

Rev. Anne J. Scalfaro  
16 November 2025

10:30 a.m. MT Worship  
Fruit of GOODNESS Sunday (Communal/Ecclesiological)

Calvary Baptist Church  
Denver, Colorado

## ***“For Goodness’ Sake, Let’s Feel Good about Giving!”***

Third Sermon in *Cultivating the Fruit of GOODNESS*  
Part of *Abide & Grow: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*

*NOTE: A sermon is a spoken word event. This manuscript served as a guide but is not exact to what was preached in the moment.*

### ***2 Corinthians 8:1-19***

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Today is Commitment Sunday and *For Goodness’ Sake*, Calvary, if nothing else, I want us all to *feel good* about giving! And, I know that is not always easy to do with the financial stress we might feel in our own lives, or the uncertainty we feel about the world around us, and maybe even the mistrust some of us feel toward churches that have used giving as a tool for manipulation or guilt.

Talking about money can raise all kinds of feelings in us, and while I cannot guarantee that one sermon on giving will erase past experiences that have led to feeling guilty or guarded about giving OR undo damaging theology that says your salvation is tied to whether you tithe on your salary, hopefully at least this sermon can offer a different perspective. Someone asked me once if salvation is tied to giving, so let me just say clearly: God loves you. Period end of sentence. God loves you

whether you give or do not give. You cannot buy God’s love, forgiveness, or grace. You cannot earn God’s love forgiveness or grace. You are marinating in God’s love right now, breathing it. It’s all around you and within you. It’s a free and flowing gift that is not subject to the whims of the economy or your own actions; it’s an ever-renewable and renewing resource! God’s love is with you, always and in all ways. And so are we—your church.

As your pastor, my hope is that you feel good about giving because when we are giving we are living into our essential God-created goodness. Our God is a giving God. We are created in God’s image. So when we give, ideally, it makes us feel more human and whole and more closely connected to God and others. That kind of deep connection to God, self, and others...that’s as good as it gets,

right? It *feels good* to experience that connection.

A few months ago, a congregation member gave me a book that really changed my thinking about giving and living. It's called *Die with Zero: Getting All You Can from Your Money and Your Life* by Bill Perkins. It challenges the notion that we should work really, really hard until retirement *and then* start living or doing the things that bring us joy.

Perkins invites us to think about our health as much as our wealth—and the time we have ahead of us. There are some things we can only do when we are younger and healthier. If we wait until we have “enough money and time to travel,” (aka until retirement) it's likely we may not have the health to travel. And we may not have the time, either. Sure, we may have more hours in our days if we are not working, but how many years left in our life span? How many ‘bucket-list’ adventures can you fit into the last 10-20 years of life and how many of those can you do with bad knees and arthritis?

Perkins says life is a balance between time (the years we have ahead of us), money (what we

make, save, spend, and give), and health (how able we are to do the things we want to do). His experience, in talking to many people in their later years is that while there are some good travel years in retirement, there are also a lot of medical procedures, seasons of caregiving, wanting to be nearby for grandkids' events, and unexpected diagnoses.

As we age, the thing that brings us the most happiness—research shows—is not how much money we have. It's the *memories* that we have stored up and the people around us who shared those memories and experiences with us, especially if we are no longer able to remember them for ourselves.

Perkins encourages people to make as many memories as possible all throughout your life; don't just wait until retirement to travel. Spend money now. Go see family. Be with friends. Go do that thing on your bucket list now. Experiences and memories come through *spending* our money and *giving away* our money, not through saving it up for later or saving it up for it to be distributed after we die. It's very much focused on the present moment—and it's definitely a *gospel message*

even if he didn't intend it that way!

He divides up life into the “go-go” years, the “slow-go” years, and the “no-go” years, and the good news is, no matter what season you are in, you can make an impact. Your Legacy Is Now, he says: *“My number one rule is: Maximize your life experiences. So spend your money while you're alive—whether it's on yourself, your loved ones, or charity. And beyond that, find the optimal times to spend money. When it comes to giving money to your kids, the optimal time, as I suggested earlier in the chapter, is when they're between 26 and 35—not too late to make a big impact and not so soon that they might squander the money. But what about giving money to charity? With charity, there's no such thing as too soon.”* They need your dollars now. Trust that other people will be around to give their dollars later, but your time to make an impact is Today. Not tomorrow. Plus the more you give today, the more you get to experience the impact and benefits of your giving too!

Why wait until you die and then give the church money for a new boiler, when you could give that money now and experience

the consistency and efficiency of that heat yourself? And when your money could go further, because things just get more expensive as time goes on and your dollar has more impact the sooner you use it? (Okay maybe he didn't have that last example in the book, but I couldn't resist!)

*Die with Zero* is really not about Dying at all. It's about living with impact and joy. Reading it made me feel even better about giving to the people and places I care most about because I'm helping create lasting memories and impact and experience the fruits of my giving which also brings me joy. Whether you are a parent with little ones, an older person living alone, a young person just starting out—the beauty of Perkin's message is that it is never too late to use the money we have to make a difference, create memories, and doing something meaningful in the world.

Which brings us to today's text. One of my favorites. The generosity of the Macedonian church is like the “community version” of the generosity of the widow who puts two coins into treasury. It's not about how much we give, it's about the joy

and intention we have as we give it.

So here's some context. As Paul went around starting new Gentile churches, in addition to getting people to give to their new local church start, he also took up an offering for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Church was the 'mother church' if you will of all of Paul's missionary endeavors, not in terms of funding, but in terms of spirit and inspiration. The Spirit of Pentecost came down in Jerusalem—it's where the whole *ecclesia* movement began (*ecclesia* is Greek for 'assembly' or 'gathering').

But the Jesus-followers in Jerusalem tended to be a lot poorer than those other places in the Gentile world where Paul was traveling. Persecution was greater in Jerusalem. Life was difficult. So the Jerusalem church had a real economic need. But that's not the only reason Paul took up a collection for them. He also wanted to strengthen the relationships between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.<sup>1</sup> There was some strife between these two

groups, and sharing resources was one way for the Christians who were Jewish by tradition to experience the faithfulness of the Gentiles. Maybe they do not eat kosher and maybe they are not circumcised, but the Spirit of Christ is seen and experienced in the joy of their generosity – that is undeniable. They, too, are faithful followers and have practices that reveal their faithful commitment to God and community.

So who are the Macedonian churches Paul is referencing as he writes to the Corinthians? Communities like Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. These young churches were sorely persecuted from the time they came to faith, and it had left them financially bereft. They were *poor*. The Bible says they were experiencing (literally) "*down to the depths*" poverty (2 Cor. 8:2), yet their compassion for the persecuted Jewish believers in Jerusalem, and their willingness to act on their compassion became an example of generosity to the whole body of churches—then and still today.

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<sup>1</sup> Lois Malcolm, "Commentary on 2 Corinthians 8:7-15," *Working Preacher* (June 28, 2015), accessed on November 16, 2025 at [https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-](https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-13-2/commentary-on-2-corinthians-87-15-3)

[common-lectionary/ordinary-13-2/commentary-on-2-corinthians-87-15-3](https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-13-2/commentary-on-2-corinthians-87-15-3).

While they were poor in resources, they were rich in faith, so grateful to have the good news, or *charis* (grace) of God. This message of God's goodness had come to them from Jerusalem, Paul had come to them from Jerusalem, and therefore even thought they were struggling financially, they "begged" Paul for the opportunity to participate in the offering, some giving from their means and even 'beyond their means'—showing the strength of their community. They knew that they would take care of one another, so some people stretched even further in their giving. That kind of generosity, when you give beyond what you can rationally figure out in your family budgeting plan (or your church budget reconciliation meeting!), is giving on faith. *Living on faith. Following Christ with faith.* Trusting that God will provide because the economy of God is one of provision and care.

But Paul isn't with the Macedonian church right now. He's writing to the Corinthians. As you might imagine, because the city of Corinth was a wealthy city—an important trade and travel hub—the church at Corinth had wealthy members. It had poor members

too, but it certainly had members with means to make a lasting difference in the life of those who had next to nothing in Jerusalem. Yet they themselves were a struggling church start, I imagine after meeting in a home for a while, maybe they were beginning to imagine what it would be like to build their own place of worship or gathering. Something that would take investment and dollars.

Yet Paul's point, is not to tell the Corinthians NOT to give to support their own church and growing ministry. His point was that they had more than enough to do that AND to give to the Jerusalem church.

And, as I see it, as Paul is writing to the Corinthian church, he's also giving ALL churches some Guidelines for Giving. Not commands or orders, but guidelines to actually help us *feel good* about giving. And Corinthian church had internal strife going on about a lot of things, and I think Paul knew that if they could collectively feel good about giving together and do something good *together* that no single one of them could do on their own—that that would actually draw them all closer together.

So here are the Guidelines to Feel Good about Giving that I have pulled from Paul's letter and how they translate to us at Calvary.

First, **Giving feels Good when we have a little 'healthy competition'; is inspiring and motivating.** The whole premise of Paul's appeal to the church at Corinth to give is based on him telling them that another church—who has less money than they do—is giving and feeling really great about it. This reminds me of the friendly 'giving competitions' we had at Vacation Bible School growing up. Each grade would 'compete' to see who could bring the most canned goods for the food drive or whose class could bring the most coins for the offering. It's the same premise we use for 'giving matches.' Do you remember how successful Miracle Match was here at Calvary a couple years ago? And how could it not be? Someone steps forward and says they'll match dollar for dollar gifts made up to \$75,000 for a total potential yield of \$150,000 and not only do we meet that but the church gives an additional \$16,000 past the goal? \$166,000 in 10 days. Same thing happened even a few years further back when we

needed to replace an HVAC unit quickly. HVAC Give Back. We had a gift for half of the unit, \$28,000-ish. And Calvary, you gave the other \$28,000 and then some (you actually gave \$40,000, exceeding our goal by \$12,000!)—and that all happened in a few days.

In my experience—and in our Calvary 'lived experience'—one of the things that makes giving feel good, is knowing that others are "in it" too. That others are giving and while it's not a competition in terms of amount, knowing that other people are in the race with you, so to speak, makes all the difference.

It's one reason we celebrate Commitment Sunday by walking forward to place our Commitments in this box (lovingly made by one of our Calvary saints, Gordon Sieker!). We visually see that we are not the only ones giving. That it's *all of our gifts together* that make a difference. And not just *our* gifts, but you'll see that the box is on the communion table. It's there for a reason. Our commitments today rest atop the generosity of the generosity of the "Communities of Saints" who have come before us, and our generosity will be what allows for the generations after

us to enjoy this communion and receive the Bread of Life from this very table. We are connected, Here and in the Hereafter.

Calvary, ***For Goodness' Sake, let's feel good about our giving because we are in this together.***

Second, **Giving feels Good when we partner with others for greater impact.** Paul tells the Corinthians that the Macedonians were “begging him” to participate in this offering for the Jerusalem church because they saw themselves as “partnering in this ministry” (v4). Not only did they want to be a part of supporting the church that had given birth to the movement of faith that had reached them, they also wanted to support Titus (as well as Paul) in spreading the word to get other churches to help too. The Macedonian Church didn't see themselves as an isolated entity doing ministry alone. They realized there was more they could do together with other churches that just their church could do.

We see this too, Calvary. This is why we partner with local non-profits like Jewish Family Service and Kentucky Service

Village who are meeting in needs in ways that we are not staffed, trained, equipped, or outfitted to meet. JFS has a full food bank and wrap around social work services to help families in need. Kentucky Circle Village houses seniors at an affordable rate. This is also why we partner with Global Servants like Dwight & Barb Bolick, Joyce & David Reed, and Luran Bethell—because they have ministries around the world (literally) that we could not participate in without their leadership and presence. The Bolicks are empowering young women and girls, teaching leadership skills, while also creating systems that use rainwater more efficiently for irrigation, all across Central America. The Reeds provide spiritual support for all 70+ Global Servants serving all over the world, enabling these folks to extend their tenure because their spiritual health is cared for. Luran Bethell consults with and trains dozens of people following in her footsteps to end human trafficking. And we have advocacy groups like Colorado Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence or the Baptist Joint Committee or Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, bringing faith voices together to advocate for life-saving policies,

separation of church and state, speaking against Christian Nationalism, and for the just and loving treatment of immigrants and refugees. And then we local partnerships like New Hope Baptist Church and our Stedman Reading program, the Blessings ministry, and Facing Racism trainings, supporting the Tamarac Family Shelter. All of these partnerships serve to make our just and loving Jesus-following “voice” stronger. Now more than ever, when other voices of faith are joining together in loud assemblies and gatherings speaking of a Christ we do not recognize, we need to partner with others to raise up a voice for justice, equity, rights, and peace.

And there are other ways that we partner too...by encouraging and mentoring people on their journeys to ordination. Just as Paul is doing with Titus. Prisca Ampah is in the ordination process with us right now and Sau Nam Mading is beginning that process. Both of them are from countries (Ghana and Myanmar) where the ordination of women is not recognized. And willow carter will be interning with us as she begins ordination. As a trans woman, willow’s very identity is seen as a ‘threat’ right now in our

country and there are very very few churches where she could even attend, let alone be ordained. How amazing is this...that we get to support these three women Calvary! We are making a difference in their lives and in the greater kin-dom of God by supporting their future ministries. What a gift and a privilege.

Calvary, ***For Goodness’ Sake,*** lets feel good about our giving because we are partnering with others for greater impact.

Third, **Giving feels Good when it springs from Gratitude, when we remember and give thanks for all that we have been given.**

As Paul says to Corinth, I’m not commanding you to give because the Macedonian church gave, I’m just sharing with you “the eagerness of others” (v8) to ‘test’ the genuineness of your love. The word ‘testing’ is the Greek verb *dokimazo*, the same word Paul uses when talking about other spiritual practices



like forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> It's not a test in terms of *"if you fail, you no longer have God's grace."*

Quite the opposite; Paul's point is that whether they give or not, they have God's grace. That is the amazing gift. Do they really get that? Do they really feel, deep down, the utter miracle and joy of life in this very present moment, on this day, in this community? The "exam" if you will, or "test," is whether the Corinthians realize that they have received the greatest gift of all already – the grace of God and if they have really internalized what that means.

Paul reminds them of what "poured out love" looks like. He reminds them of the one they follow, Jesus, and how Jesus' life was one of giving away what he had to live with and among the poor and marginalized. He was nomadic in life and dependent on the generosity of others, not stable housing with healthcare and a healthy 401K. His love was experienced in the present moment with people, and in ensuring people in that people he met in that present moment were clothed and fed and sheltered and that their thirst

was quenched and their sins forgiven. He ensured they had a place at the table, even when the authorities determined that he had no place at their table or on this earth and they crucified him. The generosity of Jesus' life never changed. He kept giving, kept forgiving, even in his last breaths, "father forgive them, for they know not what they do." And of course, those breaths were not his last. His self-giving love continued through his Spirit in the Resurrection, and his Spirit continues in us today.

This is to say, Paul was reminding the Church of Corinth that the only reason they exist is because of the love and power of Jesus, that is WHO their community is formed around!

We understand this truth, too, Calvary. We are a community formed around the person and spirit of Christ. It's literally in our mission statement: *"to be a Christ-like community that experiences and shares God's love."*

There are lots of communities out there that you are a part of.

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<sup>2</sup> Malcolm, *ibid.*

Your neighborhood or living residence. Your kids' school. Your workplace. Your family. Your gym. Your book club. And so on. How many of those communities are expressly Christ-like and devoted to following the teachings of Jesus in such a way that they impact how the community thinks about its money and mission and purpose? There are lots of people who call themselves "Christian." How many places, though, are formed in the loving, just, radical, and need-meeting Spirit of Christ? How many communities strive to be *Open to All, Closed to None* because that's how they understand the love of God and the purpose of their lives?

We understand the Goodness of our Creator and our created Goodness and our call to create Good in the world. So Calvary, ***For Goodness' Sake, let's feel good about our giving because it springs from Gratitude; let's remember and give thanks for all that we have been given and let's remember the very reason our community even exists.*** Without Christ, we are just a club. Without God's unconditional love, we are forever striving to be loved.

It's not an easy time in our country to espouse faith in Jesus, and yet here we are, claiming and re-claiming the Grace and Love of God for all people, over and over and over again.

Fourth, **Giving feels Good when we're assured that giving to others doesn't mean we have to deprive ourselves.**

Paul says that "*the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not what one does not have,*" (vs12). We are not asked to make ourselves poor so others can be rich. Paul says, "*For I do not mean that there should be relief for others and hardship for you, but it is a question of equality...*"

(vs13)... "*As it is written, 'the one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little,'*" (v15). This reference is to Exodus 16, when the Israelites were commanded to gather manna each morning and were not allowed to save it or pile it up. It was a principle of daily sufficiency. Each person could only gather and guard what they needed for that day, they could not stockpile or hoard and so it only makes sense to share and make sure all have enough each day. Again, it's about focusing on present provision, not future

worry. On community and all having enough. On abundance, not scarcity.

The reality for the church at Corinth is that there were some really well-off people in that church. It was a wealthy city. Not everyone in the church was wealthy, but there were enough people there that were that Paul knew that there was more they could give than what they were currently giving. Not in terms of making them poor or suffer, but just in terms of—they could give more and not even know the difference in their bank account. They wouldn't feel it on a day-to-day basis.

As you think about your giving, we're invited to start from the perspective of looking at all the resources in our life and seeing what we need to live on each day. Factor in your rent or mortgage, your groceries, your healthcare, your bills, your car payment, your kids' expenses, etc. Look at what you need to live on and if those bases are covered, then all the rest of what you have is discretionary income. If your 'essentials' are covered, then the rest is 'extra.' And if you have some 'extra,' then maybe your 'extra' can become someone else's 'essential.' Look to see who

might be struggling to make ends meet, even perhaps, your church—which, by the way, is currently \$27,000 behind in terms of having what we need to pay our bills and make ends meet this year.

Paul is inviting us to ask, can we give some of our 'extra' to ensure the 'essentials' of others are provided for. Rather than thinking of money that is assigned to us as "this is my money" and "this is your money" what if we thought of money as how we pay for and provide for needs (our own and others)? And once our needs are payed for and provided, let's look around and see what other needs could be payed for and provided for?

Paul just challenges us to look at what is our need and what is our want, and then to say, where we see extra, how can our 'extra' become the 'essential' that someone else needs just to make it? Maybe that's a neighbor or a friend or a kid. Or maybe your "extra" is the "essential" that Calvary needs to pay our bills and make ministry happen.

Some of us in this room may say, "I do not have any discretionary income right now." And that's okay. That's

the season you are in. If you do not have any ‘extra’ right now, then how are you turning to your community of faith to help you meet your needs? This is what our Calvary Family Emergency Fund is for. We have a fund that exists solely for the purpose of helping our congregants when they are in tight financial times they didn’t expect. A lay off. An unexpected diagnosis or health situation. A car wreck. A season of transition. We are here for our congregation members, and just this year we have helped with mortgage, rent, car payments, car insurance, medical supplies, therapy, moving expenses, groceries, prescriptions, and more. Our ‘extra’ can be your ‘essential’ when you need us.

Thank you for your generosity Calvary in giving to this fund, and for your vulnerability in asking for when you need help. You are helping us live into our mission to be a Christ-like community that experiences and shares God’s love. We are here for each other. We really do mean what we say in terms of giving according to what you HAVE not according to what you do NOT have.

Calvary, ***For Goodness’ Sake***, **let’s feel good about our giving because it doesn’t mean we have to deprive ourselves, it means we have what we need and so do others.**

Which brings us to this fifth point: **Giving feels Good when we take stock of our abundance and use it to meet the needs we see before us.**

Paul writes, “*it is a question of equality between your present abundance and their need, and their abundance supplying your need,*” vs 14.

It’s similar to the last point, but there is a difference.

The last point was about basic needs and ensuring all are taken care of in terms of bills being paid and the like. *This* point is about viewing abundance in a holistic way, realizing that some abundance is financial, and some abundance is of time or talent or spirit or skill.

So Paul tells the Corinthian church, they have an abundance of people with gifts – people of faith, people who are good speakers, people who are smart and have knowledge, people who love to serve (vs7) and he says, ‘you also have people with

abundance of financial means'...but you haven't tapped into them yet. He contrasts them with the Macedonians who are not as learned or educated or wealthy, but yet have an abundance of spirituality and generosity and who have found a way to give abundantly to meet the needs of others.

This kind of exercise is really important for all of us in different seasons of our lives. We change and our circumstances change. Which means, our abundance changes. As does our need.

For example, as you look at your life right now—where is your abundance? Is it in financial resources? Is it in time? Is it in skills? Is it in presence? Is it in health? Or are those your areas of need?

Some of you, like folks in the choir, are able to give the gift of your presence...you are in a life space that has you living geographically close to the church and you can come twice a week, on Thursdays and Sundays, to sing. I'm not saying it's not a sacrifice and it doesn't take schedule maneuvering – but you have chosen to give us not only the gift of your voices

and the gift of your consistent presence.

Recently, 30-ish of you were asked if you would be willing to serve in a deacon leadership position and you said, *“no you do not have the abundance of time or interest to serve in that way in this season.”* We put a form in the Enews for several weeks asking for nominations and got zero submissions. What does this tell us? It tells us that in this season of our church's life a lot of you do not have the abundance of time in terms of giving an on-going commitment like deacon service. This is also true when we need volunteers for nursery care or children's events. This is informative for us in terms of how much staff we need, which I'll come back to in a minute.

There are lots of reasons why you may not be in a season of abundance of time or service: illness or caregiving, aging or child-raising, working or transition or new jobs. In past seasons of our church's life, more people had an abundance of time to give in more long-term ways. We are not in that season.

But what many of you do have is resources. Perhaps age and

time and travel and caregiving or child-raising or other things keep you from serving in this season...if that's the case, I invite you to look even more closely at the abundance of financial resources you may have. Because ministry in our church continues and the need is great. And while in generations past, some things were done by volunteers, that is no longer the season we are in. We need perhaps more staff than we did in the past. We value the ministry we share and the quality of ministry we share in worship, learning, pastoral care, missions, advocacy and the like...and we also value this beautiful building and sacred space we enjoy each week...and so in order to keep up that ministry, we need your abundance of resources. Probably more so now than ever.

Every pastor says that every stewardship season, right? But it's true! There is no greater or more meaningful moment to give than the present. There is no more needed time for your gift to make a difference in this church than right now. Today. This year. Sometimes I hear people saying they are saving for future asks. Consider this your future ask. What would

happen if we all gave all that we could today? Like really gave all that we could? God might just provide for the future asks too!

And just a side note: I hope we ALWAYS have "future asks." Because if we are asking that means ministry is happening. Asking for money is a sign that ministry is happening. It is when we *stop asking* that you should get worried, not when we DO ask. And remember, not every 'ask' is for every person to respond to. Respond where your abundance can meet our need.

You and I have needs and bills and all kinds of things unique to our households to consider with our finances. You and I also have opportunities to lean into abundance in ways we may not have thought of before. If we cannot give more from our checking account, is giving more from stocks or an RMD (required minimum distribution) a possibility? It benefits the church and it benefits you because it's tax-deductible. If you do not have those types of assets, maybe you have a car you could donate. Or maybe your employer or your company will match what you give to Calvary. If you haven't checked on that recently, please ask!

Maybe you are given a gift, or inherit some money, and you can give a percentage of that. Maybe you cannot go on a trip you were going to take this year because of some kind of life situation going on...consider donating that money to the church. Abundance is all around when we look for it.

And so is need. How we view need makes all the difference. Every need we come across is an opportunity to feel good about giving and to grow our community and connection to God, self, and one another.

To lay it out plainly: **Calvary has great need.**

- Our building insurance premium more than doubled, jumping \$23,432.
- We have an old building; it needs on-going maintenance.
- Our health insurance premiums jumped 18% on our current plans and while we're looking at as many options as we can, the increase is still significant even if we modify our plans.
- Our bills are increasing, just as they are at your home.
- Our missionaries and partnering organizations are requesting more money too, as their needs are rising.

- The cost of supplies and stamps and musicians and toilet paper and security services and everything that happens around here is going up.
- It even costs more and takes long to drive to hospitals to make visits, as you well know...traffic in Denver is tough, and the time it takes to do visitation has increased in my tenure by quite a lot. A hospital that used to be 15 minutes away, is now 30-45 minutes away! So if you wonder why need so many pastors ever...it's because there is a lot of need and it's all over the place! And each of us is just one 'body' but together we can meet vast and varied needs, whether they are here in the building, at your home, or in a hospital.

I say this just to remind you that if our giving, your giving and my giving, remains the same year over year, we are actually funding *less ministry* not the same amount of ministry. We have to be continually increasing our giving (on the whole) to keep doing what we are doing, and we need deep gifts of abundance to help us expand our mission and ministry.

And honestly, part of Calvary's need is my own need. I can't keep leading and operating as I am now and have been for many years. You have responded to that need and we have three part time positions to really help mitigate my work load – the Congregational Chaplain (Brenda), the Pastor (Ian), and the Executive Director of Church Operations (to be discovered!) and while yes, these positions fit into the general financial framework of the positions we have, it still costs money to fund new staff who have different ministry needs. We really need this staff structure to work. I need it to work. It is working so far in practice, I feel immediate help and relief with Brenda and Ian and I know I will feel that with an ED. Even more, I'm so excited for how Pastor Alice's position will shift focus to concentrate on guests and new members and our external outreach and messaging to share our message with more people. This is all really, really good. And – it costs money. God has led us in setting this vision, and now I am confident that God will lead us to provide the resources we need for this vision.

I also know that I cost you a lot of money Calvary. The longer tenured staff you have, the more expensive they are. There is a great abundance and gift in long tenured staff in terms of stability in communities and deep and lasting relationships. Many of us treasure these things about Calvary. And what we treasure, we also have to fund. That's just a reality. For all of us.

Damon and I give more generously to Calvary year after year because each year we are more invested in you and in our ministry together. That's another gift of longevity. We cannot imagine our life without you all, and we cannot imagine the world without Calvary!

**So yes, Calvary has great need, AND Calvary has great abundance.**

- We have a beautiful place to worship and gather we do not have a mortgage.
- We have a parking lot. You don't have to pay for street parking! We are near the light rail and have a bus stop on our property – we are accessible.
- We have a gym and a playground, an atrium and a kitchen—places to fellowship and play and share meals together.



- We have a chapel and a prayer room, a sanctuary and a Foot of the Cross Courtyard, ensuring that this sacred space is not just here for you while you are living, but after you have gone on too...you can forever be “with us.”
- We have an intergenerational ministry with kids on the steps and seniors in the choir.
- We have a national ministry with people worshipping in person and across the state and country from Utah to South Dakota, California to Maryland, Texas to Massachusetts, Wisconsin to Iowa to Oklahoma and more.
- We are an agile church able to pivot quickly to meet needs in our community, like gathering food for JFS when SNAP benefits were suspended.
- We have volunteers that offer professional services to us for free! People like our livestream tech team or people on our Exec Board offering their professional skills in HR, property management, stewardship and fundraising, and even folks who coordinate whole ministry areas in mission or education as volunteers or who serve in the nursery or choir week after week. Or people like Nadou who make us coffee every week! We are blessed.
- We have an endowment that allows us to draw a percentage of our earnings...in recent years it's between \$25,000-\$30,000 a year.
- We have about a dozen partners sharing our facility in various ways that totals \$155,000.
- We keep a cash reserve of around \$100,000+ to help us make responsible leaps of faith in our budgeting.
- We have an amazingly committed and talented staff, who work above and beyond the hours in the day, putting heart and care into this community that we love.
- As deacon Willow Carter pointed out last week, we have a community that sees our church as a place to come when they have need, a place where they will be listened to, cared for, and even when we can't fully meet all their needs, they know we will help them figure out where to go to find the help they need.

And we have you! And me! We are the greatest asset to our abundance. Our giving can grow each year. We are the wildcard Calvary. We are the ones whose giving and generosity has the chance to rise and meet the needs at hand with abundance and provision and joy. Some of you maybe have never played your card with us, so to speak. It's hard to trust churches sometimes, and I get that. If you want to see our finances, talk to our Treasurer, Cindy Ponikvar; we are an open book and will share with you whatever you need or want to know. Your giving is confidential at Calvary. We want to earn your trust as a place that is worthy of your abundance.

Even more than that, we believe that God has given us a vision to be a voice and presence and a living witness of Christ's love, justice, peace, hope, and joy in the world. We are engaged in ministries that matter. We help people in need. We inspire people with music and preaching. We care for kids and families. We are here for you when you are sick, we are here for you and your family when you die. From birth to death and beyond, we are here.

We are an abundant presence in your life. And we love being that presence.

The abundance of blessing is great. And that's why the need is great too.

Paul knew this. That's why he knew the Corinthian church could do more with their giving than what they were doing now. And not just do more for the sake of giving more, but for the sake of creating real good in the world for the people in Jerusalem that really needed some help.

Calvary, ***For Goodness' Sake, let's feel good about our giving by using our abundance to meet the needs before us...beginning with the needs here at home, here at Calvary.***

Just think of all that you get just in one worship service – beautiful live music, inspiring/thought provoking teaching and preaching, a beautiful space to pray/sit reflect (perhaps more reflective than your yoga studio even!), coffee and treats, childcare if you have kids, meet with a pastor after worship or during the week to talk (think about what you'd pay your therapist)...just to have

this space is special...and to have people looking after it...if you were to add up all these things...if you ever worship online think about what you pay for a monthly streaming service...and put a value on them....of what it costs to run the church....it's a lot!

- concert ticket
- lecture event
- yoga class
- Starbucks coffee
- childcare for a couple hours
- therapy session
- HOA dues or security dues
- Netflix or Hulu subscription

And not only that – but your giving ALSO helps organizations and ministries all over Denver and around the world! We get to give to support our spiritual health AND all of these entities. Where else do you get to give to help others while at the same time helping yourself while at the same time praising God!

The final point Paul makes about this text that I just love is that Titus has the same joy of generosity and sharing that Paul does. Paul mentors Titus and now Titus is mentoring others. It's the best part about the church. The ebbs and flows of leadership and generosity and all of us playing our part. It

brings full circle back to the first point, that we are not in this alone! Generosity inspires generosity. **Giving feels Good when our giving inspires others to give!**

I love this passage because it reminds us of God's goodness and that we do not have to be wealthy to give. *Everyone gets to experience the joy of giving because everyone gets to experience the grace of God.*

*For Goodness' Sake*, don't miss out on the joy of giving. Let's feel good about our giving, because we're giving together, and we're giving to a place where God is doing great good through us and for us.

Amen.