



***First Fruits***  
**Derrick Shields**  
**“Ingredients for a Generous Life”**  
**January 21, 2024**

**Key Verses:** 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

**Key Thought:** The main ingredient for a generous life is coming to know the generosity of God.

**Points to Consider:**

- The goal of this message is to facilitate a shift in our mentality from one of scarcity to one of abundance. What determines our mentality is— ultimately— what we *truly* believe about God.
- 1-8: Paul exalts the churches of Macedonia as a model of generosity.
  - i. 1: These churches had embraced the **grace** of God.
  - ii. 2: Paul suggests that it was their abundant **joy** that enabled them to be generous, even as they were enduring extreme hardship and poverty!
  - iii. 3: They were willing to **sacrifice**, giving beyond what they had to spare.
  - iv. 4-5: Their giving was **worship** unto the Lord— a “vertical” before a “horizontal” matter.
  - v. 8: Paul implies that their giving was proof of their sincere **love**.
- 9: Our passage concludes with Paul’s reminder of the ultimate example of Jesus, who—being rich— was impoverished in order to enrich us by means of that poverty.
- Phil Webb shared how his motivation for giving was utterly transformed through a life-changing experience of God’s generosity.
  - i. Phil confessed that he had slipped into a selfish motivation for giving, informed by the “prosperity gospel,” which advances giving mainly as a guise for getting from God, in such a way that givers *earn* and *are entitled to* material blessings from God.
  - ii. Phil took responsibility for the near failure of his business as a commercial contractor. He and his family nearly lost everything. However, God graciously and generously delivered the business from failure, and it has now recovered.
  - iii. Through the experience, Phil shared that he became disenchanted with material possessions and utterly captivated by God. Consequently, he was freed from the “prosperity gospel” and now gives chiefly because of his love for our gracious and generous God.

**Discussion Prompts:**

- How does your mentality (whether it be one of scarcity or one of abundance) expose what you *truly* believe about God? Explain.
- Which of the “marks” of the Macedonian churches (i.e., the bolded words above) is most inspiring to you? How might it look for you to exhibit that mark?
- Explore what significance the example of Jesus (verse 9) has for our posture toward giving.
- What do you believe God might be saying to you through Phil Webb’s testimony?
- Close in prayer for each other, based on your discussion.