

Rev. Shaun Arndt
Peace, Sun Prairie
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Epiphany 10

2 Corinthians 9:8-11
See how rich we are!

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Have you ever thought about what you could do as a child of God if you were rich? Maybe daydreamed how you could do more to help others in need or support, expand gospel ministry even more here in Sun Prairie and around the world giving to missions or spend more time focused on spiritual matters? If only we were rich.

Our second lesson today challenges this whole line of thinking. It shows how each of us already *is* rich, wealthier than we could ever imagine. As we look at this Word of God, let us **See how rich we *are!***

In his second letter to the Christians in the Greek city of Corinth, Paul talks about a special offering that was being gathered to help struggling Christians in Jerusalem. As Paul encouraged the Corinthians to continue to generously support this work of the Lord, he reminds them and us, why we are able to serve the Lord: Because we *are* rich. He says: **God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need.**

We are already rich, because God has truly made **all grace abound** to us. The Greek word here for **abound** means “to overflow.” God doesn’t give us a small drop of His grace in our lives. He fills our cup to overflowing!

Grace is the word that tells us how God has shown astounding love and mercy to sinners. Grace tells us God has been amazingly kind to us, not because we earned it in any way, but only because God’s heart overflows with such amazing love. **Grace** describes how God gives us the very opposite of what we deserve!

Like all people we entered this world in spiritually bankrupt before God. We once had only sinful hearts that could do nothing except sin, even when we did what looked good to the world.

Our hopeless sinful condition gave the God of justice no reason to loves us, but instead to reject and punish us. Our sinful condition and the imperfect actions it produces meant we were spiritual beggars headed to the worst place for all eternity. Even one impure thought condemns us to hell's unending, inescapable punishment. That's what we all deserve, preachers too!

But God made his **grace *abound, overflow!*** He gave His greatest treasure to save us: Jesus, the priceless treasure, we just sang about. God the Son shared our humanity to give us the riches his own sinless life deserved. Jesus took on himself the crushing debt of our sin. He suffered hell's fury on the cross instead of us.

Jesus gave the only treasure big enough to rescue us from sin: the life and death of God in human flesh and blood. His death removes sin's curse forever! By rising from the dead, Jesus proves the hopeless debt of

our sin is paid in full, peace with God is ours! **See how rich we are** in God's saving **grace** overflowing to us from Christ.

But there's another way God has **ma(de) all grace abound to you**. We came to this life in such spiritual poverty, so dead in sin we could not by our own effort believe and enjoy God's treasure of forgiveness in Jesus.

So again, God made his **grace abound** and *overflow* when he personally sought you out to be His own and called you to faith in the Gospel promise of Holy Baptism. At the font, the Triune God personally adopted you, cleansing away every sinful stain with Jesus' blood.

And then God's **grace** has overflowed for you and me times without number, as He sought us out with His Word to call us back to himself when we have fallen, strayed and wandered from his ways over and over again. Think how He has fed us with Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper, comforting us with the very treasure that purchased our peace!

And still His **grace** will overflow into eternal life—to that day when we experience in full how truly richly God has blessed us when we feel the power of the resurrection in our bodies risen from the grave to endless life, when we're reunited with fellow believers, hear angels voices with our own ears, but greatest of all, get to see our Savior face to face!

See how rich we are! If all we had was Jesus and what He gives us, we would still be **blessed** to overflowing. Even if we had no food, no clothing, no shelter, but had Christ and his eternal life, Paul would still be right when he says: **having all that you need.**

But then God makes *all* **grace abound** as he makes our cup to overflow with, friends, home, food, clothing, shelter, education, God's protecting angels, prayers heard and answered as the Lord knows best.

And then in **grace**, He even gives abundantly more than our basic needs. He provides us with luxuries unheard of for most of this world's history: like cars and computers and smartphones, more than just one or two sets of clothing, recreation and hobbies.

Why has God so richly blessed us? Only because of **Grace**, his undeserved love, we could never earn.

The Lord has also richly blessed us so that we are ready to be a blessing to others: **so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

The proper response of faith to God's love is **good works**. **Good works** do not save us, they don't even help save us. God's **grace** alone in Christ saves. But hearts that God's **grace** touches and makes alive in faith want to serve God and others in response to Jesus' love.

Paul speaks of **every good work**. Good works are not limited to what we do for church. They include hearing His Word and home and speaking to him in prayer.

Taking care of our families out of thanks for Jesus is also a good work. Living in thanks for Christ's love includes faithfully doing whatever God gives us to do as students, children, parents, spouses, single people and whatever calling He has given us in life as we follow his Word. This even includes enjoying with

thanksgiving and in moderation the good gifts God gives us to enjoy in life.

Every good work includes imitating God by giving for others of the time, money and skills God has given us. **As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever... so that you can be generous on every occasion.**

Paul quotes from Psalm 112, that talks about how thankful believers respond to the Lord's love. The Lord wants us to willingly show our thanks to him by supporting helping others who have needs for their bodies as well as helping the spiritually needy by bringing the good news about Jesus' saving work to this dying world.

Notice though, Paul doesn't say how much to give. He teaches us to give generously like our God does. He gives us the reason to give: not because we're forced, but because the Lord has won over our hearts with the overflowing **grace** and love he's first given us. With hearts freely forgiven by Jesus, God wants us to freely give.

And the Lord has never told us to give more than he has given us, or to do the impossible, but to faithfully respond in proportion to the way he has blessed us. If he has given us little, we will want to be faithfully generous from the little the Lord has given. If the Lord has given us much, we want to be faithfully generous from the much the Lord has given.

See how richly God has blessed us in Christ, and then look at the earthly blessings God has given you, and prayerfully decide how to **scatter abroad** those gifts to do the Lord's work.

And then consider this: **Your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.** Our thank offerings of time, talent and treasure not only are thanks to God, but also result in others giving thanks to God.

People around the world have thanked God for the result of our mission offerings bringing them the riches of God's Word. There are people who thank God for a pastor to comfort their dying grandmother with Jesus' promises, because of your generous offerings that help run our Seminary. There are little children who thank

God in prayer as a result of your offerings that prepare and support Christian teachers.

Just think of all the thanks that goes to God from all around the world, because God has made us so **rich** in Christ, even making us **ready** to be a **rich blessing** to others!

So... understand **How rich we are**—overflowing with God's **grace** in Christ that saves us, overflowing with forgiveness for every sin, including our failures to always respond generously to the riches of His love. overflowing with God's peace in Christ, that restores and readies us again to serve Him now and forever.

Dear friends in Christ, **See how rich you are** and then live as the rich people God has made you. Amen.

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that we through his poverty might become rich! Amen.