

All Together...

Let's Praise God with Gladness!

Sunday October 22

Psalm 100 & Acts 2:43-47

We must begin our series on generosity with the goodness of God as the Divine Giver!

The whole world belongs to God, including us, and we are the recipients of his generosity as Creator and Redeemer.

Therefore, we give to God and to others as an act of joyful worship. Giving is our joyful response of gratitude to God's amazing generosity.

PRAY: Lord, we look forward to learning about gospel-centered generosity as we start this study. All Together, we seek to have open hearts and minds to receive what you will reveal to us. We praise you for being our Creator and Redeemer. All that we have is Yours. AMEN.

Active Thanksgiving

Monday October 23 | Andy Keller

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Psalm 100:1-2

When I think of thanksgiving, the image that immediately comes to mind is a table with overflowing food and surrounded by family. Specifically, I can picture turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and cranberry cheddar summer sausage from Schmidt's meat locker in Nicollet, Minnesota. You also may picture big "T" Thanksgiving, being that it's a national holiday and one of the most popular times for family and friends to gather, but when we look at little "t" thanksgiving, the theme of psalm 100, we get a slightly different picture of thanksgiving.

In Psalm 100, thanksgiving looks a lot like worship. There's a gathering of people, singing, serving, and being reminded of who God is and what God has done. Psalm 100 gives us a very active, dynamic and even noisy picture of thanksgiving. It is more than just saying, "what I'm thankful for," or having a thankful posture or outlook. Here, we see that thanksgiving leads to action.

As I look at my own life and the areas I want to grow in being more thankful, I can sometimes get stuck waiting to "feel" thankful in the midst of frustrations or other emotions. I want to be thankful for my family, even when they might drive me crazy. I want to be thankful for who I am and the life I've been given, even when I wish my circumstances would look a little (or sometimes a lot) different. I wonder if the invitation in Psalm 100 is to engage in the *actions* of thanksgiving even when I don't feel the *emotions* of thanksgiving. Maybe as I sing, serve, declare, and give, I will find myself being a much more thankful person despite how I may feel.

We are His

Tuesday October 24 | Kristin Brouwer

Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Psalm 100:3

WE ARE HIS! In the busyness of our lives, we often forget that we are his. We find our identity in our work, bank account, our roles (parent, employer, employee, student, child), or in social media. We can often forget we belong to God. That he created everyone and everything. Since this is the case, no one belongs to himself/herself and nothing we own belongs to us. All the good things or blessings we have received over the years, they came from God. All those challenging trials that we have gone through, were from God in order to make us who we are. As children of God, we have all that is needed. God owns it all and is in control of it all.

We are the sheep of his pasture. Being the sheep of His pasture is a personal relationship. Each one of us was created by God. Because God is Creator, and we are His creation, we are accountable to Him and owe Him our complete devotion. We are sheep. We need a shepherd. Not only do we forget we are his, it is also easy to make other things our shepherd. We put trust in the things of the world without even realizing it. We put trust in our resources of time, money, or abilities. We can even put trust in our loved ones or ourselves, thinking we would be better off as self-dependent. When we trust in other things to be our shepherd we give our significance, protection, approval, or strength to anything or anyone other than Jesus, our Good Shepherd. As sheep who trust a shepherd, we don't need to worry, we just need to trust the shepherd to lead and guide us.

As sheep, may we declare the truth that God is God, and we are not. That we have a good shepherd we can trust to guide us and provide for us. We can rest because WE ARE HIS. We are blessed

to belong to a Father that sees us, knows us, loves us, and calls us His sheep.

“Know this: God is God, and God, God. He made us; we didn't make him. We are his people, his well-tended sheep.”
Psalm 100:3 (MSG)

Grateful Guests

Wednesday October 25 | Sam Winn

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him; bless his name. Psalm 100:4*

Imagine opening your front door to welcome guests you've been eagerly anticipating and love dearly. As you greet your cherished guests, they look at you indifferently, walk in, glance around and begin to question your preparations and make demands. How would you feel?

Now imagine the scene again. This time when you open the door to your beloved guests, they greet you warmly, thank you for inviting them, and compliment you on your gracious hospitality. As they look around, they take notice of your preparations, thank you for all of your work, and praise you for how good things are.

Which guests seem to understand and appreciate your love and care? Which guests seem to value you and their relationship with you? Which kind of guest do you want to be as you enter God's presence?

In John 10:9-10 Jesus says, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

PRAY: Thank you, Jesus, for being our gate to the Father and giving your life that we may have life to the full. Thank you for loving us and wanting us to be united with you. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for dwelling with us. Praise be to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! You are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness. Praise and thanks be to you! AMEN.

Paying Attention

Thursday October 26 | Karen Bohm Barker

Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common. Acts 2:43-44

One of my religion professors in college confessed that he struggled with verses that talked about selling everything you have and giving the proceeds to the poor or ones about giving until it hurt like the widow giving her last coins. What, he posed, was he to do with his wealth and comfort? What was the gospel response?

That's a little how I feel about this passage. It was a miraculous time. People heard the Good News in their own language. Peter stood before them and delivered a sermon that broke their hearts and inspired them to change. So, they changed. Three thousand people! No wonder verse 43 says "awe came upon them." How could it not? But then that pesky verse 44. They were "together" and "had all things in common." I can imagine that "together" means they were of one mind or that they had a unique unity of spirit. But I have a more difficult time rationalizing having all things in common. All things? In common? What should I do? Please don't make me live in a commune. Please don't make me co-own the lawn mower with the whole block. Please don't ask me to share cooking responsibilities with... her. I don't have the answer. But I have a stab at a couple of possible answers.

The church Jeff and I are going to in Illinois has 12 people in attendance on a good Sunday. No one is younger than early 60s. When one couple went on vacation they told us that they were leaving just when the beans in their garden were ready to pick, so would we please feel free to pick them. There is a prayer text-chain and when I asked for prayer for Daniel's job interview

process, they prayed and then texted me every day to ask what was happening and how to adjust their prayers. The property we built on has no trees or bushes. Nothing. So, a neighbor is propagating a bush for us, and a woman from church stopped at our house after my mom died to tell us she was buying a tree for our yard in memory of Mom. My brother mows the ditches in front of our property. He knows we don't have a mower for that. We don't live in a commune, but everyone knows what each other needs and sets out to meet that need if at all possible. The sharing is remarkable. And humbling. There's no programming for it.

Everyone simply pays attention. In both joy and sorrow, we pay attention, and then we act. Nothing I have is so precious or so carefully curated that I can't give it to you when you need it. That's how these people live. I don't know what having "all things in common" looked like for the Israelites in Acts, but I think this is what it looks like in places like Bureau County, Illinois, and Sioux County, Iowa.

Joy Beyond Understanding

Saturday October 28 | Tricia Wiese

They would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Acts 2:45-47

When Peter gave his sermon in Acts 2, there was an overwhelming response. Three thousand new Christians were added, and "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer". These earliest Christians were setting the precedent for future generations. Verses 45-47 model what a Christian community entails.

One reason I chose this particular passage was verse 45 which reads: "And they [the new Christians] were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need." What a communal approach to helping others and intentionally recognizing need. This reminded me of when Rob and I bought an older home in town 20 years ago, and we wanted to replace our stove. The hope was to sell our old one and earn some money. We were a much younger couple then with four children, so extra funds were welcome.

Somehow, we learned that a stove was needed for a family at a rental in town. We immediately shifted our mindset and scrubbed the white electric stove until there was very little trace that it was used. Our attitude became that if we were going to give something away which represented us, we wanted it to be the best we had to offer. The same family also needed a double stroller. Ironically, we had one as our youngest two were 20 months apart---again, the intense scrubbing commenced so

that it was clean for precious little passengers. We never met the family who received these two items, but the joy we felt in helping someone was beyond the joy we would have felt about making a few dollars. May we always have that mindset to distribute to any in need. The earliest Christians modeled for that to become our norm.

I love the images in verse 46 of “day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes.” What stood out was the “day by day” reference. We generally attend church once a week, but the early Christians went EVERY DAY to the Temple to worship. Afterwards they gathered in each other’s homes to share a meal. How wonderful that would be to excitedly recount the day’s worship and continue in that posture over shared food which “was received with glad and generous hearts”. What authentic gratitude!

The early Christians exhibited a JOY beyond our understanding. Despite no modern luxuries, they excelled at Living in Community, Worshiping Daily, and Sharing Provisions with all. As a result of the early Christians “praising God and having favor with all the people . . . the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved”).

The repetition of “day by day” reminds us that our walk with God is a daily way of life—and how we present ourselves inside and outside of the home determines if we will draw others towards God or away from Him. Keep praying for that authentic, supernatural JOY which leads to daily worship and loving generosity—or that “Jesus Sparkle,” as described to me by two God- filled ladies at the Sioux City Panera.

All Together...

Let’s Put God to the Test!

Sunday October 29

Malachi 3:1-12

In this second sermon, we go to the Old Testament book of Malachi and read about the only place in the Bible where God commands his people to TEST Him!

If giving is an act of joyful worship, it is also an act of faithful obedience and trust.

The prophet Malachi calls us to return to the Lord. How? By bringing in the full tithe, testing God to be faithful to open the windows of heaven and pour out his blessings.

This is not a prosperity gospel, but a command and invitation to obey and trust God with your tithe (first fruits) and see how God will provide.

PRAY: Lord, All Together, we ask that you help us stretch ourselves beyond what we think possible. We trust You, Lord, and You alone. We trust that you will lead our hearts and minds to act in joyful obedience to give of our resources. We cannot imagine the Kingdom blessings you have for us, but we know You are faithful and will provide. AMEN.

Giving with Joy!

Monday October 30 | Derek Brower

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. Malachi 3:1

My favorite experience with giving and generosity took place when I was a high school student. My Sunday school class was a group of boys who were working various jobs in the summer. Most Sundays, an elder named Eldon would stop by our class to check in on us and to ask about our lives. One Sunday, he asked about our summer jobs and if we were giving part of our earnings to the church. I don't remember all of the conversation, but he challenged us to come up with an amount that we could give at the end of the summer. We discussed it among ourselves and tried to figure out what a tithe of our earnings might be and came up with a figure, I know it was more than a few hundred dollars amongst us all. With all of us contributing, this was a significant amount of money. The next Sunday, we shared our figure with Eldon and he challenged us that if we gave that amount on a certain Sunday, he would double our gift to the church.

At the end of the summer, I remember all of us pooling our money to see if we made the challenge amount so that we could “stick it to Eldon” so he would have to pay. When he stopped by our class and we shared that we had made the goal in our gift to the church, he pulled out his checkbook and wrote a check to the church, doubling our gifts. I'll never forget the smile and joy on his face as he wrote that check. We gave our gifts out of obligation and to “win the bet”, motivated to force his hand, never suspecting that he was joyfully investing in our lives and demonstrating the example of a cheerful giver. May we be an example of cheerful giving to those who look up to us, or to anyone that sees us living out our call to be generous.

First Fruits

Tuesday October 31 | Tanya Rowenhorst

But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like washers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD, as in the days of old and as in former years. Malachi 3:2-4

When I was a young girl, I still remember my grandpa telling us this story: As a young married couple with five little girls, he and my grandma didn't have a lot. Finances were tight, and if they waited until the end of the month to tithe, after all their expenses were paid, there was never ten percent to give. But instead they decided to give their “first fruits” - they gave their tithe at the beginning of the month, before their expenses were paid - and somehow they always had enough money at the end of the month without running short.

This story has greatly impacted my own journey of giving, from being newly married, both of us still in college while working part-time jobs to make ends meet. And then as a young mom who felt the Lord's call to stay at home. And even now, God continues to challenge my husband and I to give more and to give when it doesn't always make sense on paper.

In Malachi 3: 2-4, the author shares how the Lord refines us like gold and silver. This concept has always intrigued me. To refine is by definition, “to remove impurities or unwanted elements.” In Bible times, fire was used as a way to remove impurities from gold. In 1 Peter 1:6-7, the refining process is mentioned again. “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that

perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Here, trials lead to refinement. I believe that in my grandpa’s story, the testing of his faith through his finances and giving led to even greater faith in the Lord as his Provider, Jehovah Jireh. I have had the great blessing of witnessing the faithfulness of God generationally through my grandparents and my parents, which has challenged me to continue to trust God with our giving as well, even at times when it didn’t make logical sense.

The refinement doesn't occur AFTER God proves Himself faithful. The refinement comes IN the trial - where we have to choose whether we're going to trust that He IS who He says he is, before we actually know how it's all going to work out.

Regardless of your financial situation, how is the Spirit challenging you to trust Him in your giving, and how are you allowing Him to refine you as well?

Asking for Judgement

Wednesday November 1 | Pastor Kurt Bush

Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts. Malachi 3:5

Malachi 3 is not a passage I find myself in often. But in reflecting on this passage, something really interesting stands out to me. I read that God promises not just to draw near, but to judge. And it’s in this list of “judgment worthy” actions and postures that I’m reminded that God doesn’t simply care what I think, but also how I turn that thinking into faithful action.

I think it can be easy for me to think about God judging “sorcerers,” “adulterers,” and “those who bear false witness,” but it challenges me when I think of God judging “those who oppress...wages” and those who “thrust aside the alien.” Why does it challenge me? I think because these are actions, not simply points of right thinking or theology. It appears to me that these are all issues of holding on too tightly to something. Maybe my finances. Maybe my time. Maybe my attention or care. It appears that these are actions and postures that show a lack of generosity. I wonder if these things challenge me because a lack of generosity or holding on to something too tightly is something I’m prone to do.

So I wonder if you’d join me today in asking God to show you where those places are in our lives that we’re holding on to something too tightly. To show you where your generosity might have the capacity to grow. And in doing so, may we trust that God will not simply judge those areas of our lives, but God will also grow, shape, and sanctify them as we lean into them.

Creative Tithes

Thursday November 2 | Jen Schon

For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished. Ever since the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, "How shall we return?" Malachi 3:10-13

In Malachi 3, God encourages his people, who have strayed from him, to return to him. And the answer to the 'how' to return to him in this section is tithing. As we'll discuss in the sermon, tithing is an act of worship and of trust. We should thus bring "the whole tithe into the storehouse" (v. 9) of the church as it fosters our relationship with God. Even the "poor widow" of Mark 12 tithes – giving all of her money to the temple.

In the Old Testament, we see tithing taking the form of farmers leaving a portion of their crop behind for the needy to be able to gather, as we saw in the book of Ruth. Thus, tithing was a form of caring for others. And, indeed, in today's times our financial offerings are used at Trinity Reformed Church to care for others – to buy groceries to stock the food pantry, to purchase peanut butter to feed Haitian children, to provide gas cards for those needing continual out-of-area specialized medical care, etc. But this broader sense of tithing perhaps offers an alternative for those of us who may find ourselves in a season of life where it seems impossible to offer a financial tithe, as we can still care for others in non-financial ways.

How? Can you give of your time to the church – to help with children's ministries, to weed the church garden plot, to help make a Wednesday evening meal, to hand out bulletins on Sunday morning? And if you've no time to give? Can your God-given skills, disposition, or resources become an offering and a means to demonstrate care? Can you be generous in complimenting others? In making children smile? In sharing

your lawn mower with a neighbor or letting them borrow your car? In praying for our community, our country, and the world?

I'll leave you with a story about one of the best people God brought into my life. In what seems like a lifetime ago, I worked for a company in Iowa providing technical support for internet customers and taking payments over the phone. Every month, a customer I eventually came to call Glenda the Good Witch would call to pay her bill. Despite this being a simple and quick task, her joy for life and kindness could easily be sensed over the phone. We built a relationship over the months – yes over the phone - and eventually she invited me to her home. She offered me locally sourced bee pollen to hopefully alleviate the allergies she had come to know I had, as well as a warm meal. Later when I moved out of the area, she brought boxes to me at work. The most astonishing thing, though, is that if most of us were Glenda the Good Witch, we likely wouldn't have had the same sunny disposition and helping spirit and, in fact, may have gotten more of a 'Wicked Witch' reputation. Glenda and her family were in a terrible car accident with a commercial truck. Glenda was still in physical therapy years later just to be able to engage in normal daily activities, and she and her husband had lost a son in the accident. They were not wealthy by American standards. Nonetheless, they were among the most joyous and generous people I've ever met. If they can be generous of spirit and with their God-given resources to care for others, how much more so can we be with ours?

Below, I'd encourage you to make note of what you'll do in the coming weeks to engage in showing care for others.

Living Sacrifice

Friday November 3 | Kellie Lancaster

Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, "How are we robbing you?" In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! Malachi 3:8-9

A little over three years ago, God called me to stay home with our two young children. My husband, Alex, and I had built our lives on two incomes, and to be very honest, my identity and worth was wrapped up in my career. God was calling me to lay that down, cut our income in half, and trust that He would provide what we needed even though when we looked at the numbers, it just didn't add up.

Our faith was being tested. God loved us too much to let us continue putting our own comfort ahead of Him and, as it turns out, he used the last three years to break chains, restore broken ways of thinking and searching, grow our faith, and show us that he deserves the very best of our time, attention, obedience, devotion, and resources.

As we began to prepare for this big change, we sifted through our budget and ruthlessly cut out expenses that felt very much like needs. It was hard and it was scary. We had to say no to so much (a lot that we had taken for granted in years past) and even then, we were still a "slow bleed," draining our savings slowly as the months passed by. We had been so comfortable (a dangerous place to be!) and now God was asking us to lay all of our comfort and security and idols down and trust Him.

We continued to tithe and give through that season. To the world, that was silly. To us, it was vital. God wasn't about to be robbed of our best, and when we obediently trusted that He would provide for us, He ALWAYS showed up. Our faith, marriage, and relationships, all grew exponentially when the

distractions of the world were taken away. We learned what was enough and reset our priorities to align with God's (something we realized needs to be revisited frequently.) Our lives were changed in those three years. Thank you, Jesus!

Being a cheerful giver took on a whole new meaning in that season. We experienced sacrificial giving in a whole new way, and God delivered (as He always does!) in blessing us with new eyes to see what He was doing (which by the way was so much better than we could have ever hoped for or imagined (Ephesians 3:20)!) We wouldn't trade those years for anything this world has to offer.

What areas of your life is God being robbed of your very best?

How can you take action in those areas and act as a living sacrifice to give freely of yourself and your resources and trust in His provision?

Putting God to the Test

Saturday November 4 | Laurie Kurtz

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. I will rebuke the locust[a] for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the LORD of hosts. Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts. Malachi 3:10-12

This was a key verse for Vince and I as a young married couple trying to navigate finances. We had been giving to our local church, but not an intentional tithe of 10 percent. After attending a Sunday School class that highlighted this verse, we were convicted to “put God to the test” as the verse says and step out in faith by tithing on our gross income.

This was a significant increase in our giving and it was a scary step to take. We had just purchased our first home and felt uncertain of how finances would look by the end of each month. God was faithful to provide all that we needed and more. We’ve never regretted taking that step and exercising our faith muscles.

At times it can be tempting to hold onto some extra, especially during uncertain times, but we always remember how God has been faithful to meet all of our needs and how all we have belongs to Him.

All Together...

Let’s Lead our Hearts to Freedom!

Sunday November 5

Matthew 6:19-24

For the third sermon, we’ll engage with this key teaching in Jesus’ sermon on the mount, reflecting on what it means to store up treasure in heaven and how we can actually lead our hearts (our desires and feelings) by choosing where to invest our treasure.

As it goes with our giving, so it goes with our hearts!

Jesus goes on to say we can’t serve two masters. We will either serve Mammon (which is bondage) or find freedom in serving God.

Only in investing our treasure in things that matter to God, serving Christ alone, will our hearts be set free from bondage, worry and fear.

PRAY: Lord, help us focus on the eternal, not in temporary things of this world. Free us from the bondage of worry, guilt and comparison. Open our eyes to the everyday activities that are really simple opportunities to serve You. We give you our day, and we pray you would work in our hearts this week to seek you as our only treasure. AMEN.

Tale of Two Treasures

Monday November 6 | Jeff Joiner

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust[a] consume and where thieves break in and steal.

Matthew 6:19

Today's verse begins the section of the sermon on the mount about laying up treasures in heaven and not choosing or serving money over God. In Luke 12:33, Jesus goes a step further and calls his followers to sell their possessions and give them to the needy.

I was able to see first-hand the two sides of this teaching between two grandfathers. Leo was a self-educated engineer who secured several profitable patents and Vern earned his calluses during long days on the factory floor, eventually moving up to lead a department. Both were successful, strong leaders, family men, and professing Christians who attended church every week.

The clear difference between them was where their treasure was stored, and this was clear to me even as a child without wisdom to know such things. The treasure for Leo was which stocks were increasing in value, his new cars which he let everyone know were paid for in cash, and a lifestyle of privilege. Vern on the other hand lived a life of service, below his means and sharing his treasure with those in need.

The life lesson I'll never forget was when staying with Vern and his wife Betty for a week one summer. PTL ministries had fallen under scandal with Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker taking millions of dollars from the ministry. Vern and Betty had been regular givers to the tele ministry above and beyond their support of the local church and other ministries. Though they were upset at the fraud, they made it clear that God had them give to that ministry

not only for what good it could do for that ministry, but also the good it was for them and their hearts.

Vern lived a sacrificial life to the end and he and Betty lived well below their means by retiring in a mobile home park and continuing to serve and live in community until they no longer could.

My grandfather Leo lived a miserable life focused on money and sacrificing relationships to achieve his goals. His lush retirement days were spent watching the stock ticker swing up or down along with his mood. He was known for berating wait staff at restaurants and argued with business owners to squeeze every penny. His treasure was clearly on earth.

Leo and Vern were two extremes on the spectrum of storing up treasure. I pray you have a Vern in your life and that we are all moving more into a life of giving and serving rather than hoarding and protecting our treasure on earth.

Living Faithfully

Tuesday November 7 | Karen Bohm Barker

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matthew 6:20

In the last four months I have taken part in the funerals of two faithful and faith filled women of God. One was my mother, in June. The other was Arlene Schuiteman today, September 26. My mother lived in Bureau County all her life. She would have said she lived a life of no significance. Housewife and mother, Sunday School teacher, Vacation Bible School teacher, Kids Klub teacher, “Grandma” to local first graders who read to her in order to improve their reading skills, church pianist. She often said that no one would come to her funeral because no one would be left. Her friends were gone before her. She scoffed at the idea that her funeral would be anything of significance. But funerals are a great time to hear stories. The good stories. A man I had never met told me he was a Christian because Mom led him to the Lord. A woman recounted the very room in the church where my mother led her to the Lord. At her funeral our country church was packed to the gills with people of all persuasions: atheists and full-time ministers, LGBTQ persons, political MAGAs and political progressives, those who lived in wealth and those living in poverty. The thing they had in common was that Mom had loved them and had shown them Jesus.

Arlene lived in Africa most of her adult life. Books have been written about her life. She was a public person, speaking, teaching, ministering. She was sent by the RCA as a missionary nurse and teacher first to the Sudan, then to Ethiopia, then to Zambia. She lived a life of sacrifice in order to be faithful to the calling she had from God. She, too, said that no one would come to her funeral because no one would be left. Her friends were gone before her. She, too, was wrong. At her funeral a message from a Sudanese man was read. In it he said that if she had not

come to the Sudan, he and his people would not be Christian. At her funeral four Sudanese now living in the states came to honor her. They sang in Nuer at her gravesite as we all wept. There are generations of people in Sudan and Ethiopia and Zambia who are Christians because Arlene was faithful.

You see, don't you? Arlene's life seems more significant because she was a missionary and because she took the gospel to places that had never heard it. The sacrifice is evident. The product of her work is remarkable. But I am certain each of these women would affirm that the work is God's work, not theirs. They were individually faithful to their call. And that's the thing. We are each laying up treasures all the time, just by living we are doing that. It does not matter if I attain notoriety in what I'm doing, it only matters that I'm living faithfully. Then, and only then, am I laying up treasure in heaven.

Eternal Lessons in Driver's Ed

Wednesday November 8 | Tracy Cleveringa

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:21

Mr. Ordahl wasn't the most captivating teacher. His monotone voice could lull you to sleep. But when he taught Freshman Driver's Ed, I paid attention. I know the information he shared could be a matter of life or death, literally.

One day he posed this question: when you get to a narrow road or a big turn, what do you do?

I don't know! What do you do? I was captivated because I knew this would be important to tuck into the recesses of my mind. What he said would stick with me and change my life.

"Look at where you want to go and that's where you'll go."

He explained not to look down right in front of you but to look further down the road. That small act will smoothly get you where you need to go.

Yes, this is so true while driving. I often use this advice in construction zones, on mountainous roads or narrow bridges. But I've often come back to this advice when I think about heaven and earth. Where are my eyes looking? Down at the here and now? Further down the road to heaven? Because where I'm looking affects where I'm going and how smoothly I get there.

Mr. Ordahl's advice didn't just change my life with regards to driving habits, but it also changed my life's focus. Instead of following the culture and focusing on things of the world that will eventually fall apart, instead, I can focus on the eternal treasure that will never fade or be destroyed.

What does this practically and tangibly look like? I'm still learning, but by generously giving of my time, energy and money for Kingdom purposes, I'm reminded that my time, energy and money are not my own. When I'm exhausted and ready to give up on a person, I remember that Jesus has never given up on me. When it's easier to focus on myself and ignore all the hard things going on in the world, I'm reminded that I don't have to fix it. I just need to love people through the hard times and point them to Jesus.

Mr. Ordahl has since passed away and has no idea the impact that one statement has had on my life. But I certainly feel like it was a Driver's Ed teacher's way of saying...

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Seeing with the “Correct” Lens

Thursday November 9 | Longtime Trinity Church Member
The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. Matthew 6:22

I have worn glasses or contacts since I was in elementary school. It is really amazing how much having the correct prescription can change how I see the world. Recently, I needed a change in my contact prescription and went back and forth with my optometrist for several weeks before finding the “correct” lens. I was frustrated: I couldn’t see without squinting, I couldn’t see road signs well, and even trying to watch a television screen was challenging. I think my husband will attest that I was in a much better mood when I had “healthy” eyes.

The scripture passage today talks about how having healthy eyes gives the whole body light. What lens am I using to see the world around me? Are the people I see each day a blessing to me or a burden that I have to interact with? Are opportunities to listen to a friend, give a gift, offer a note of encouragement, or volunteer to meet a need seen as good things or hassles in my day? With God’s help, do I see the world with his eyes? Am I clinging to my fuzzy prescription lenses?

From this verse, as part of the entire Matthew 6:19-24 section, we can see how looking outward shifts our focus from storing treasures on earth to storing treasure in heaven. As we look around us with healthy eyes from God, we can find joy, just as a “correct” contact lens can alleviate frustration and bring pleasure back to daily life tasks.

May we all open our eyes to the blessings around us and live daily with his light shining through us.

Open Eyes in Wonder and Belief

Friday November 10 | Tana Van Gorp
But if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! Matthew 6:23

“Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a musty cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!” Matthew 6:22-23 (The Message)

When I really want to try and understand a scripture passage, I love to read at least two versions, especially if the first time I read through it I may not fully comprehend or resonate with what is being said. Sometimes, each version I read is very similar in wording and feel. Sometimes, as in this case, the words change enough that I can make a deeper meaning to the passage and verse. As I looked to this verse with the context of giving on my mind, I honestly wasn’t fitting it all together with just this small piece of the larger passage. I even turned this in late because I was at a loss of what to write. =) Thankfully, God used my son Jace to help me find a way forward.

On our way home from school, we saw our neighbor out scraping paint off one of her buildings. She is a senior saint and a widow. Jace asked what she was doing, so I told him as we drove into our garage. He proceeded to play for a little while then came up to me and asked if he could go help Miss Audrey because he is a really good helper. I said yes and off he ran. After he had been over there for a few minutes, I went over to make sure he wasn’t in the way and Miss Audrey said he was being a very good helper. She said her kids told her she shouldn’t be doing that kind of work anymore at her age but she didn’t listen to them because she can do it and wants it done. We chatted a

bit longer than I went back home and Jace stayed for about 45 minutes working alongside Miss Audrey.

My mom heart swelled by Jace's kindness that day. He saw Miss Audrey working and knew he could help her. He joyfully gave his time to her because he believes with his whole being that he is a good helper. As I reflect on this with the help of these verses, I can't help but compare Jace's eyes with those of Audrey's grown children. They saw her working and gave her words. Jace saw her working and gave her his time and his talents. At almost six years old, he didn't live squinty-eyed in greed of his afternoon play time. He gave his time freely and purely and I am sure his generosity did not go unnoticed by Miss Audrey.

A Letter to the Church on St. Paul Avenue

Saturday November 11 | Carol Schumacher

No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. Matthew 6:24

Dear Family at Trinity,

I am so glad you are spending time unlocking "generosity" together. Giving good gifts to all my children, in generous ways, is my delight and joy - and I have an endless supply.

Consider: the earth is full of my unfailing love(Psalm 33:5) I am gracious and righteous, full of compassion(Psalm 116:5) it is in the full abundance of my grace that I give you one blessing after another(John 1:16) with me is full redemption(Psalm 130:7)

I am always fully present in your life at all times; for I never leave you nor will I forsake you. I have made all this possible with the full extent of my generosity - my life given for you. You are my dearly loved children. My generosity will continue to flow into your lives for all eternity. You will always receive from me fully and freely an unlimited supply of grace, mercy and love. Just as you have received from my gracious hand, I invite you to give of your time, abilities, and resources to the work I want to do through you. Yet because of your own will, which I gave to you freely, you are able to choose. I will always love you unconditionally. Generosity is in my heart for all of you.

In my eternal love,

Jesus

Respond: Find a few minutes of quiet space and write a letter back to God or a letter to money. What might you say to the one you choose?

Reflect: "Stand at the crossroads and look...ask where the good way is..." Jeremiah 6:16 Where might you be standing at a crossroads between two masters?

All Together... Let's be Cheerful Givers!

Sunday November 12

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

This fourth Sunday is “Commitment Sunday,” when we are invited and challenged to bring forward our pledges as part of our All Together work to pay off our church building.

In today's sermon, we hear Paul's words to the Christians in Corinth, where he says key things like:

- The one who sows sparingly will reap sparingly; but the one who sows abundantly will reap abundantly. (v.6)
- Each of you must give as you've made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver! (v.7)
- God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance...(v.8)
- You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity...(v.10)

PRAY: Lord, we look forward in anticipation and with joy as ALL TOGETHER you are stirring our hearts to give. We thank you for this journey together as a church family, just as Trinity members have gone before us and given of their resources. We pray that we joyfully consider what we can give from what You have given us. AMEN.

The Cheerful Giver

Monday November 13 | Michele Rosenboom

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

One of the gifts from my childhood was learning the importance of obedience. It taught me the valuable lessons of discipline, delayed gratification and serving others. However, a few decades into adulthood, I realized that this beautiful gift had morphed into people pleasing. For me, maturing has meant that I have had to learn the importance of considering my motives when giving.

Paul identifies the prerequisite to cheerful giving in this text as *freedom*. He says we should decide in our heart what we have decided to give. This choice implies a passage of time. Have I asked God if this opportunity is something He wants me to do? What is the cost of this gift? Do I actually have the ability, the capacity or the resources to give it? There are so many good opportunities to give *and also*, I'm a human with limits.

I have given far too many times because I felt it was required of me or because it's what a good person would do...for reasons that had nothing to do with real love. When I drill down to the root of my motives in these situations, I can usually spot pride and fear. When it's time to fulfill my obligations, I often find myself doing an embarrassing amount of complaining. Maybe not out loud, but *definitely* in my heart.

And the heart is exactly what God's looking at.

Authentic giving, on the other hand, feels completely different. It feels abundant and joyful. Honestly, this kind of giving is some

of the most fun I've ever had. I'm relaxed. I'm not trying to control the outcomes or results...because it has nothing to do with *me*. I can be cheerful because I've decided, with God's help, that this is what I'm supposed to do with my time and my resources.

I picked up gardening a few years ago and I particularly enjoy Paul's reminder in verse 6 that we can expect to harvest what we sow when it comes to giving, too. When I'm gardening, the more seeds I plant, the more likely it is there will be a good harvest. I tend the plants, but honestly, the *wonder* is in watching God grow them and produce fruit.

Paul isn't saying here that God loves a cheerful giver *more than* a reluctant giver. Paul is just reminding us of the kind of giver God is, about *how* God gives. God doesn't have to give us good gifts, but he *wants to*. His good gifts overflow from how good He is. 1 John 3:1 says God has *lavished* us with His love. He's the opposite of stingy. He's exceedingly generous and *abounding* in love! (Psalm 103:8)

How we give is far more important than what or how much we give. God's looking at the heart and He loves to see cheerful giving!

The Lord Provides

Monday November 13 | Stan and Bonnie Vandersall
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. As it is written, "He scatters abroad; he gives to the poor; his righteousness [b] endures forever." 2 Corinthians 9:8-9

In the previous 2nd Corinthians verse, we read that God loves a cheerful giver! Now in 2 Corinthians 9:8 we read, "And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all you need, you will abound in every good work."

Several weeks ago, while traveling home from a favorite lunch stop, another car ran a stop sign and slammed into the side of ours. We looked at each other and realized we were unhurt. However, because of the damage, our vehicle was totaled by insurance. For days we dealt with a rental that you had to do pushups to get out of, several different agents and their "next steps", and a search for another used car that far outpriced our original. Each day we waited for answers to our concerns about a payout and a different car. Three weeks to the day we received a generous offer from insurance so that we could buy an even better car than we had before. Suddenly the air escaped from our balloon of mistrust, impatience and complaints. The Lord did indeed hear our concerns and our prayers.

Now as we humbly approach our generous God, we continue to express our thankfulness for sparing our lives. We pray for the wisdom we need to use the gift of a new vehicle wisely. Plus, we look forward to generously and joyfully serving our Lord.

Don't Miss The Unexpected

Wednesday November 15 | Rose Korver

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 2 Corinthians 9:10

For several years we served at a Christian boarding school in Southern Alabama. I did not want to be there that first year, but decided to make the best of the situation despite my misgivings. I could only think about all the special days I would be missing with my children and grandchildren.

After we had been there for three or four months, I received a phone call from the girl's dormitory asking me to meet with several of the girls. Wondering what was going on, I went. The girls met me at the door and escorted me to one of the rooms where several of the girls were waiting. There was some small talk and then one of the girls asked if she could ask me a question. Everyone became silent and I waited. Their question – can we call you mom?

I had been so intent on myself and what I would be missing, birthdays and holidays of my own family that I thought were so important, I could not think beyond that. On Mother's Day that year, after chapel services, there was a knock at our door and there stood several students. They presented me with a card they had made and signed, and a cake they had baked and decorated. I was so sure that I would miss so much by being away from my children, I almost missed the blessings I was receiving from the students on campus.

No matter what situation you are finding yourself in right now, God is there with you, sending blessings your way. We just need to stop, recognize what they are and bask in their beauty. It may be the smile of a small child, a butterfly flitting from flower to flower, or the touch of a hand from someone close to you. God shows up in ways we could never imagine; even in the question from students – can we call you mom?

PRAY: Dear Lord, open our eyes to see the blessings you send our way. Help us to share those with the people around us.
AMEN.

Generosity Blesses the Giver

Thursday November 16 | Karen Clark

You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us. 2 Corinthians 9:11

I don't remember why I was at the courthouse. All I remember is God's appointment for me that day was to meet the mother of a young man who was on trial for murder. A Hispanic woman who had traveled across the country from California to support/help her son. Her life story was complicated. She was alone and caring for a number of other children and through a series of events she ended up coming to our home and ultimately leaving her baby and preschooler with me during the day while she attended the trial of her son. Her needs were many... physically, emotionally and spiritually. Having ourselves experienced God's care and provision through the generosity of others, we had no doubt that God wanted us to help her and trust Him with the "how." God showed up in incredible ways...unexpected gifts came from so many different sources. Her van needed repairs and new tires. God moved in the heart of another and tires were given. In her hour of great need we saw God care for her and us as we became His hands and feet. We had the opportunity to praise the LORD with her and share our faith and love for Jesus.

Generosity always encourages and blesses... It blesses the Giver - We would never have known the joy of seeing the LORD work in so many different ways. He gave energy for caring for her children, a quiet spirit as we waited on God for His provision and growth in our own faith as we saw His hand in the events of those days.

It blesses the Receiver - In her hour of great pain and need she saw God's care for her through the love and concern of others. She was amazed at how God provided through the generosity of so many and rather than becoming bitter her thoughts were again directed to praise the LORD.

PRAY: Thank you LORD that You never fail or abandon us. We do not have to be afraid because in every situation You help us. Your mercies are new every morning and all we can do LORD is say thank you. In Jesus name. AMEN.

God Glorified in Obedience

Friday November 17 | Trinity Church Member

For the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings 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 partnership with them and with all others. 2 Corinthians 9:12-13

Paul applauds the generosity of the Corinthians and the Christian witness it provides. When we are obedient in giving, God provides a way for us to give even more, so that He may be glorified. A local farmer shared that in his experience, the more he gave, the more he received in all kinds of blessings.

“The year 2002 was a terrible financial year for us. The farm was in the thick of paying back several long-term loans on land and buildings and prices were low on all our farm products. I had a few kids in college, saw some deals go south, and I ended up having to borrow thousands from a line of credit every month just to pay the farm bills. But at about that same time, the church I attended began fundraising for a building project of over \$1.5 million.

Those of us in leadership roles were challenged to start off the efforts with large pledges to get things rolling. My farming partner and I decided we would pledge \$100,000 to be given over the next ten years. We definitely tested the Lord with this. That was an extraordinarily large amount at that time, but we not only fulfilled that, but exceeded it greatly. For the next 10+ years, we put our entire soybean crop into that fund. But the more we gave to that project and to other places, the more the crops were good, and prices were good, and finances seemed to get better and better.

In a more recent year when bad weather created low crop yields across the region, some of our crop yields were 10 percent higher than they'd ever been. I attribute that to God pouring out his blessings after we were faithful in giving, trusting that he would provide.” Giving is an expression of our love and gratitude toward God and an act of praise, thanksgiving, and worship. It is also a witness to others when they see blessings come to those who put their trust in God.

Surpassing Grace

Saturday November 18 | Rick Clark

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! 2 Corinthians 9:14-15

When I left Ecuador to come to the US for college, I traveled alone at the age of 18 from Quito to Chicago. I remember being overwhelmed by the number of choices that were laid out before me. My friends in Ecuador did not have those options. If their dad was a carpenter, that was the only path open to them.

Since then, I have been repeatedly overwhelmed by the surpassing grace of God upon me coupled with the generosity of God's people at Trinity.

In our first year in Orange City, we were making mortgage payments for a house in Southwest Iowa and paying rent here, so we were struggling financially. I vividly remember the night we were even out of peanut butter and mac and cheese. So, we sat at the table praying, asking God to provide food to feed our three children who were under the age of three at that point.

Minutes later, the phone rang, and it was Art Van Riesen (who was managing a grocery store here at that time), telling us that someone had just dropped off \$200 so we should stop by and get some groceries. To this day, we have no idea who this generous person was!! It was certainly not the last time we experienced God's generosity at the hands of his people. So many inexpressible gifts from our loving Father.

As you reflect on God's blessings in your life, may you be filled today with a deep sense of gratitude because of His surpassing grace upon you.

All Together... Let's Give God the Glory!

Sunday November 19

1 Peter 4:10-11

For these final days in our All Together Generosity series, we celebrate God's faithfulness and the generosity of our church from the previous commitment Sunday.

We circle back to where we began, emphasizing that we give as an act of praise to God who is the Divine Giver, and our shared desire is that "God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ."

To Him belongs the glory and power forever and ever. So we wrap up this series with a day of celebration, giving God all the glory, and moving forward as a people who want to live all of life as an act of stewardship--all together being "good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

PRAY:

Using Your Light

Monday November 20 | Muryl Korver

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. 1 Peter 4:10

This verse reminds me of the various spiritual gifts assessments that I have taken in the past. It has been at least 30 years since I first took the assessment to determine which of the 23 different gifts were unique to me. Looking back, I can see how they keep me energized for service in the different churches that we have attended. I am not going to enlighten you with my results, but I have discovered that they are directly related to my experiences, traits, convictions, and observations from others. They are not necessarily related to my talents or spiritual disciplines. I believe each of us should know what their gifts are and how God intends for us to use them within our church. If you do not know your spiritual gifts, I encourage you to find an assessment and determine them, so you can better serve Christ and the church.

I am also reminded of a verse from Matthew 5:16; Let your light shine before others, that they may see our good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. So, let's look at the word "your" in that passage and look at each one from 1 Peter. We see that it gets personal. Jesus isn't saying walk around church and ask everyone else for them to shine their light and Peter is asking us to use our gift. God does not intend for us to look to someone else or wait for someone else to step up and be bold and courageous for Him. He expects boldness and courage from each of us. He expects us to let our personal light shine for him publicly and privately and for us to use our gift(s) to serve others,

So, gift or light, how can we shine our light or use our gift for Him in the places of influence He has given us?

How can we share our light or gift with the people around us for their redemption and transformation?

PRAY: Heavenly Father may we as Your followers be a light to a dark world, and may we use Your gifts to build Your kingdom. In Jesus' name. AMEN.

Words from God

Tuesday November 21 | Barb Dewald

Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God. 1 Peter 4:10a

Words matter. They run through our minds, fly out of our mouths, and magically and instantaneously travel through cyberspace on our phones and computers. Words serve to build up, tear down, inspire, challenge, encourage, discourage, and comfort. The gift of speaking, meant to serve others, intends that we speak God's words. While I am so grateful and deeply indebted to many pastors for proclaiming God's word in thousands of sermons, the teachers who have helped me to understand more fully, and the authors who have challenged me to go deeper, today I am thinking of those who were not preaching, prophesying, or teaching. My life has been deeply impacted by so many ordinary people whose words are rarely heard by large groups but have been faithful to share God's words with me.

A mentor gives wisdom and discernment regarding my calling and future. A former student sends a card in the mail offering unexpected encouragement. A friend offers words of comfort as I continue to grieve the loss of my parents. Weekly prayer group friends pray using scripture to remind me who God is and what God does. A Life Group member shares an insight from scripture that I hadn't noticed. Someone stops me at church to say that God put me on their heart this week. A lifelong friend calls and challenges me while still reminding me of God's faithfulness and my identity in Christ. Thank you for listening to God's voice and giving generously that I might be encouraged, comforted, challenged, and inspired to continue in my journey to live all of life in stewardship to Christ.

May our words today be inspired by God and given generously to serve others.

Meeting Needs with God's Strength

Wednesday November 22 | Mark Scallon

Whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 4:10b

I grew up in a home with this popular saying displayed in our kitchen, *"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can."*

My siblings and I have always watched my mom and dad jump from one activity to another, perhaps even more so now in their retired years. We jokingly wonder if we will fit in their busy schedules. (We do.)

Through their actions coordinating, scheduling and participating in community activities, taking on neighborly good deeds and taking care of family members, no one can deny their motive: to make everyone else's life easier and to lessen burdens.

But how do we truly know if we are relying on our own strengths or God's strength in our day-to-day life? That's something for each of us to prayerfully consider. What I have noticed through my parents, though, is that when people rely on God's strength alone, they usually display a genuine and authentic joy for the work and tasks at hand.

I'm thankful for what I've witnessed over my years—whether my parents' resources were few or many, whether it be time, money or talents, they saw needs and quietly met them. Not with their own strength, but with a strength only God can provide and the joyful output to prove that it was never about their own temporary glory, but an eternal glory for God alone.

Let the Encore Go On!

Thursday November 23 | Pastor Brian Keepers

“To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 4:11(c)

As we reach the end of this five-week sermon series, today is the final Scripture and reflection in our devotional. I've been so inspired and challenged by the stories and insights from members of our church family. I hope you have too. I hope you've also experienced the Spirit's work of transformation in your life and relationships as we've sought to grow all together in generosity.

What better way for us to end than to hear Peter's doxology—a burst of praise to the triune God, who is the great Giver of all good gifts! I love the way the Message paraphrases it: “That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh yes!”

We join Peter in singing our own doxology, giving God “all the credit” (all the glory!) for how he has worked in our lives personally, and in the life of our church throughout this “All Together” campaign. That's been our hope through this entire process—that everything that has happened and is yet to happen will ultimately be about God and not ourselves.

This sermon series may be ending, but our “encores” and applause for God's goodness must go on. In fact, we join all of creation and the multitude of angels and saints in the heavenly throne room, offering our endless praise to the One who is worthy of all power, glory and honor! (Rev. 4 & 5). We offer God our praise not just with prayers and singing, but by the way we live our everyday lives. The apostle Paul exhorts us to live all of life for the praise of God's glory (Eph.1:14)—as a God-glorifier. To borrow the words of St. Augustine, God's grace helps us, all

the days of our life, to “be an alleluia from head to feet!”

So as we finish this series, consider these two questions:

1. How did you experience God's presence and power over the past five weeks? Make a list of how God has blessed and stretched you, and then give God thanks and praise.
2. What is one way you will seek to let your encore continue—that is, how will you specifically seek to be a God-glorifier in your everyday life as you move forward?

PRAY Generous God, to You alone belong the power and the glory! You alone deserve all the credit for the transformation and blessings in my life and our church. Help us to keep the encore going. Help me today to live for the praise of Your glory. AMEN