Ready or Not? — Delivery Transcript

2 Corinthians 9:1–7 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, November 2, 2025 · *Close the Gap*

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If you'll take your Bibles, we're going to be in 1 Corinthians second 1 2 Corinthians chapter 9. If you're new to Broadview, these videos and that graphic closed the gap as part of a series we're in and that series is part of a capital campaign we're doing and any time you hear the word capital campaign out of a preacher's mouth if you're a guest you think I picked the wrong Sunday to give because they're going to be talking about money and I understand that and I know there's a lot of people here today it's your first time and so I promise you what we're about to do is a Bible study.

We're going to look at the scriptures, and the main point of my sermon is the main point of the text. So we're not talking about a capital campaign. Let me rephrase that. We're not talking about this capital campaign. We are, however, talking about a capital campaign in the first century. And that's what 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is all about. It's one of the reasons we wanted to look at these chapters as we think about this season in our life as a church, trying to address a gap that we have facility wise with our student ministry and even in this even in this worship center as well.

And so as you're turning to 2 Corinthians chapter 9, I wonder have you ever had a situation where you had the best intentions and every desire to do a certain thing, but by the time you did the thing you had intended to do, it was too late. Has you ever had that happen? Maybe for you it was your oh, it's still hard to talk about. Your senior year of prom, the girl you wanted to take to prom, you waited too long, and by the time you asked her I'm sorry, someone else is taking her.

Anyone else have that experience? Nope, just me. Dumb. Some some of you might have been something other than that. I it happened to me again the second year of Hebrew For the quarterly exam, I thought I had it, I'm, you know, I did well in Greek, I can do well in Hebrew. It's not going to be that hard to memorize the conjugation tables Yes it is. It's way harder than what it th what you might think it is. And so I remembers trying to cram that last night before the exam and just not being able to do it.

Didn't matter how badly I wanted to do it, didn't matter how good my intentions were, certain things have a you know, time sensitivity to them. And if you don't put in the necessary preparation at the necessary time then when the day of harvest comes or when payday comes, you don't have what it takes to pay the price of admission. And I think the people who know that better than anybody are farmers. Any of you farmers in the room? We got a lot of farmers in West Texas. I grew up surrounded by farmers.

No farmers in this room, evidently, so you're not going to know what I'm talking about. But if you grew up around farmers, then you know especially cotton, which is very popular in West Texas, it requires a certain preparation process. Before the day of the harvest can come. And if you don't put in that readiness, if you don't put in that process of readiness, it doesn't matter how badly you want the crop to happen, it doesn't matter how sincere you are if the prep work isn't done, and if it isn't done properly, then you're not ready when the harvest day comes.

And that's true at every level. Even before you plant the seed, you've got to prepare the ground You can't prepare the ground at just any time of year. The soil has to have a certain kind of condition to it. When you plant the seed, you can't just grow it any time of year. Cotton, it can't be too hot, but neither can it be too cold. It can't be too dry, but it can't be too wet. It has all of these particular little moods about it, and you would think, why would you grow cotton in West Texas where the weather's just like.

But that's because that's what cotton wants. It wants that kind of thing. And when you do everything you need to do on the prep end before you plant the seed, and if you maintain it properly with enough competition to stimulate growth, but not so much competition that you choke it out. And if you harvest it at just the right time, you can't do it too early. Or you won't have any cotton to get or if you do it too late, all the cotton will be on the ground. But if you do it just the right time and you demonstrate readiness at every point along the way, then by the time the harvest day comes you've done everything you needed to do, and you're going to reap a bountiful harvest.

And so the point is, every farmer will tell you, a bountiful harvest is preceded by a process of preparation. Preparation precedes a bountiful harvest. Because the universe operates according to certain laws. God created the universe that way. He's a God of order. You have laws of physics, you have laws of math, you have laws of science, you know, laws like gravity. Doesn't matter how sincere you are, if you think you can fly, you cannot fly. You'll fly right to the ground it's a law. That's something God put into motion. Second law, third moment, dynamics, all the laws of relativity.

You got philosophical laws like the law of non-contradiction. A thing can't be what it isn't. You can't say of a ba a bachelor that he is married. You can't say of a married person that they are a bachelor. Those two things m contradict each other, so there are laws we must follow. And just like there's laws in the physical world and science and math. In philosophy, there is also laws in the spiritual world. There are spiritual laws. There are laws as it relates to ethics and theology and just like God structured the universe to order those physical realities, He has ordered the universe according to spiritual realities.

And if you want a life that God can bless. Then that life has to be lived a certain kind of way. And we're going to look at one of those laws this morning in our text today. Some people call it the law of the harvest. And it's a law that applies to everything, not just money. But Paul is going to apply the law of the harvest to money. And I would define the law of the harvest as that you reap what you sow. You reap more than you sow, and you reap later than you sow.

You reap more than you sow, you reap what you sow, and you reap later than you sow. And that that law has a reality whether you like it or not, and if you don't do the necessary prep work leading up to that kind of harvest day, then your intentions for the harvest are just as irrelevant as the intentions of a farmer to have a great cotton crop when that day comes. You've got to do some work before the day of the harvest for the harvest principle to work in your favor.

And that's what I want us to look at this morning. Our text contains the law of the harvest, but the text really is focused on the process of readiness that precedes that harvest. Day. And again, I want to apply it to our situation, which is raising funds for a youth wing right behind me. But this principle applies to every arena of your life, and these readiness principles also apply. To any arena in your life. It applies in your marriage, it applies to every relationship of significance, it applies to morality, overcoming things, reaching goals that you have professionally that all requires a process of readiness.

And so you want a good harvest, a bountiful harvest requires a readiness. And that's what I want to show you in our text today. What that readiness pledge looks like and the principles associated with being ready. When the day of harvest comes. So 2 Corinthians chapter 9, starting in verse 1. Now concerning the ministry to the saints, if you're not familiar with this chapter, he's writing to Corinthians from Macedonia about a giving fund for starving Christians in Jerusalem. Again, I'm not going to show you the map, but if you had a map, Paul is hundreds of miles up north, Corinth is hundreds of miles down south, and Jerusalem is hundreds and hundreds of miles to the east across an ocean.

So he's talking to Corinthians while in Macedonia about starving Christians in Jerusalem way over there. And it's been a thing he's been talking about for years and years and years. Corinth was a familiar with it, but he's writing this letter to remind them of some things. He says, concerning the ministry to the saints, about that fund in Jerusalem for those starving Christians. It's unnecessary for me to write to you because I know your eagerness, and I boast about you to the Macedonians Okay, has been ready since last year. Notice the quotation marks.

That's what Paul had been telling everyone in Macedonia. These guys are ready. Your zeal, Paul says, has stirred up most of them. But I'm sending the brothers. He talked about these people last week. Saying I'm going to send them on ahead. So that our boasting about you in this matter would not prove empty. In other words, I don't want you to embarrass me by not doing what you said you would do. And so that you would be ready, just as I said. Otherwise, verse 4, if any Macedonians come with me, and then they find you unprepared, we, not to mention you, would be put to shame in that situation.

Therefore, I considered it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance the generous gift that you promised. So that it'll be ready as a gift and not as an extortion. The point is this. Here's our principle of the harvest the person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should do as he's decided in his heart, not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver. Pretty simple, right? Paul says there is this law, this spiritual principle about reaping and sowing.

And if you will sow, a certain thing, a certain kind of way, then your reaping of that thing will look a certain way. If you were if you sow generously, you're going to reap generously. If you sow with a lack of generosity, you're going to reap a lack of generosity. This applies literally again to everything. It applies to kindness that you demonstrate in your relationships. It applies to patience that you demonstrate. We're not going to go through all the ways that it applies, but Paul says it's also going to apply to money and generosity.

One of the reasons I'm really excited about doing this campaign, even though I hate talking about money in front of people, is I believe that this principle is true. I've seen this principle play out in my own life as I've tried to increase my generosity towards God. I have seen God increase his generosity towards me. And not just financially, although it's been true in that way, but in every way the bountiful generosity of God has been more and more manifest in my life as I've tried to increase and my generosity towards his kingdom.

And I think this campaign is an invitation for our entire church to experience that reality in their life. But what Paul does before he addresses the principle is he talks about the process so the principle can happen. And we need to talk about that process. For our church as it relates to this issue, but really any issue in your life. If you want to receive the harvest, then you've got to be ready. There's a readiness pledge that precedes a bountiful harvest in your life. And I think it's so amazing just how timeless these principles are if you look at them.

I want to give you seven. We're going to have to move really quickly. I didn't move quick enough in the last one, so if I'm going too slow, someone say speed up\! Say it kindly. It'll trigger me. Alright, verse 1, notice he says, concerning the ministry to the saints, it's unnecessary for me to write to you why? Because I know your eagerness. Here's what Paul's not saying. He's not saying I didn't need to write this letter, but I was bored, so I'm going to write it anyway. We know that's not what he's saying because he had to write this letter.

Remember Corinth, if you're not familiar, was very upset with Paul because of some baggage in the past, because Paul had called them out on things that they shouldn't have been doing. They didn't take kindly to it. And so they started making fun of Paul, made fun of him being bald and not a good speaker and bald and all of these things. And so Paul could have you know, tit for tat, but instead he sent Titus to try to reconcile things and Titus, because he's a great leader, did that job. They're back together again.

Corinth is back on board. And Paul is writing to say, I'm not doing this because I think you're not eager. Titus has shared with me just how excited you are and how you're back on board. I think that's awesome. So it's not that it's unnecessary in every respect. Paul's just saying it's not necessary for me to write in respect to your zeal I am persuaded that you are excited. I am persuaded that you are sincere. What Paul is saying is sincerity is not enough. When it comes to being ready for the harvest.

You can be sincere all day long. Sincerity is not sufficient. You need sincerity plus action. You need sincerity plus putting things into practice. And one of the reasons that a readiness pledge, in other

words, a commitment from you to be ready for the day of the harvest, one of the reasons that's so crucial. Is because that pledge will force you to put into practice the things that you intend to happen. This is true in every arena of life. If you want to get married, you've got to go on a date first.

Okay. No one just gets married. Well they used to, but then we don't do that anymore. If you want to have a certain kind of career, you're going to have to go to work. If you want to have a certain kind of children that live a certain way. It's going to take certain inputs here and now again and again and again. I know lots of people that have hopes and dreams, lots of people who are super sincere. And it doesn't change their life. In fact, there's really this sad thing that happens when there's a big gap between your sincerity.

And your commitment to putting into practice what your sincerity is for, the bigger the gap between those two things, the greater the regret when the day of the harvest comes. Because your sincerity is not sufficient. Your sincerity has to be moved to action. You've got to put into practice the things that you want. And that's true with generosity too. You can say God knows my heart. He knows I desire to be generous. Sincerity is not sufficient. You've got to practice readiness because readiness puts to practice the things that you intend.

Second principle, moving quicker. Come on. Y'all speed me up now. Don't let me get distracted. So verse 2, I know your eagerness, and I boast about you to the Macedonians. And here's his slogan. Achaea has been ready since last year. And then Paul says, your zeal has stirred up most of these Macedonians. So not only does readiness put into practice your intentions, readiness also provokes other people to action. Paul says the fact that you're so pumped up has spread. The news of that has spread. And so now these Macedonians are smoked up to be generous themselves.

And Paul in chapter 8 says they're so smoked up, they're giving from a place of poverty. They're giving from a place of severe affliction because of you, because of your sincerity, because of your zeal, it is provoking other people to action. Now, sincerity will do that in and of itself, but what really provokes people to action is demonstrating readiness towards your intentions. This is true in every area of life. I saw I actually saw this week. I was studying for this sermon and I was kind of mulling this over in my head.

And I was at at this school and there was these kindergartners at the school, and it was bathroom break time, which meant the kids were losing their minds. They were going crazy. There's only one one bathroom, one kid at a time in the bathroom, so all the other kids were just losing it. But one kid was like out of tension, he was super straight, super silent, super on point. And his dad's a military officer. No, I'm just kidding. I don't know what his dad is, but he was he was like, you know, he was on point.

And the teacher was exasperated because the kids were acting crazy and she goes, class everyone look at Malcolm. And everyone looked at Malcolm, who was on point, and guess what everybody did? They started to act like Malcolm. And they got they stood up straight and they stood in a line and they even did his little facial mannerisms and everything because they wanted that. Glory that the teacher was giving to him, they wanted some of that for themselves because that's human nature. Humans im

imitate that which we want to you know enjoy.

We don't just imitate people. A lot of times we imitate virtue. And we and they saw that virtue and that individual and so they wanted to do it. This is what Paul's saying, your reputation is causing imitation. And it's just like if you're in a gym and you're you know pumping out your bench press or whatever it is that you do, and then you see somebody next to you and they've got you know another ten pounds on their plates, you're like, okay, I can do that, I can do another ten pounds, I can get some of this in my life.

Because it's provoking you to action. And Paul says that's what it's that's true in generosity as well. Your zeal and accompanying your zeal with readiness. Is stimulating people to do more. I think this is true as it relates to our giving campaign, which is one of the reasons when we talked about doing this, I talked to our leadership people early. In fact I talked to them really early about what we needed to do and how it would look and what it would take. And when it came to the pledges, I would meet with them one on one, some of them one on one and some of them one on some, we know at deacon's meetings or we had a special deacon dinner and with our pastoral team and we didn't do a special dinner, but we met and we talked about it.

And with our staff, the same thing. And what I asked them to do was I want you to turn in your pledges first. Before we ask for pledges from anybody else. Which we're asking for today and the next day and the next week, all the way from till the end of November, we're trying to receive pledges. But before I asked you as a congregation to turn in your pledges, I wanted us as a leadership class to say where we're at and what we're committed to because I wanted to be able to encourage our congregation with not to provoke 'em to jealousy, but to provoke 'em to action.

And so I asked them to turn in their pledges last week and I got about sixty percent, which is, you know, that's not a hundred percent, but some people don't meet deadlines, you know. So I'm sure they're they're turning theirs in. But even at sixty percent which is like I don't know fifteen, eighteen people. The number boggled my brain. I couldn't believe it. It's like less than five percent of our congregation and they committed $477,100. $477,000. 18 people. That's almost one-third of the 1. 5 million that we need to raise.

And when I saw and that number, especially when it was, you know, 60% of that demographic, I thought, okay, we can do this. We can actually reach this goal. It provoked, of course I'd already made my commitment, but I'm hoping it provokes other people in our congregation to be generous. Because they see this not just the sincerity in the words of another person, but their readiness to make it happen. And so it'll provoke people to action and it puts it puts to practice your eager intentions. The next a couple of things in verses three and four he says in verse three, I'm sending the brothers.

So that our boasting about you in this matter would not prove empty. Remember, he had been talking them up how great they were. He says, I don't want that to be false. And I want you to be ready just as I said. Otherwise, verse 4, if they do come with me, the Macedonians, and they find you unprepared, we not to mention you. Would be put to shame. So this is actually happening at two levels here. First

Paul is talking about their public reputation, but he's also trying to link up readiness and their private integrity.

So it's happening at two levels. So when it comes to their public reputation, Paul is saying you being ready is going to protect your reputation. Every church has a reputation for something. Even our church has a reputation for something. And our reputation matters, right? It's by the way, the fact that Paul is praising them publicly, I think that's crazy. Because they were attacking his character. They were mocking him, they were questioning his integrity and his sincerity, and he did not respond in kind. He praised what was praiseworthy. So that's just to me that's just incredible.

But he says, I want you to be ready because I don't want that public reputation that you have to be harmed. Why does he care so much about their reputation? Well, if you think about this, a lot of people in church world have their faith strengthened by other people who are Christians. I would never say that your faith should be in another Christian, right? Your faith should be in Jesus But it's inevitable that other Christians will strengthen your faith by their example. And when Christians who really demonstrate readiness and they're you know just living for the Lord Their life has a positive effect on us such that they increase our faith.

And when those Christians are publicly exposed to not be what they said they were. The opposite happens. They don't strengthen our faith, they weaken our faith. And even though our faith wasn't necessarily in them, the blow to their reputation causes us to begin questioning whether if they're wrong, if they were lying about that, then what else were they lying about? And are they is this not true any longer? And a lot of people deconstruct in their Christian faith because of the blow of the reputation of many Christians and of many churches.

And Paul knows that. Paul's saying, your generosity is not even just about you anymore. Your generosity is about me. Your generosity is about the gospel advancing. Your generosity is about so much more than you, so you have to be ready because it's not just about you. But it is about you, right? Verse 4. It is, it's going to be a shame to you if they come with me and they see that it was all hot air. If you were talking a big game, but you weren't ready to deliver. I let my kids listen to a lot of different kinds of music.

Some music I probably shouldn't let them listen to. But I let them listen to classic rock every now and then. Because I like to listen to classic rock. I didn't like it. My dad forced me to listen to classic rock. And I got to know a lot of the songs and queen Freddie what's his last name? Freddie Fender? Freddie Fender? Mercury. Mercury. There it is. Is there a Freddie Fender too? Okay. Freddie Mercury, talented vocalist, incredible. One of their favorite songs is we Will rock You. Every time I get in the track here lately, if it's not people hating by the red clay strays, it's we will rock you by queen.

And they get into it, they scream, they love that song. You know what their favorite line is? You got mud on your face, your big disgrace, kicking your can all over the place and Briggs, my youngest, he's a little force of nature, and he gets so into it. He gets animated. Blood on your face, you big disgrace. He's just like really into it. And that's what I if when I read this from Paul, that's what I think you're

going to have mud on your face, you big disgrace. Because your integrity isn't there.

There's a gap between what you presented yourself to be and who you are in principle. And we talked about last week how there's a direct connection between money and trust. And that if you want to be entrusted with more from God or whoever, that you need to be a trustworthy steward. You need to be a steward worthy of trust. And trust is diminished when integrity is lost. When you lose your integrity, people say, I don't know if I can trust you anymore. And Paul is saying, this is why you need to be ready.

It's not just about you, but it is about you. And if you're not ready, that blow to your integrity it's going to be it's going to put mud on your face and everyone else's faces and you don't want that we don't need that. The people in Jerusalem can't take that. And so get ready. Get ready. It puts to practice your intentions. Provokes other people, it protects your reputation and preserves your integrity. But then the big one, the big one's in verse 5. Therefore, I considered it necessary. Notice the switch up.

I considered it necessary. I didn't have to do it because of the zeal, but I do have to do this. Why? I had to urge the brothers to go on ahead of you and arrange in advance. The generous gift you promised, so that it will be ready as a gift and not as an extortion. Two things happening here as well. Paul's essentially saying it's important for you to be ready and so to ensure that you're ready I'm going to send these p brothers ahead of you and I'm going to establish some accountability.

I'm you remember Ronald Reagan during the cold War, trust but verify. Dovery pro Dovery no proverjai. That's how you say it in Russian. Trust but verify. Ronald Reagan was not saying. Well he might have been saying I doubt the integrity of the Russians, but let's say for the sake of argument, he wasn't saying it, I don't trust you. I do trust you, but I just want to make sure. And that is not accountability is not always a form of suspicion. In many respects, accountability is a gift of protection. Because you want to protect the progress towards the goal that was that was communicated.

A good example of this is this campaign I've never done anything like this as a pastor and so I asked one of my mentors if he would coach me and how to do this because he's done this like four or five different times and he knows what you need to say and when what you need to do and when you need to do it and how and all these things. And a lot of what he said was not rocket science, it's like common sense, anybody could have known that. But the one benefit that I did get, the greatest benefit, I should say, not the one, the greatest benefit I received was accountability.

It was the fact that I had a phone call with him in 15 days and I'm going to have to give a report on whether or not I did what I was supposed to do. Which forced it move it like motivated me to keep making progress because life was crazy and I was kind of lazy because I was tired and I didn't want to do that and I didn't feel like doing that and you know I'm a chief introvert and I don't like having all these meetings but I don't like to feel shame and I don't like to lose and I don't want to look weak and so I'm going to do what I got to do.

That accountability protected progress. And that's what you want in your harvest day. Your day of harvest might require some kind of readiness framework that puts you accountable in a public way so that you do what you said you were going to do. And I think that's what this campaign is. I think these envelopes on this campaign that no one really who wants to turn in an envelope? Why do I have to turn in an envelope? If I'm going to give, I'm going to give. You get the money, you get the money.

What does the envelope matter? The reason that we're doing the envelopes is the same reason that Paul was doing what he was doing. He sent some brothers on ahead in advance so they could arrange in advance the gift that was promised. I don't know how they did that, but I would imagine maybe months earlier, maybe several months earlier, they went to Corinth and they said, hey, Corinthians, remember what this is about? They tried to contextualize it for the vision and why they were giving. And then he probably also said, so that we're not unprepared.

Six months from now, hey let's every week set aside a certain amount of money so that when the day of harvest comes you're not having to pull money from places you don't have it. You've already done the necessary work with this accountability so that it's already in a special fund ready to go. And when the day of harvest comes it's going to come from a place of plenty and joy, not coercion and obligation I th I think that's what these things do. Really it operates at two levels. On one level it happens for you because you can say, I may not I may want to give a certain maybe God wants me to give a certain amount of money for close of the gap, but I don't have that money right now.

But I think that God's going to use me to do that. So I'm going to go ahead and communicate today what will happen in the future. And so like this first blank is a year-end gift that's for this year. We every year we do a special offering for missions called the world Missions offering. Close the Gap is funding the world Missions offering. That's one of the things that we're doing with Close the Gap. So this is not new for us. What is new is this part down here, the three-year pledge.

And that is what we talked about last week of getting alone with God, asking him what your number should be. And then creating a plan for how that number is going to be realized, whether it's selling things or getting side hustle or just every week using your cash flow to set aside money. Whatever that looks like, that's this number. And then all of them together are this number right here. That's your total gift, the year-in gift and the three-year pledge. This part right here where it says annually, monthly, one time or other, that's on our end.

Because we want to be able, as stewards, of the money that's being entrusted to us so that we can forward it into the kingdom through this youth campaign or this youth wing. If we're going to be able to properly cash flow and pay for these projects as they come about, we need to know what's going to happen. We can't make promises that we can't deliver on. We don't want to be guilty of what Paul's saying, don't be guilty of. So these pledges, not only do they put accountability on all of us publicly, but it enables us, the ones who are hiring these contractors and doing these things, to do what Paul is saying here, arranging in advance.

Jesus talked about this in Luke chapter 14. He said, Nobody builds a tower without first sitting down and calculating whether he has what he needs to build the tower. Otherwise he's going to build his tower halfway and stop and everyone's going to make fun of him. And we don't want to do that. He said the same thing about a general going to war. No general goes to war unless he first sits down and wonders, I've got 10,000, they've got 20,000, can I do this? Otherwise, he's going to go to war and all those people are going to die because he wasn't ready.

That's what this is. That's why we're going ahead in advance, arranging in advance what our congregation believes God is leading us to do. So that those who are stewarding the funds in order to accomplish the goal can do so with great wisdom, credibility, and integrity. And you have a soft form of accountability. No one else is going to know your number, obviously, except the person that puts it in. But just like our leadership team said, hey, we're communicating, we're saying publicly our leaders are committing $477,000 to this process. No one knows what leader gave what, but everyone knows the leaders have committed to this.

And the same thing is true for us generally speaking. If our church together speaks with one voice and says, this is what we believe God is calling us to do. Then there is a soft accountability that when we get to the future if we did not keep our word then we did not keep our word. And so the fact that we will one day be shown to whether what one day be shown whether we did or didn't keep it motivates us to keep it because that's what account that's what readiness does.

Readiness progresses the future that you desire. Real quickly, the last ones, readiness also helps, readiness helps preclude any greed in your giving. Look at what he says at the end of verse 5. He says, I want to do this so that your gift will be ready as a gift and not as an extortion. He's creating a contrast between two kinds of giving. This kind of giving, the word he chooses, is a word picture that communicates abundance. Like overflowing this pic this Greek word is a word picture that communicates restriction poverty, like there's nothing there.

It would be like trying to squeeze blood from a turnip. You've heard that phrase? That's this that's this word. And every translation uses different language, but the basic idea is imagine if you were going to a restaurant let's say you were going to cotton Patch. By the way, those of you who have given me cotton patch gift cards, legit. I have had such amount of free cotton patch. It's awesome. But we so this is the reason it's fresh on my mind. We went to cotton Patch, me and Odge went to cotton Patch, and someone in our church gave us a very generous gift card.

And we got our mill and I don't know the bill is like sixty bucks and there was another forty dollars on the gift card and because that forty dollars was already there and because God has blessed us and we had other money on top of that it was nothing for us to say, hey, keep keep this change. $40. That's a pretty generous tip. And it was fun. It was joyful. We was like, I want to bless you. I want you to be I want you to be happy and this isn't coerced.

It's not like I have to do this. I want to do this. And it was such a beautiful and invigorating blessing in our life. But imagine if we didn't have the gift card. And imagine we only had $80 in our wallet. And

we haven't bought groceries yet. And that costs like thousands of dollars these days just to buy groceries. And the water bill wasn't paid yet. And then we get our bill. It's a $60 bill. What are we going to do? We're going to say, man, I don't know if we can do a tip today.

We would never do that. We would still give the tip, but it would be like squeezing blood out of a turnip. Ah, this is so painful. And that's what Paul's saying. I don't want it to be like that. I don't want it to be coercive. I don't want it to be painful. I want it to be joyful. That's what God wants. He wants your generosity to be happy and joyful and abundant and voluntary. And that's why you got to be ready. That's why you've got to prepare in advance. That's why every week set aside just a little bit so that when the day comes, your generosity is huge, even though the process of getting there wasn't as hard as it might have sounded when you first wrote that number down.

And so it precludes greed from your giving. We don't use this word very often. It's the opposite of include. I'm keeping greed out of my giving. I don't want to give to the Lord and secretly hate the fact that I have to give to the Lord because I made this commitment, I'm going to give. That's not what the Lord wants. That's the opposite of what he wants. He wants you to be joyful. And so be ready. Be ready so that you can preclude greed from your giving. And then finally be ready because it positions you for God's blessing, verse 6.

The point is this the person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. We're going to talk about this next week. We don't have time to do it today. But the fact is that readiness is necessary to put you in this position. If you want to reap generously You have to sew generously. And I don't know any of us that are just rolling in the dough. Some of us might be, but if you're not rolling in the dough to sow generously you're going to have to plan it out over time through a process of preparation so that when the day comes, what you've sown over that time is generous and what God will bring about in the harvest will be generous.

It puts you in a position for readiness. He finally concludes each person should do as he's decided in his heart, not reluctantly or out of compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver. I hope that as you hear me saying these things, you don't hear me trying to strong arm anybody. If you're a guest, none of this is even for you. We're not asking you to give a dime to our church, although I would challenge you. To apply these principles of readiness to every arena of your life. But even as your pastor who desires so much to see God do this thing in our church.

So that we can keep reaching more people, so that they find new life in Jesus. As desperately as I want that. I would not want it to come from a place of coercion or sadness or guilt. Or don't want to be seen as someone like that, so I guess I'm just going to have to do this even though I'm not in a position to no, it really does have to come down to a place where you, no matter what the amount is, because it's not about the amount. Generosity is not about the amount, it's about the sacrifice it takes to give it.

But getting to that place where you're able to give generously and sacrificially requires something to happen in here. And the only way that that happens is if you give with your eyes on the harvest. I think about Jesus when I think about this, who in the Garden of Gethsemane was sweating drops of

blood. And would do anything to get past what he was about to do. But he says, Father, not my will, but yours be done. And the author of Hebrews talked about why he was able to do that. And he says in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 2 that it was because of the joy that was set before Jesus that he endured the cross, despising the shame, and now he's seated at the right hand of God.

In other words, Jesus had his eyes on the prize. Jesus was able to be generous. Jesus was able to stay in a state of readiness his entire life. Setting aside every life every day he lived was a day of sinless perfection to the Father so that he could give that life for us and die in our place for our sin. It required him to be ready so that the day of harvest could come. But what motivated Jesus to do that? It was the love of the Father, obviously. It was it was a number of things, but it was also the joy that was set before him.

He saw the fields of the harvest. And that's what we need to be motivated by in our giving. As Christian people, our joy is his joy. We give, we were part of what he envisioned when he laid down his life and what we inherit when we enter into heaven. Is that same inheritance. We inherit this kingdom spreading the entire globe so that people from every tribe tongue and nation gather around the throne and sing worthy is the Lamb who is slain. Salvation belongs to the Lamb. Glory and honor, blessing and power belong to Jesus the Lamb.

That's why we give, that's why I'm giving. It's not it's not just for a building, it's not for a balcony. It's for those people. Because that's the inheritance. And if you decide that's why you want to give. Then your giving will come from the right kind of place and you will be ready when the day comes. And so as we enter into this time of response, I just want to challenge you to maybe reshape your thinking on this question. Over the next three weeks, we're going to collect these envelopes. So some of you will turn in your envelopes today, some of you later.

We have to the rest of this month. But as you think about what God would have you to give, I want to challenge you to think about these cards as a mechanism for readiness. That God would use your public commitment today to motivate readiness at every point over these next three years. And to do so with your eyes fixed on that harvest. Of every person, every generation finding and enjoying new life in Jesus And if we can do that together, there's really no limit to what God will do through us.

And if you're not able to do that this morning because you don't have a relationship with Jesus, the invitation is open for you this morning to receive that. So I'm going to ask you to bow your heads and