

## Introduction

I appreciate the opportunity to teach this morning on a topic about which I feel strongly. This morning's message is on Biblical giving. It ranks right up there with worship, because how we use our money and how we give is a reflection of our hearts. True, biblical giving is worship. Giving was a frequent topic of Jesus during His ministry.

Our Lord made more reference to money and possessions than to either prayer or faith. He spoke about money and possessions more than heaven and hell combined. (Randy Alcorn, *The Practice of Tithing as the Minimum Standard of Christian Giving*)

In many ways, I am humbled to speak on this topic. The only reason I can speak on it are God's demonstration of grace to my family and me through what He has taught us and how He has provided for us. We have nothing about which to boast. In addition, many people in this room have true, giving hearts, and could give great testimonies of God's goodness to them. They probably give way beyond what we could ever think of giving, whether in dollar amounts or percentage of their income. Nonetheless, here I am. A few weeks ago, I asked Pastor Mike if I could take a Sunday and speak about some things that God has put on my heart, and he has graciously agreed to do so.

I am going to say many things this morning. You may not agree with some or any of them. Some of what I say may even make you angry. If, as I believe, my convictions are from God and His Word, then your beef will be with Him and not me. God's economy is not the same as ours. He operates differently than we do. I understand only a fragment of it, but what I do understand, challenges me to the core. For the most part, I am not going to teach on tithing this morning. For those not familiar with the term, tithe means 1/10<sup>th</sup>, and so the practice of tithing means giving 1/10<sup>th</sup> or 10% of your income. Actually, I do not believe in tithing and I do not think it is the New Testament standard of giving. But more on that in a while. This morning, I am going to start with some statistics, followed by a testimony. Then, I will offer some Biblical principles for giving from Scripture. Let's get started.

## Statistics

Randy Alcorn from Eternal Perspectives Ministries provides the following statistics.

American Christians control 70% of the world's Christian wealth. The average American Christian gives 2.6% of his income. Average giving by adults attending U.S. Protestant churches is \$17 a week. That is \$70 a month or \$840 a year. 96% of American Christians give away less than 10% of their income. 80% of the money given to the American church is given by those 55 and older. The average Christian in our churches gives 30% less than the average American gave in the depths of the Great Depression. If U.S. Christians raised their giving to the Old Testament starting place (10%), an additional \$140 billion a year would become available for the work of Christ. (Randy Alcorn, *Exponential 06*)

## Testimony

From the day my wife and I were married in 1983, we committed ourselves to tithing our income. It was never a question of something that we would or would not do. We did not have a lot of money. I was in my junior year of college and working part-time. My wife worked full-time, until our first child was born, during my senior year in college in 1984. From that point, she stayed home and I continued to attend college, and then seminary, full-time. I also worked an assortment of part-time jobs and ministry positions during that time. When we moved back to St. Louis in 1989, we had never made over \$14,000. In fact, we had only made over \$10,000 once or twice. We had all three children during that time. Things were often tight financially, but we were always provided for.

Let's fast forward to 1991 or 1992. Our annual income was about \$16,000-\$17,000. I was working a seasonal job and we had no health insurance. We were still tithing. We had been attending Christ Community Church for a couple of years and were introduced to faith giving for the purpose of giving to missions. We had never considered giving beyond our tithe on a regular basis. It was a new idea to us, but my wife and I decided that we would give an extra \$25 a month to missions. This would be above our tithe amount and we were excited about being a part of what God was doing through this church in missions. When I completed the pledge card,

however, I filled it out wrong because I misread it. When we later discovered the error, we realized that we had not pledged \$25 a month, but we had pledged \$25 a week. We could have corrected it. It would have been a logical thing to do. However, we made a decision to stick with the pledged amount and see what God would do.

As I mentioned, I was doing seasonal work and was laid off during the winter. I picked up temporary work that paid less than my regular job, but it was at least something. We continued to tithe and give the extra faith pledge amount for missions. There were probably times during that winter when we were giving about 20% of the income that was coming in. One month, I knew that if we continued to give, we would be \$200 short for our rent payment. We had no savings, but I continued to write the giving checks and we told no one of our situation. The Sunday before the rent payment was due, we came out to our car after church and found an envelope on the seat. It had \$200 in cash in it. God had provided. He not only did that once that winter, He did that twice. We were always able to give our tithe and missions gift and we were always able to pay our bills on time.

This was a great demonstration of God's grace and provision to us. God was saying very clearly that we could trust Him. However, although we had seen the provision of God, and seen that He was completely able to meet our needs, we have backtracked from that level of giving. However, we are still committed to tithing on our gross income to the church and, then, giving additional amounts to such ministries as missionaries, poverty relief, and crisis pregnancy centers. God has continued to be faithful and we have found, as always, that we can never out give God.

### **Biblical Giving – Overview**

My primary text for this morning is 2 Corinthians 8-9. I am not going to read through the whole passage with you, but I encourage you to read and reflect on the principles contained within these verses. I am going to touch on a few of the significant principles that I see here. Within these chapters, I see at least three qualities of biblical giving. Biblical giving is radical. Biblical giving is rewarding. Biblical giving is revealing.

### **Biblical Giving is Radical**

Let's start with the first quality – biblical giving is radical. 2 Corinthians 8:1-7.

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

Notice in verse 1 that it is God Who is responsible for the actions of these believers. Paul asks the Corinthians to notice the grace that God gave the Macedonians. It was God that enabled them to do this, and by His grace, spurred them on. In essence, Paul is saying that God is responsible for their behavior and He is the One that enabled them. It is important to remember that God is the one that gives to us, so that we can give to others. He gives through us. Apart from Him, we cannot give. In verse 2, he says that their behavior was rich generosity, which sprung out of overflowing joy and extreme poverty. Verse 3 says that they gave as much as they were able and then even beyond their ability. In other words, they had every rational reason not to give, but they gave anyway. In fact, in verse 4, it says that they pleaded for the opportunity to give. The fact that they had to plead to give may infer that they were being counseled by some not to give. It would make sense to us, wouldn't it? And yet in verse 5, Paul states that their actions were a result of them giving themselves to God. Finally, in verses 6 and 7, he also encourages the Corinthians to excel in this grace of giving.

We have presented before us an example of radical giving – people showing generosity to an extreme. These were people that gave with urgency and abandonment, not worrying about the future consequences of their actions on their financial condition. These were not wealthy people. In fact, they were poor. Yet, they were

zealous in their desire to give. They were radical givers. A giving heart is not dependant on circumstances or income. Now, if this was an isolated incident in Scripture, it might be possible that we could rationalize it away as not being a standard by which to operate. But it does not seem to be isolated. In fact, it seems to be the norm. Consider the woman praised by Jesus, when she gave her last two coins to the Lord. It was all she had to live on. Zacchaeus, when he gave half of his possessions to the poor and pledged to pay back four times anyone he had cheated. Though he was a person of wealth, after he met Jesus, he chose not to hold onto those things. Jesus instructed his disciples to sell their possessions and give it to the poor. Barnabas – selling a piece of land and giving it to the church. The early believers – selling their possessions, homes, and land and giving it to others and the work of the Lord, so that there were none that were needy among them. These examples demonstrate a radical and even reckless desire to give to God. In fact, I am not sure I know of any examples in the New Testament where this is not the kind of giving that is referred to as the standard for giving to God and others.

So, this raises a question. What is the giving standard for followers of Christ? Many people will refer to tithing as the standard. Others will say that tithing is an Old Testament principle for those under the Law, and that the New Testament principle is grace giving. They will refer to the passage in 2 Corinthians, where it says each should decide in his own heart what to give. Quite honestly, tithing is barely mentioned in the New Testament. It is referred to, but not commanded, in the book of Hebrews. It is also referred to by Jesus when He is rebuking the practice of the Pharisees – they tithed on everything but neglected justice and the love of God. Jesus said they should have tithed but not neglected these matters. But someone may argue that Jesus was talking to those who were operating under the old covenant, so this instruction does not refer to the church. So, where does this leave us?

I told you before that I do not believe that tithing is the standard for the church today, except that I believe it should be the starting point for our giving. Not the goal we strive for or the level we try to work up to, but the starting point. I know that there are people in this room that disagree with what I just said. I understand many of the reasons that you may believe what you do. Yet, I stand on my statement and here is why.

Jesus said that He did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. He fulfilled all of the Old Testament sacrifices by becoming the greater and perfect sacrifice. He transcended the ability of the Law to save. Think about the references Jesus made to the Old Testament law. He calls on followers not to obey the Law, but to go beyond its requirements. “Do not commit adultery.” Jesus said, “Lusting in your heart is committing adultery.” “Do not murder.” Jesus said, “Anyone who is angry with his brother is in danger of judgment.” “Don’t break an oath.” Jesus said to be the kind of person that does not have to take an oath and just be taken at his word. “An eye for eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Jesus said, “Turn the other cheek.” “If someone wants to sue you for your tunic, give him your cloak as well.” “If they force you to go one mile, go two.” “Love your enemies.” “Pray for those that persecute you.” Jesus did not command us to just obey the Law. He called us to blow it away by going beyond it. He did not say, “Meet this standard and you have arrived.” He calls us to strive for new heights and to show that there is a difference between a follower of Christ and a mere adherent to religious rules. In relation to giving, Randy Alcorn said it this way:

To me, giving less than a tithe is simply not an option. Someday, I’m going to stand before God and give an account of my life (Romans 14:12). On that day, I do not want to have to explain why, being indwelt with the Holy Spirit and having lived in the most affluent nation in human history, I failed to give at the minimal level of those who did not have the indwelling Spirit and owned far less than I. (Randy Alcorn, *Giving Less Than A Tithe?*)

In other words, how could someone who is bought by the blood of Jesus, knows the risen Savior and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit think of giving less than the minimum of 10% required of Old Testament saints? When Jesus calls us to strive beyond the baseline on the Law’s requirements, why are we quick to reference His call in other areas, but we avoid the issue of money? This is why I do not believe in tithing, except as a place to start. I believe in what I like to call “alling.” It is not a word. I made it up. But it is the standard to which I think we are called as believers. We should be ready to give whenever and whatever He calls us to give. Nothing should be off limits – not houses or cars, not bank accounts, not retirements, not anything.

Don’t get me wrong. I do not think it is evil to have possessions or to have money. What I am saying is this. We have to recognize that these things are God’s gift to us, for the purpose of blessing others and bringing glory to God. We have to hold them loosely and be willing to give them at any time. In our society, we often only give to

the extent that we don't have to trust God, rather than stretching our faith (extending ourselves) and trusting God for His provision. Biblical giving is radical and even reckless and every godly example held up in the New Testament reveals this abandonment to God. If we have this approach to giving, we will not have to do the calculations and figure the percentages. We will be giving beyond what the Law requires because we will operate with the understanding that it is all God's. We will be using every spare resource to pour into the kingdom of Christ and building up treasure in heaven. We will be giving even when the wisdom of the world, or maybe even common sense, says no. We will even give when those in the church say no, because we have our eyes set on a greater prize.

### **Biblical Giving is Rewarding**

This brings to my second aspect of giving which is that biblical giving is rewarding. Let's look at 2 Corinthians 9:6-14, where Paul continues his exhortation.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.

Notice, in this passage, that each of us should decide what we should give, so that it is not given reluctantly or under compulsion. No one can tell what to give. Otherwise, it is not giving. Your giving is between you and God – period. I don't decide. The pastors don't decide. The elders don't decide. We can provide guidance from the Scripture, but it is a choice you must make. God desires joyful givers.

I see here three aspects of how giving is rewarding, and they are that God will make grace abound to us, He will give us a harvest of righteousness, and He will give us abundant joy. The first of these is that God will make all grace abound to us. If we give faithfully to God, He has promised that we will have all that we need. This is not a prosperity gospel. God is not promising to make you wealthy, with an abundance of possessions. This passage says that God will make all grace abound to us, so that at all times, having all that we need, we will be able to abound in every good work. In other words, if we demonstrate ourselves to be givers, God will bless us with what we need so that we can continue to give. I have heard John Piper say, in reference to this, that God increases our income in order to increase our standard of giving, not our standard of living. Therefore, give, and God will continue to provide, so that you can continue to give. For those with a desire to give, this is truly a reward.

Second, we will be rewarded with a harvest of righteousness. This reward is one that will never spoil or fade. It is the storing up of treasure in heaven. When we give, we are planting seeds – to reap a harvest of righteousness. The impact on even one life that is impacted by the gospel can have a ripple effect on multiple other people and generations. When we give to the work of Christ, even though we may never see the results, there will be people in eternity, from this nation and around the world, both now and in future generations, that will be the harvest of righteousness from our generosity, which God has enabled us to do.

Third, we will be rewarded with joy because of the thanksgiving and praise that will be offered to God by others and us. We will rejoice because of the grace God has given us by enabling us to give to others. We will rejoice because others will be brought into the kingdom and become worshipers of God. We will rejoice because we will have let go of our grip on the things of this world and become satisfied in God as our all-surpassing treasure. True joy and contentment are found only in Him. We will be feasting on Jesus and our joy in God will be our awesome reward.

**Biblical Giving is Revealing**

So, as we have seen, biblical giving is radical and it is rewarding. Finally, it is revealing. There are at least two things that giving reveals. It reveals our trust and our treasure. The question before us is this. Do we really trust God? When we look at the example of the Macedonians or other givers in Scripture, quite frankly, from our viewpoint, they often seem reckless and maybe even foolish. Let's be honest. We want to gloss over these sections and say that surely this is not what God seeks in all of us. Yet, they are praised and held up as examples to other churches. So, why does this seem so odd to us? Why does it seem so foolish to us that those in poverty would plead for privilege of giving beyond their ability to give? Why are we so quick to dismiss it? I believe it is because we do not really trust God. We don't really take Him at His word. We don't really believe that if we extend ourselves and abandon ourselves to God, and embrace radical and reckless giving, that He will come through and come to our aid. We are afraid – afraid that we won't have what we need down the road, when the unexpected arises. We are afraid to let go of the reins – to lose control.

We are trusting more in our own ability to save and protect our future than we are trusting in God. The reality is that it could all be gone tomorrow. If just takes one major catastrophe in the world or in our lives, and it is all gone. And it does not matter how much you save – it could all be gone. There is only one place of safety, and that is in the hands of the Almighty God. Jesus said to trust. He said that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. He said not to worry about our lives, what we will eat or what we will drink or what we will wear. Life is more than food and the body more than clothes. (Luke 12) God knows exactly what we need and is able to provide them – regardless of our situation. But we have to trust Him.

But you say, "Phil, you don't understand my situation. You don't know the financial issues we are dealing with. We just don't have the money." I understand, believe me, I understand. I have two sons in college – at a private Christian university. Our choice, I know, but beyond the grants and scholarships and what my sons earn, we, as parents, expect to shell out a minimum of \$5500 next year in payments next year. We have chronic illnesses in our family that require ongoing care. I estimate that our out-of-pocket expenses will be about \$6500 for next year. I estimate that we will pay \$3100 in gasoline alone. We have not been on a vacation in 20 years. We would really like to have a house – one that is closer to church and closer to my job, so I don't have to spend two hours a day on the road. It would be great if every time severe weather started brewing, we did not have to intently watch the weather forecast to see if we need to abandon our mobile home on top of a hill. We would love it. I watch our finances all the time. We have reasons to hesitate. We worry just like you. We wonder about the future. But the God of the universe has said to trust in Him.

Sam Storms, in his book, *Pleasures Evermore*, says that we can serve and sacrifice for the behalf of others because Jesus will sacrifice in serving us. He does not call without a promise to provide (p. 77). Giving to God is grounded in the character and nature of God – and He has promised to provide what we need. We will never be able to out serve and out give God. It is impossible. He has promised. He has promised. And Christ Community Church, it is time to start living like our God does not live in a little shoe box. Who is this God that cannot provide if we step out in faith? Who is this God that cannot see what we are going through? It is not the God of the universe – because there is nothing He can't do. And it does not matter when it comes to college, and healthcare, as oil prices, and vacations, and houses, because He says that He has it taken care of. And that trusting in Him, He will meet our needs according to His riches in glory and give a greater joy than any of things could ever provide. That's what I want! That's what I want! If He calls us to give a minimum 10% of our income to His work, then He is completely able to help us survive on the other 90% or 85% or whatever is left.

The second thing that giving reveals is where our treasure is. In 2 Corinthians 8:8-9, Paul says:

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

There is a reason that Jesus spoke on money and possessions more than any other subject. The manner in which we handle them is a blazing light into the depths of our heart. We are very quick to point out the parts of this passage that say that someone needs to decide in their own heart what to give. It is true, however, we ignore the substance of the rest of the passage, which says that a follower of Christ should have a very generous heart.

Therefore, for the Christian, deciding in our heart what to give should result in joyful generosity and sacrifice. I fear that very few in the American church know this type of joyful giving. In this nation of abundance, I fear we have lost any clear perspective. We are so wealthy. Compared to the way in which the rest of the world lives, everyone in this room qualifies as wealthy. We need a biblical perspective – not an American perspective. And in these verses, Paul offers us one. He challenges the Corinthian church and He challenges us.

Test the sincerity of your love by comparing it to the earnestness of others. Look at the Macedonian church and how they gave and sacrificed with joy. Look at the other examples in Scripture. Look at the example of faithful saints through history, like John Wesley, who near the end of his life was giving over 95% of his income to God. He had determined early in his ministry how much he needed to live on and as his income continue to grow and grow, everything else that came in above the small amount he needed, he gave to God. Wow. But there is a bigger wow. When we have looked at all the human examples we can find, then there is Jesus Christ. Paul leads right from verse 8 to verse 9, when he says to test the sincerity of our love by considering the generosity of others. He points right at Jesus. For we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor, so that through His poverty, we might become rich. Jesus is the standard! He gave everything. He gave up the glory of heaven to come to this earth, so that He could sacrifice in death, suffer and die so that we could partake in the riches of God's grace and mercy for all eternity. He sacrificed in life, so that at one point he said that He did not even have a place to lay His head. This is the God of the universe – and he had nowhere to put His head when He slept. He gave it all! And brothers and sisters, as followers of Jesus Christ, our lives should reflect our Master.

We in America tread on very dangerous ground. We are so in to accumulating and buying newer and newer things. We have such an abundance of money and possessions and how we choose to use what we have reveals where our hearts are – where our treasure is. Do not be deceived. If money has such a hold on you that you are resistant to let go of it, you are not only in danger of being disobedient and dishonoring to God, you are at risk of hell. Scripture is clear on this – you **cannot** worship God and money. You cannot serve two masters. It is not possible. Jesus said:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Matthew 6:24

Jesus said that you cannot serve both. If money and possessions have such a hold on you that you are not willing to give them away, then I fear that God has no hold on your life. And this is not based on my convictions, it is based on the words of Jesus Christ. Friends, God is a giver. He is the giver. At the very heart of Who He is, is giving. If we claim to be Christians, and to have the living God dwelling within us, and there is not a desire to give to the kingdom of God, we are either ignorant or liars. We are being molded into the image of Christ and part of that image should be to become a radical and joyful giver. When Christ becomes our treasure, His very heart will saturate ours and flow through our lives. Our lives will flow with abandoned generosity – because God is a giver. (Storms, p. 80) If God is living within us, then our lives and our giving should reflect His generosity.

### **Conclusion**

Biblical giving is radical – even reckless. It is rewarding. And it is revealing.

So, where does this bring us? Brothers and sisters, I believe that we are at a crucial point in the life of this church. God has richly blessed us. What are we going to do with it? My testimony at the beginning of this message revealed that I believe that God is calling my wife and I to take a step out from where we have been – to trust God beyond what we think is safe. To get a little Macedonianish! But I also believe that God has put a burden on my heart for this church and that it is time for us, as a congregation, to start doing some radical and even reckless giving.

I would like to issue two challenges to us – one for this year and one for next.

If you look at you bulletin each week, you will notice that we are behind for giving to the general budget and to missions. This has been going on for quite a while. People, this should not be – not when God has given us the means to meet the need. I am challenging us a congregation to make up the deficit and meet both of these budgets by the end of the year. In fact, I challenge us to do it, with God's help, by the middle of December. I would like to see us blow the top out the budget by year's end. God can do this. The question is do we want to see Him do it through us?

For next year, the leadership has proposed a budget with a very small percentage increase overall. There are all kinds of contingent items that we would love to do and that different ministry leaders have proposed. These relate to different ministry and building items that we feel God is calling us to do. But at our current level of giving, they are not possible. This is not that complicated. Either God is calling us to do these things or He is not. If He is calling us to do these things, then according to His Word, the resources should be available. Remember the words of Sam Storm, **God does not call without a promise to provide.**

Why did God start this church? Why did God give us this building? Did He give it to us so that we could sit here on Lindbergh, in a prime location, and all gather here in an auditorium that could seat 600 people or more, so that we could all spread out and have 2 or 3 times as much room as we need? Who are these seats for? I will tell you who they are for. They are for the harvest of righteousness that God wants to give us! It is for the young children who learn about Jesus from the nursery and the 2 & 3's and through the Sunday School, and the youth group, and VBS, and AWANA, and through the teaching of the Word in our services, and Men's and Women's ministry, and the outreach and missions projects that we do. It is so lives can be impacted right here and right now. So that families can be changed. And when those lives have been touched, they reach out to others and touch their lives, and the harvest begins to spread like a fire, both in our generation and in all the succeeding generations until Jesus comes. It is a treasure to be enjoyed now but that is also stored up for all eternity, as people become worshipers of the Almighty God through Jesus Christ. And we can celebrate and rejoice because He has allowed us to be a part of it by provided the seed to sow and we can be a part of a glorious harvest because He has given us the privilege of giving. Why would waste on stuff that is just going to fade away when we can do something with it that will never end?

Choices, my friends. Choosing to live for eternity rather than the here and now. It is about having vision for God-things. Asking ourselves the important questions, like do I really need a newer house when the current one meets our needs? Do I really need a new car when the one I am driving still runs fine? Do I really need to spend thousands and thousands of dollars every year on entertainment, and eating out, and vacations, and on newer and bigger toys, when there is something bigger and eternal offered? I am not opposed to those things, but what if we spend more on those things than we give to God? Where are our hearts in all of this? Let me be blunt. If the thought of giving to kingdom of God does not even put a glimmer of joy or a tremor of excitement in our hearts, then it is possible that we don't even know Him. How could the greatest Giver in the universe dwell within us and not affect the way we live and give? Could it be that the American church does not have a greater impact in our culture and world because we don't use our God-given provisions and resources much differently than pagans who don't know Christ? Why would they stand up and take notice? What greater message could send to the a world saturated with pursuing things and money than to give it away? And we can give with confidence because **God does not call without a promise to provide.**

You will find an insert in your bulletin. My challenge to us for next year is to see what God will do through us. If you are not giving or are giving less than 10% of your income to the work of Christ, I challenge you to pledge to give a minimum of 10% next year. If you have been giving 10%, I challenge you to go beyond that and see what God will do. It is like taking the training wheels off – it is a little scary. But remember – God has promised that if you are giving to Him, He will provide so you can continue to sow in order to reap a harvest of righteousness. I challenge all of us to stretch our faith and see what God can do through us next year.