

BRIGHT HOPE FOR TOMORROW:

The Indescribable Gift

May 15, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord’s Favor* (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

As the world begins awakening from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new *possibilities* with God this Easter season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: 2 Cor 9:10-15 NIV ¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. ¹² This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. ¹³ Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. ¹⁴ And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

This Week: 2 Corinthians 9:10-15

Throughout these closing verses, Paul is direct about what participation in the collection will mean for the Corinthians. They will “reap generously” if they sow accordingly, God will give them plenty for sowing and will increase their harvest of righteousness. Paul assures them that they will be “enriched in every way” by God for their “generosity/liberality” (9:11). And not insignificant in Pauline communities, they will be adding to the thanksgivings to God (9:12).

So “the collection” is a special appeal for the kind of caring for others that is incumbent on persons claimed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, no matter how much or how little they have to contribute. Once again, Paul assumes that the very ones who benefit from the Corinthian generosity will find themselves “longing for” and “praying for you” (9:14) – a hint at the same reciprocity that he expresses so clearly about the collection in Rom 15:27: *“If the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things”*. The prayers and longings of others who benefit from Corinthian generosity are activated by the “surpassing grace of God,” which is the ground spring of all of faithful life and certainly of faith’s generosity.

It is not surprising that Paul’s two-chapter appeal about the collection, which began with the defining note of “grace,” rises to its conclusion by crediting God’s grace as infusing all of life with generosity, with longing, and with prayers one for another. Moved by this grace and its powerful working through the lives of people everywhere, Paul closes with this theme, reworked into a sort of blessing - *Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

– Adapted from the *New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, Vol XI p. 130-31*

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Verse 10 reminds us of the generosity of God, who supplies “seed to the sower and bread for food.” What are some of the ways that God been generous toward you?
2. Why would God want us to be generous? How does the practice of giving shape us?
3. Earlier in 2 Corinthians 8:11, Paul teaches the Corinthians to give prayerfully, *according to their means*. Can a person with fewer means be just as generous (or perhaps even more generous?) than a person who has greater resources?
4. The Corinthian (largely Gentile) generosity led to transformed lives and attitudes among the impoverished Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, potentially leading to greater Gentile-Jewish unity in the church. How can our generosity as a church transform lives and attitudes in a time when many people outside the church look upon Christians in a less favorable light?
5. Can you think of a person whose life has been enhanced because of the generosity of FUMC Coppell? What would it be like to multiply this **Bright Hope** ‘blessing’ in coming years?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC
2. Pray for how God's will can be done through us in the Bright Hope for Tomorrow campaign.
3. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: 2 Corinthians 9:11 *You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*