

Open our eyes, O Lord, that we always recognize that we are paupers in Your sight, absolutely dependent on Your grace for all that we need as Your children. But having become rich in Your grace lead us also to be generous with all our neighbors so that they too may enjoy the inheritance You have prepared for us all. Amen.

The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives; for those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off. The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when He delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand. I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing. Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever. For the LORD loves justice; He will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever.

In Christ Jesus, who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, dear fellow redeemed:

Our Creator made all species so they can reproduce after their own kind. While there can be interbreeding within species, a new species cannot be created and perpetuate itself through regeneration. For example a horse and donkey can produce a mule, but a mule cannot reproduce itself.

You and I are born children of Satan, but through the gracious working of the Holy Spirit we are born again and made children of God. We are not hybrids like a mule however. We are made anew and receive the full righteousness of God for Christ's sake. Our old sinful natures do not disappear from us in this life, they still cling to us and produce all manner of sin until we die. But our new man of faith made in the image of God produce righteousness alone now and forevermore.

Our text speaks of one such quality of righteousness, namely generosity and on this day as we consider also the 7th Commandment we shall take note of God's miraculous working in us and observe that **Righteous Generosity Produces after its own Kind.**

I

We first hear this: "The wicked borrows but does not pay back". So it goes for the wicked too, wicked self-service emanating from the pit of hell produces after its own kind. Why would anyone borrow but have no intention to repay? - self enrichment, of course.

Just like the wicked will lend with the hopes of repossessing or charging exorbitant interest. Righteousness knows nothing of such plots of greed, rather we read: "the righteous is generous and gives."

My fellow righteous children of God, you may not have found within your thoughts the wicked notion of borrowing with no intent of paying back, but have other get-rich schemes crossed your minds? Now we are not talking about legitimate investments, nor pursuits of honest money making enterprises, but rather ways to take advantage of others individually or even corporately. We have all been so tempted, whether through insurance fraud, lying about things we have sold, being given too much change back after a purchase with the thought of keeping it, and finding money or other things of value and salving our consciences with *"finders keepers, losers weepers."*

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says this: "be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ... This is the generosity that begets our generosity my fellow saints in Christ. Look at the image of God's generous gift of His Son unto death for all your sins. The payment for your sins was generous, not one of your sins was left unpaid. What are some of your most grievous sins, which come back often to your remembrance? Do you think Jesus' blood has not washed them away? You do not begrudge His generosity like those first hired in our Gospel lesson for today. Despite what the enemies of your faith say, God has been super abundant in His gracious salvation secured by His Holy Son for you.

So Paul goes on to say "Be sure of this, one who is covetous, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ ... Let no one deceive you..., for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." As generous as God is in providing salvation for all people, He is also exactly complete in His punishment for the unanswered sins of the wicked. "Those cursed by Him shall be cut off" so that even "the children of the wicked shall be cut off".

II

The Seventh Commandment is clear about our attitudes toward money and possessions. God gives us everything we need both for this life and the life to come and in turn we, as His true children, inherit his generosity with all our dealings with neighbor in this life. We now get to use what we have for the benefit of others. As the Psalmist observes: the believing righteous one "is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing." - like the boy that was with Jesus in the wilderness. He, not the over 5,000 "responsible"

adults brought a lunch! He generously gave it to His Lord, who multiplied times over 5,000!

The unbelieving world does not know how this works among the righteous of God. In the recent tax bill you could hear the warning that churches will now be hurting financially. Why? It reasons: *since the standard deduction for household income will be \$24,000, families who once had itemized deductions for their church contributions, will no longer be itemizing. So the tax break they once received on their contributions will no longer be there for them to take.* Now this would be true if Christians were only generous on account of this tax break.

In truth if that is why Christians gave at the level they gave, it could hardly be called generous. Such giving would be a benefit only personally not reflective of a trust in a generous Lord. Such gifts are not even blessed by our Lord in the first place. The Lord's generosity naturally produces genuine generosity in His children.

Yes, I know we can all confess to our sins of being greedily stingy, but our Lord does not cast us off, rather as the Psalmist observes: "The steps of [the righteous] man are established by the LORD, when He delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand." How does our Lord hold your hand when you fall? He declares all your self-serving sins to be forgiven. You receive of His generosity every time you eat His true body given for you and drink His true blood shed for you.

What is behind our sins of stinginess? We are concerned we will not have enough for this body and life. But trusting in the promises of God to give us our daily bread, the Psalmist could make this observation: "I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread." These promises are as true today for you, the saints of Christ, as they were in the days of David, the days of Moses, Abraham and even Adam.

David makes this point earlier in our Psalm: "Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance." Our riches are found in the generosity of the Lord – we shall not want as David observes in Psalm 23; we shall not lack anything here nor into eternity – again like the boy who gave up his lunch and still had eaten to his full.

Do not be deceived - righteous generosity produces after its own kind. The lies from hell would have you believe that it is your generosity that earns you God's favor. It makes sense to the

unbelieving world and even to your sinful flesh, but the truth is that God does the work of making you righteous in His Son - declared so by the work of His Son in our place. That generosity of forgiving you of all your sins through the shed blood of His Son and the generosity of crediting to you the sinner the Son's righteousness is what produces your generosity. Your generous Lord gives to you the eternal riches of forgiveness and life through His Son; you, His heir, in turn give to others based on what God has given you. God's eternal generosity causes you to help your neighbor to improve and protect his goods and means of making a living.

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever." Amen.