

2018-19-45 Galatians 6:6-10 – **How can we best serve the Lord?** Pent. 19/Stewardship 10/20/2019
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Grace and peace from God our Father have set us free to serve through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.
God's Word of blessing to help us serve Him is in Galatians 6:6-10
These are Your Words, heavenly Father to fill us with blessings for our good. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

All of us know someone who is kind and generous. You can try out-give them with gifts, but they always have more gifts for you. He or she always is ready to show more kindness in more ways. Every true Christian wants to be that kind of caring person since God has been generous and caring to us! Yet we're tempted to think that we don't have enough gifts or time or love to show God's kind of love. What can we do to become a greater blessing to people around us who need the love of God? Paul set a goal for believers in verse 10: *"As we have opportunity, let us do good to all..."* (v.10). Last week we heard Jesus' parable of the wicked manager. Jesus commended him not for his sin, but for using what he had in the time he had to reach his goal, which was a new job among friends. How do we stay motivated to serve God and stay on task so that our lives become a blessing to people the way God wants us to be?

How can we best serve the Lord?

First, we remember the undeserved blessings of God. Paul wrote earlier in Galatians that all people have been born under the curse of the law as sinners. That curse included death and an eternal separation from God. In our Gospel lesson for today, we read the description of the torment that the soul of the rich man experienced in the fire of hell. That is what we deserve! But God sent His Son to take the punishment of that curse for us. Paul wrote in Romans, *"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man.... But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:7-8). He also wrote in Galatians 4: *"God sent his Son... to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons"* (v.4-5). Through faith in Christ, God made us His blessed children. Not only do we have eternal life with God, we have a loving Father who cares now! God provides for our daily needs. Think of His blessings today. The Lord provided transportation for us to get here, freedom to join in worship without fear of arrest, we'll eat a meal after church at home or at a restaurant; and tonight we'll have a safe and warm place to sleep. These are free gifts from God through the means He has given.

Have we paused to give thanks to God or do we just want more? God doesn't need our kindness or offerings. He created and owns all good things! We are not even our own, since Jesus bought us with His life as the price. Do we regard everything we have as God's or as our own? Because of God's promise to provide, we can live generously, but do we? Paul wrote, *"As we have opportunity, let us do good"* (v.10) Too often when God allows problems for us individually or financial in the congregation, we wonder why God isn't providing. He will abundantly provide if we allow Him to work through us! Paul wrote, *"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"* (2 Corinthians 9:8). The problem is not with God, but with our lack of trusting His promises and our tendency to let our sinful nature control our thinking.

Paul warned: *"Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. ... whatever a man sows, he will also reap. Indeed, the one who sows for his own sinful flesh will reap destruction from the sinful flesh"* (v.7-8). In the lesson of rich man and Lazarus, the rich man was an unbeliever. He used everything he had for himself. He rejected God's Word or didn't apply it to his life. He was forever separated from God in hell!

Whenever we live for our sinful nature we put a barrier between us and God. We need to hear the Word: *“Godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10)*. Our repentance is not just sorrow for sins. It is a trust in Jesus’ forgiveness and a confidence in God to provide for us as we serve Him. Such confidence comes from hearing God’s Word. In the Old Testament when God challenged His people to give offerings, He promised: *“Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10)*. This week as we read or listen to His Word, pray that the Holy Spirit will help us apply His Word to everything in our lives. Then, we will be thankful to God for all He has given us!

Second, the benefits of God’s Word have no end! Paul wrote, *“The one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (v.9)*. Yesterday I was at the national convention of Christian Life Resources. Pastor James Hein preached for the opening service and he encouraged us from 1 John 3:18 to love people just as God loves us. He said that unbelieving people don’t have the love of God by nature. History has shown that when a country as a whole loses its Christian influence, it soon devalues human life and shows little concern for people in need. We are living in country that is now post-Christian. We are tempted to follow the crowd and live selfishly or in our own little world and not see others in need.

The early Christians were in an ungodly culture that had little value for human life. How did they survive? How did they eventually overcome the ungodly influences of Rome which were worse than our culture today? They didn’t not take over the military or vote in a new leader with better morals. Their love from Christ motivated them to treat Christians and even their enemies with the same love. They overcame evil with good. They helped the poor, hungry, and neglected people. They contributed directly to those who served as pastors, teachers, or missionaries so more people could hear of Christ and believe. Paul wrote, *“Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with his teacher” (v.6)*. We have that same task today as we support our congregation’s work and synod’s missions and have charity for people in need.

Here is key point: God has allowed us to continue to live on earth with this goal: to pass the saving truth of Christ to more people. It takes sacrifice to do this! We sacrifice time to read a devotion at home with our family. It takes time for us to pray for people in need. It takes offerings to support the work at Trinity that we carry on together that more children and adults learn of Christ. Paul wrote, *“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (v.10)*. We should ask daily, *“To whom can we share the love of Christ by word or action?”* Many people need spiritual help. The love of Christ compels us to reach out to them and to pray for them whether they are Christians or not. God has called us to be His people with a purpose to share His eternal love in word and action.

How do we know that getting God’s love to others takes sacrifice? Consider Jesus. He left heaven to come to this sinful earth. He sacrificed His time to pray, to study, to preach, and to love people in need. The greatest sacrifice He made was when He gave up His life for us. Jesus said, There is no greater love than that one lays down His life for his friends (John 10). Because of Jesus, we don’t have die to satisfy God’s justice, we get to live in thanks to God. In Christ, we have a gracious God, who provides for us, forgives our sins, and gives us occasions to serve Him and others. We can make a difference in this world for God! Amen.