

## Hayward United Methodist Church

Pastor Samuel's Message for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday After Pentecost, November 17, 2021

**"Thanks Be To God"**

**Text: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

**Gospel Reading: 2 Corinthians 9:11-16 (NRSV)**

**You will be enriched in every way for your generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgiving to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.**

**Prayer for Illumination (UMH 6)**

**Lord, open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.**

**Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

**In the month of November, we will be celebrating our stewardship. November is also the month of thanksgiving. Once a year we gather with family and friends over a special meal to celebrate and give thanks to God for God's faithfulness and mercy. God has blessed us so much and especially with life. We have lost so many of our loved ones due to pandemic all over the globe. On the one hand we grieve with those who grieve. On the other hand, we give thanks to God for God's preservation and guidance over the years. We can be thankful to God for earth and all there is in it. We can give thanks to God for friends and families. We can give thanks to God for church. We can give thanks to God for community. We can keep counting our blessings one by one.**

**Stewardship reminds us of our relationship to God and to one another. Adam and Eve were the first stewards. God planted a garden which was called the Garden of Eden. God put Adam and Even in the garden to take care of it. Stewardship is**

all about taking care of someone's property. We believe that God has given us the earth as a trust to take care of. It comes with responsibility. It also comes with restriction. God said to Adam, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:17). God established a boundary to show his sovereignty. God is in charge of everything. We are only called to till the earth and make it prosper for all living beings. God owns everything. We are God's servants in taking care of God's property. We are accountable to God and we are accountable to one another.

First, God provides. The apostle Paul draws attention to God's generosity. God has created the earth for humankind. God has created everything in it to sustain the earth like the sea, the plants, the animals, the sun, the moon, and the stars. It's beautiful universe. Paul was writing to the church in Corinth. They were new to faith and to the preaching of the gospel. Paul provides foundation for their faith so that they could grow in their faith. Paul discusses God's generosity first and human generosity second. The purpose is to enable human generosity based on God's generosity.

Paul writes, "And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work" (2 Cor 9:8). Paul calls upon the believers in Corinth to look at the blessings they received from God. Paul is not simply talking about material blessings. The believers in Corinth were not rich by worldly standard. They had to make their living by doing manual work. They did not have enough for tomorrow. They had to face hardship in life. They did not have any medical aid. They had to deal with sickness as it came. Many died untimely without proper medical care. They had to endure the scorch of the sun. They were daily laborers.

Paul himself worked as a tent maker to earn for his living. He knew the suffering of the people. He himself suffered physically. Yet he says that the believers in Corinth are blessed by God. God provides everything in abundance. Probably he was talking about the spiritual gifts that God gave them as blessings. Some were given the gift of saying encouraging words. Others were given the gift of teaching. Others were given the gift of doing good works. Others were given the gift of love. Each one of them was given a gift to edify the church and the community. They used their gifts to build God's Kingdom of love and justice.

Paul reminds us that we should take an inventory of God's blessings. Each one of us has received a gift. God has given us enough to do good work. God has blessed us with education. God has blessed us with good medical care. God has blessed us with jobs. God has blessed us with families and friends. God has blessed us with possessions. God has blessed us with basic means of living. The list may go on and on. The purpose of God blessing us with so many good things to share with others so that God would be glorified. We can use all the possessions and gifts to enrich the life of others and in turn the whole universe.

Second, our generosity brings thanksgiving to God. Paul says that God's generosity enables human generosity and in turn brings thanksgiving to God. In being generous to one another, we are going to be blessed and enriched. Paul writes, "You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will provide thanksgiving to God through us" (2 Cor 9:11). We can be generous in many ways. Paying taxes will be one way of showing generosity. It helps with roads, schools, hospitals and so on. We as church pay apportionment to the conference. It helps support the ministries of the conference locally and internationally. So many people benefit from our giving. We can be generous in our time. We can get involved in community projects. We can volunteer our time and our talents to help others. Generosity is not just about monetary giving, although it is only part of it. We can give without expecting any reward or praise. Thanksgiving goes to God.

The parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25:31-45 is all about generosity. God wants us to take care of the poor and the needy in the world. God calls us to devote our time and direct our resources to fight against hunger, to provide clean water, to improve health care, to stand for justice, and to serve the people in need. God is pleased with those who help the suffering humanity in so many ways. We have many opportunities to get into the field and do our part. God is counting on ordinary people like us.

We can lead someone to the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is transforming the world. We ourselves are transformed by the preaching of the gospel. There are people in our own community who are lonely and looking for love. We can show them God's love. We can talk to them. We can put them in touch with others if they needed any help. We can invite them to church to become part of fellowship.

**We can pray for them daily. We can pray with them. The needs are great. God wants us to show generosity by being just there with our presence in times of crises.**

**When one joins The United Methodist church, they are asked to make commitment. It says, "As members of this congregation, will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, and your service?" and we respond by saying, "I will." What does it mean? We commit ourselves to be generous in every way. We show our presence in worship, ministries, and community projects. We give our gifts to support the ministry of our church. We give our time. We share our talents to build up the Kingdom of God. We pray for one another. We pray for God's healing and God's guidance. We witness and serve one another in love. We help people who come in our way. We support local mission project and we volunteer our time to support such project. We collect offering to support people around the globe.**

**Whatever we do in God's name brings glory and thanksgiving to God. God is watching. God knows where we spend most of our resources, time, talents, and energy. Where do we see ourselves in the light of the commitment we made before God when we joined the Hayward United Methodist Church? Where do we want to improve ourselves in terms of presence, prayers, gifts, and service? We can pray about it. We can decide where God wants us to use us in the coming year. God will provide to means to accomplish our commitment. Above all, we can give thanks to God for God's indescribably gift which is Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!**

**Pastor Samuel**

**Let's say the Benediction together:  
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all. Amen.**