

Sermon for Sunday, November 8, 1981 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO 63105

"WHEN YOU DON'T PAY FOR WHAT YOU GET"
II Corinthians 9:1-15

Text: "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness."
II Corinthians 9:10

This morning I want to talk about Christian stewardship and Christian giving. I don't think I really have anything new to say this morning, especially to those of you who were members here when I came. After all, this is the 12th commitment season at Central for me and each year I have preached at least twice and sometimes three times on Christian giving. All in all, I must have preached at least 30 sermons on stewardship. However, I am not discouraged because when I came here our budget was \$375,000 and for 1982 our budget will be \$1,450,000. I am reminded of the young preacher who moved to a new church. The first Sunday he got up and preached a marvelous sermon. Everybody just raved about the new preacher and what a good sermon it was. The next Sunday there was an even larger crowd at church, but the preacher got up and preached the same sermon. Well, it was still a marvelous sermon and everyone enjoyed hearing it again so nobody complained. However, on the third Sunday he got up and once more preached the same sermon. After the service several of the Elders went to his study and one of them served as their spokesman. "Pastor", he said, "that is a wonderful sermon, but don't you have any other sermons you can preach to us?" "Oh," said the pastor, "of course I do. But you haven't done the first one yet." Well, I can't say that. If I had a new sermon on stewardship I would preach it because at least some of you have begun to do the other 30!

So this morning I would like to share some great truths about giving that most of us already know. However, as we share together what God has said, God always takes that and by the power of the Holy Spirit uses it in our lives.

In verse seven of our Scripture this morning the Bible says, "Each one must do as he has made up his mind..." Now, that means simply that what you give back to God for the work of His kingdom is your decision. It is an act of your will. This week as you and your family are thinking about what you will commit to God in 1982, and as you consider whether or not you will be a tither as the Scriptures command, you need to remember that what you do next Sunday is an act of your will. Don't blame your debts--that has nothing to do with your tithe. Don't blame inflation, don't blame the cost of living, don't blame your wife or your husband or the kids in college, because that has nothing to do with your tithe. No, what you give and how you give is an act of your will. As St. Paul says, "each one must do as he has made up his mind..." Have you made up your mind about God's share of your income? Some of us say, "well, when I make more money--or when I am in better financial shape--then I will tithe." Let me tell you, that time will never come!

One of the reasons that time will never come is because of what Paul says in verse six. He writes, "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly..." You see, when I am obedient to God; When I obey his commands and do what

God requires of me, my act of obedience opens a door for God in my life. I want to talk about what happens to you and me when by our obedience we open that door for God to enter our lives in a special way.

First, in verse eight, Paul says God will provide us with every blessing in abundance. Now notice that you don't get what you pay for! No, you get a lot more because you get blessings in abundance. Could you use some blessings from God in your life? How would you like to get blessed in your business? How would you like to get blessed in your marriage? How would you like for your children to get blessed? Well, God promises you blessings in abundance when you are obedient in stewardship. And there may be other blessings you don't even know about. There will be times when bad things don't happen to you--times when you don't get sick or when things don't go wrong. Do you have any idea how many times things didn't happen to you because God was abundantly blessing you?

Second, in the same verse eight Paul shares another promise with us. He says, "(you will) always have enough to do everything." I used to think that if I gave too much to the Lord, I would have to do without. But now I know that simply is not true. I just can't outgive God! Whatever my needs have been, God has more than met them. Now, that doesn't mean God hasn't sometimes changed my needs! I think God does that, too. After I became a Christian I didn't want to do the things I once did and I didn't want the things I once wanted. Haven't many of you found that true in your life? But what I did want and what I did need, God has always supplied. Try that in your life and see if it won't work for you. If you are faithful to God in your giving, he will be more than faithful to you in his giving and you will have enough of everything. That is a Bible promise and you can stand on it.

Third, when you give according to God's plan, you will have more to give than you ever had before. Does that surprise you? It does me. Sometimes I wonder if God isn't tricking us! You see, what happens is, as I make a decision to obey God in my finances, some things begin to happen to me. When by an act of my will I decide to be God's person, he begins to change my heart. And not only does he change my wants and needs and desires, he begins to give me a heart for others. And sure enough, just as the Bible promises, the more I give the more I have to give. Many Christians have made that funny discovery--I say funny, because in a way it is! One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of generosity and I'm always praying that all the rich people in the church will get that gift! But you know, it isn't the rich people so much who give to our church. It is the ordinary family, being obedient to God, who get blessed and God just gives them an abundance for every good work.

People say to me, "Well, no wonder you have such a big budget. You've got all those wealthy people in your church." Well, let me tell you something! If we depended on just the wealthy people, we couldn't keep the church doors open. No, we have ample because God touches the lives of ordinary men and women when they are obedient and then they have ample for every good work. You see, that is a Bible promise and it works.

Now this brings me to point four and to our text printed in the bulletin this morning, which is verse 10. Point four is this: you don't get what you pay for. Do you like to get what you pay for? Most of us do. But so often we

get something we think is a bargain. But soon it wears out, or tears, or something goes wrong and it won't work any more. Then in a philosophical way we say, "well, you only get what you pay for." However, that isn't true with God. God offers you the best bargain in the world. God offers you something where you don't get what you pay for, but you get a great deal more.

There are two special ways you don't get what you pay for. Here is way number one: The Bible says in verse ten of our scripture that God will multiply your resources. Could you use some of that? I suspect most of us could. Does that mean that if you tithe in obedience to God that you will have more than you had before? Well, it could mean that. I know of many cases where people by an act of their will have made a decision to tithe and as a consequence of that had increased income. But I wouldn't buy a new car on that assumption if I were you! I always think of God multiplying our resources in terms of the little boy who placed his lunch in the hands of Jesus. Do you remember that story? The people had followed Jesus out into a barren place and he had taught them. When there was no way to feed them, a little lad who had five barley loaves and two fish took what he had and placed it in the hands of Jesus and the five thousand were fed. Well, that's one of the major ways God multiplies our resources. He takes what we have when we put it in his hands and he makes it go further. How does God do that? Frankly, I don't know. But the one thing I do know is that God's promise is true. I have seen it in operation in my life and in the lives of others over and over again.

So that is one way you don't get what you pay for. When you take what you have, entrust it to God, he takes it and blesses it and multiplies your resources. But here is way number two that you don't pay for what you get. Paul says that God will increase the harvest of our righteousness. I have puzzled and prayed over the exact meaning of that. What does it mean when the Bible says the harvest of our righteousness will be increased? Well, if you plant something, you get a harvest back--right? So if you plant righteousness, you get a harvest from it--your more righteousness. Let me ask you this question. Are you satisfied with your Christian life? Are you satisfied with who and what you are as God's person? I suspect few of us are. Well, what is our problem? Why is it taking us so long to be good? Why is it taking us so long to be the man or the woman God wants us to be? I think the answer to that is right here. We can't get a harvest and we don't reap a bumper crop because we haven't planted very much righteousness.

Isn't that a basic spiritual principle? Do you remember what Jesus said about faith as small as a mustard seed? He promises that it will grow into a tree. Well, maybe it is time you and I started to take seriously our need to plant some seeds. Could it be for me--could it be for you--that we are not growing as we would like because we are not planting the seeds God requires of us.

Well, the Bible teaches Christians to tithe--to give ten percent of their income to the things of God. Maybe we will never be the people we want to be, we will never have the blessings we want, never have resources for all our needs, until we begin to be obedient. In the beginning I said that what you return to God is your decision--it is an act of your will. If you don't tithe, that is an act of your will whereby you say to God, "God, I won't do this."

If you do tithe it is because by an act of your will you have said to God, "God, I will obey you."

So, how you decide depends on you--an act of your will. But you will never be the person you want to be--you will never have the blessings you want in your life--you will never have the harvest of righteousness you want, until you say "I will" to God.

Next Sunday when we make our commitment to God and His Church, what will you say to God?