervous with the way things are in the economy right now you're not alone. I'm writing this because I find myself wanting to pull back and knowing that it is an act of faith to give when times are tough.

One of the things that inspired me was a homeless woman who uses our church as her address to get her mail. The other day she came in to pick up her mail and handed me \$20. She has recently started working and since life has been an up and down struggle for her I would expect her to hoard every penny not knowing how long the job would last. Instead she gave generously of what little she had and I know it was in part because this generous church has been here for her but I still believe it takes a nudging from God to give generously like that.



In comparison, however tight things get, I have an abundance and know that I can trust God to give me what I need if I continue to give not only to the church but to people in need. I thank God that I have witnesses from across the centuries and in my own neighborhood of what giving generously looks like so that I can continue to give gladly.

My prayer for all of us is that we will continue to trust that God will take care of us so that we can be faithful stewards and let our money run through our hands to the good purposes that God would have us give it. Amen