

He Gave

advent 2021 at doxa

HE GAVE: HE GAVE GENEROUSLY, WE GIVE GENEROUSLY

November 28, 2021

Eddie Williams

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Welcome to the Doxa Church Podcast. This Advent season we'll consider the radical and sacrificial generosity of God, who generously blesses us every day, and who sent the ultimate gift, his son, Jesus, to be sacrificed on our behalf. Our generosity this season is an echo of the generosity God has shown us. If you're struggling to find purpose this holiday season, remember he gave. For more information about Doxa or to join us for a Sunday gathering, go to doxa-church.com.

Hey Doxa. Good morning. We are going to read scripture from 2 Corinthians chapter eight, verse one to 15.

"We Want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints--and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you--see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work, but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out

of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness, your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, 'Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.'" This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Well, Happy Thanksgiving. Yeah. You know. The Sunday after Thanksgiving. You're hung over on pie, turkey, gravy. You're not, you're not responsive. And I'm right there with you. And yet I've got to stand up here for the next 35 minutes and act like I just don't want to sit down. After everything I just ate, okay. Good to see you anyway, and Happy Advent and Merry Christmas. I'm glad that you all could be here. I'm excited to jump into "He Gave." It's our Advent series. And so there's a lot of exciting things coming about, but for now we get to talk about the generosity of God and what, what a season that we get to do that in. We get to look at five different elements of God's generosity and how we can be generous as a result. And so I hope you're with me. I hope you can fight it off with some coffee. We're going to dive right in. Let me pray for us and we'll get into our message today.

Lord Jesus. I want to pray for a spirit of, of receptivity, of awakesness, of excitement for this coming season. Lord Jesus, as Grace said, the Advent means the coming. The coming of what? It's not Santa, not presents, not an Apple watch or a PS five, but you Lord Jesus. That's exciting. That's good news for us, Lord God. So as we unpack your word together, Lord God, I pray for, for anything that comes out of my heart to just be discarded, anything that you want, Holy Spirit, would that stick and holy, and Holy Spirit, I pray for a hedge of protection up here, Lord God, as we preach your word, Lord God, that you'd be protecting of the word that comes out of my mouth here today. And that all the distractions can fly by the wayside as we focus in for the next few minutes on you and your coming in his name. Amen.

All right, well, Thanksgiving and Christmas, times of, times of coming, times of anticipation, times of transcendence, like oddly transparent, oddly transcendence. You know, we are in a sort of secular, modern Western city, right? You know that. And oftentimes we think about things that aren't, have to do with God. We don't think about God very often here in this culture, we just don't. And yet, during this season, this is the one season where we will sort of look up, sort of inquisitively into the sky and say, it's Christmas. And there's sort of, sort of spirit of, spirit of purpose and meaning all sort of come together in this giant mixing pot for us to sort of think about God for the first time or something. The Christmas spirit as we call it. Any Christmas movie fans? By show hands, do you like a Christmas movie? Okay. So a lot of Diehard fans in here then. Yeah. Just kidding. For those of you who don't know, people, there's some, there's some controversy whether or not Diehard is a Christmas movie. It's not. Anyway, Christmas movies acknowledged this sort of spirit of transcendence don't they? Like they kind of, they try to get us excited, right? We're getting in the Christmas spirit. That's what we're trying to do. And even in a world where we are in sort of the secular modern west, where we almost always don't think about God, most of the year, this time of the year, we think about something greater than ourselves. I'll prove it to you. I've got a few quotes from a few movies. And normally we just talk about right, what we, what we can see and feel. This is the truth, right? Empirical evidence. But not so with Christmas movies, even in the secular modern Western world. I'm going to put a quote up from a movie, and I would like for you to try to just

think about it in your heart, where you think this Christmas quote is from. "Seeing isn't believing, believing is seeing." So this quote is alluding to the fact that you actually don't have to see anything to believe. The only time of the year on the east side or in Seattle area where you could sort of believe before you see is Christmas. Any guesses as to what movie this is from? Wow. Yes. Santa Clause 2. Very obscure random movie that I don't know. It's a, it's a sequel. I didn't know those were good. How about our next one? "Seeing is believing." Okay. They're contradicting one another now. "But sometimes the most real things in the world are the things we can't see." Now. Just picture someone with their head cocked sort of looking off into the stars. Trying to like picture the sort of magical North Pole land, where they're sort of believing in a transcendent purpose for this time of the year. Quote unquote. What movie is this from? Yeah. Polar Express. Classic. All right. Is it a classic? All right. Here's my personal favorite. Next. "If you look for it, I've got a sneaky feeling that you'll find that love is actually all around." Like love is around. Okay. Like, just think about, think about the sort of obscurity that this quote is. And yet this is like, this is the line of this movie that sort of like makes it all mesh together. Right. This sort of transcendent love that over the meta narrative of all of our worldviews. Right. What movie is this from? Love Actually. Is that it? Yeah. Some of your favorites. Aww, you'll watch it when you get home.

Secular movies sort of quoting something larger sort of grandeur or transcendent than themselves are actually really common this time. And it's because we're trying to connect to sort of a greater intelligently designed plan. That somehow there's a plan that sort of exists for all of our lives that bring us together for something larger. Even though we might not worship Jesus as God, we still sort of long to be connected to something bigger. And that's what these movies are getting at. So I guess I do have to ask you the question this morning, who here has ever felt a desire to be a part of something or serve something greater than themselves? If that's you, think about it, have you ever felt like you want to be a part of something larger than who you felt like you were created to be, to serve something bigger, to give, to be part of something? A couple of weeks ago, I shared a story, if you weren't here, I shared a story that happened to me and my family on Thanksgiving. We were very poor family and growing up in the Bay area, we were so poor, we didn't even think about Thanksgiving as something we should plan, we just knew that we were probably going to go to someone's house for it. And so on our way over there, I shared the story that we stopped at a gas station and, and there was a person sweeping floors and trying to clean cars to be able to get a dollar on Thanksgiving morning. And I shared that my mom, us being poor, she didn't have a lot of money, but what she did have was one of those Sprite caps that give you a free Sprite if you bring it in, right. This is like 2000 or something, '99. This is early, right, back when those were a thing, right. And people drank soda more. Right. That was a thing. And she gave that to them. And I remember this sort of combination of emotions. I remember feeling profoundly sad that sort of this person came to us to give, because knowing how little we had it was, it would be crazy to think about someone asking us for something. But then I also felt this sort of connection, this sort of joy in my heart like that we could participate in some sort of larger narrative for this guy. That we can help him in some small way, even on, even on Thanksgiving. And so we felt simultaneously really sad that we were poor, but also really happy that we can sort of help this, this person. We felt like we were connected to something bigger than ourselves. There was something about giving, even though it was a small gift, that made us feel whole. That's the

best way to describe it. That feeling that we were feeling is called generosity. Generosity. So I've decided to give you my definition of generosity, and I know it's not, it's not exhaustive, but this is my generosity for our sermon this morning, or my definition of generosity for this sermon this morning. There it is. The giving of our resources abundantly, freely, and selflessly to a purpose bigger than ourselves.

Now, let's face it. I think that even though we live in a predominantly wealthy area of the country, that we all do still struggle. That's not crazy to say, is it? I think we struggle for meaning. We struggle for fulfillment. We struggle for purpose. And that's why we watch these movies. We watch these movies because it's helpful to try to get connected into a moment where you feel connected to the zeitgeists, you know, the spirit of the age, the Christmas spirit, or some God, whatever it may be. We're longing to be connected in that season. And that's sometimes why some of us, we come to church in a season like this, even when we might not the rest of the year, right? We're looking for something. We are struggling. But here's what I want to hopefully make the case for you this morning is that we're not struggling because we don't have enough. We're not struggling because we don't have enough. I think you understand that. I think we are struggling for meaning, value, purpose, and fulfillment not because we don't have enough, but because we don't give enough. I think we are missing out on the deepest form of meaning that there is, and that's radical, conditionless generosity. You may think I'm crazy, but hopefully by the end of the sermon, you'll understand.

Now in 2 Corinthians chapter eight, verses one through 15, we're going to take a look at a few churches that are incredibly poor, but give abundantly, freely, and selflessly. And I think we can learn from what God does in their hearts in order to enable our generosity. Now, just as a preface, listen, I understand, this passage focuses on money. Why money? Some of you may be thinking right now, the lawyers in your minds, why money? Why right now, why during Christmas, why are we focusing on money? You might say, you can be generous in other ways besides money. You can give your time, your effort, your energy, your attention, why just money? And the answer to that of course is yes, you can. You can give all of those things. But two things. This passage focuses specifically on money and two, oftentimes, not for everybody but oftentimes, giving of our time and our energy doesn't make us cringe the way giving money does. There's always an uncomfortable nature around money. You understand? If you have the in-law that talks about their money all the time at Thanksgiving dinner, I do. They're not here. So I can say, they're not, they talk, it's uncomfortable. It's an uncomfortable subject. But yet Jesus says where your treasure is there your heart will be also. And Jesus spoke of money more than anybody in the Bible. And so it's important for us to think, if we can understand, if you want to understand God's generosity, you've gotta be able to understand why he asks us to give in the first place. So here's what we learned in this passage.

First thing, generosity gives you the greatest form of joy. Yeah. I said it, generosity gives you the greatest form of joy and that joy actually breeds more generosity. It's a circle. So here's the background in this passage here. There are three churches in Macedonia, in the Macedonia region that essentially pulled together their resources to give to God's churches, to help Paul and his buddies help do their fund, their missionary journeys, and to give to one another. So here's verse one. Paul says this to the church at Corinth about the churches of Macedonia. He says,

"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints--and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." Now, that sounds like maybe a lot of mumbo-jumbo to you if you're not used to coming into church, but I'm going to break it down for you. What's immediately clear about this passage? They were poor. These churches that pulled their money together, it says they have little resources, it said extreme poverty. I'll go out on a limb. Some of us don't have a lot of money in here. There's probably no one in here that's in extreme poverty. Nobody, perhaps, maybe, maybe I'm wrong. That's fair. But my hunch is that where we live, most people aren't living in extreme poverty. In fact, some of them, some of the people that are the lowest among us in our country would be incredibly wealthy in others. But this church was in extreme poverty. And it says here that they gave beyond their means. Not within their means, not up to their means. Beyond their means, more than they could give. Now, what would motivate somebody to do this? That's the first thing that pops into my mind. What motivates someone to not have anything and then to give beyond those means? What could make them do that? Now we understand if you have a little extra or you want to give, or you want to give sort of beyond your means, like every now and then maybe you get a Christmas bonus and such, but why, why would they make them do that? Now this is hard for us Westerners in an individual society. It's hard for us to understand sort of collective giving, let alone sort of collective giving out of abundance. You know, I looked up the most, 60 most generous cities, major cities in the United States. Where do you think Seattle is on the list? Yes. Where's Seattle on the list of the 60 most generous cities? Top, bottom, middle? It's not on the list. It's not on the list. We're not a generous part of the country. We're not a generous part of the country. We don't give. Now there's a lot of reasons we might not give. One of them might be debt. Maybe we, we don't just spend on ourselves, we overspent on ourselves. I know the plastic's coming out for the holidays. I understand that. But there must be a greater motivation for generosity than just helping people because there's so many people we can help. We know that. We know for a fact that there are people all over this region, all over the country, all over the world that need help. So it can't just be that. What must there be?

The Macedonians, these churches had a greater source of joy and that's what led to their generosity. And this source of joy came from God. Look at verse one again, it says, "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia."

We want you to know about the grace of God given among the churches of Macedonia. So the grace of God poured into these people's lives. Okay? And in them welled up a spirit of overwhelming sense of joy, which leads to generosity. Look at verse two.

"Their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part."

Wait a second. So you're telling me that abundance of joy and extreme poverty equals more generosity. Well don't you need money to be generous? Don't you have to have an overabundance of wealth? Don't you have that, don't you have to have that couch? Don't you

have to have that 401k funded, or the 529 for the kids? Don't you have to have that in order before you can begin to give? No, Paul says abundance of joy. So there's actually more to their bottom line than just dollars and cents. There is something else that's leading them to be generous. The Macedonians knew that because God experienced joy being generous, sending his son Jesus to the world, that they would experience immeasurable joy by also giving as well. They give out of their lack. God gives, God gives his only son, they're matching it. That's what's happening here. And so, what ensues is this sort of spiritual cycle. You're joyous because of what God did for you, that leads to generosity. Giving makes you more joyous, which leads to more generosity. And the cycle continues. Some of you know this. Some of you know that you've given before financially, or with your time, with your energy, you've given your time, you've sacrificed. You go, "Man, that was something unique. I felt connected to something larger than myself. I want to do that again. And I want other people to know about it because of how I feel as a result of this. God's doing something special." Okay?

Generosity doesn't just bring you joy though. It brings other things. And here's the second thing we learned in the passage. Generosity gives you the truest form of fulfillment. Verse seven.

"But as you excel in everything," he's talking again to the church at Corinth, "in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you--see that you excel in this act of grace also."

So here's, what's happening. Paul's looking at the church at Corinth and he's going, man, you do a lot of things well, a lot of things. You're incredibly faithful. Your speech is top-notch. You're very careful with your words. You're incredibly knowledgeable. You're very convicted in all earnestness. And you love so well. Now we might look at this list and say, that's a pretty complete list. I mean, if someone listed those five things off about me, I might say, yeah, I'm doing pretty well. I mean, thank you. But maybe humility is not making the list right now because I feel good. Like that's, that's awesome. But Paul says, actually that list isn't complete. He said, that's a lot, but that's not actually what, that's not, that's not everything. Just as you excel in those things, faith, knowledge, speech, love, earnestness, see to it that generosity makes the list as well. That's what Paul says. So I guess the question is what's on your list? What's on the list of traits that if you have them you're fulfilled, you've got it all? And then ask yourself, does generosity make the list? Is generosity on that? Maybe it's kindness, it's humility, it's diligence, it's hardworking, but does generosity make the list? Paul says it should. It should. And I guess the next question after that has to be well, if not then why aren't we generous? Why don't we give as much? Well, there are many reasons why we're probably not as generous as we could be. And perhaps the biggest reason is that, well, we like money. I don't know. I just like money. Think about it. Money's hard to come by. We work hard for it. And we don't want to give it up that easily. Yeah, of course there's people, those in need, but I've got to pick and choose my spots, right? Money's hard to get. They say, you know, money can't buy happiness, right? That's a phrase you've heard that? Maybe one of these Christmas movies, you know, money cannot buy happiness. And I just want to say, I totally disagree with that statement. I totally disagree. Money absolutely can buy short bursts of happiness. It can buy happiness in the form of a quick vacation to Hawaii in the winter. It can buy, it can bring, buy happiness through a quick item that you needed. Something. It could buy short bursts of momentary happiness and experiences, clothings, car, real estate. The only issue though, is

that money buying happiness is sort of like cocaine. Bear with me. It gives you a quick burst of excitement. Then it wears off and it leaves you wanting more. Tell me I'm wrong. Isn't that how it works? When is the last time you bought an item and said, "You know what? I'm satisfied. No more items for me. The rest of my life, I've got it all." Have you said that ever? Right. Some people we surf, perpetually are surfing Pinterest for the latest decor set or whatever. I don't know, not me clearly. But whatever you're searching for, we're constantly looking. And we want, so as we make more, we sort of spend up to that limit and that's pretty typical. The big problem though, is that money isn't actually what we're after. And neither is short bursts of happiness. We're actually after, with our money, fulfillment. That's what we're longing for. Money brings temporary happiness or adventure that sort of makes us filled, but we're not. Look at verse 15. Skip to the bottom with me in the passage.

It says, "As it is written, 'Whoever gathered much had nothing left over and whoever gathered little had no lack.'" Let me say it again, because this is a really important passage. And I think sometimes it's easy to just like snap out when verses are read. But this is, this is a really important passage. It says, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over and whoever gathered little had no lack."

This is the exact opposite of everything we live. What everyone is telling us. What all the commercials say, despite the sales and everything. Whoever gathered much had nothing left over. That's how it works. So when you store money for yourself or ourselves only, when we spend money and time on ourselves only, you sort of get a sort of phantom fulfillment that's actually just a short momentary burst of happiness. And at the end of days, you'll see that you were actually very poor. And is that what you want? Of course not. You'll look back and say, you know what, I had a lot of fun, but I wasn't fulfilled. Is that what you want? It's not what I want. When this happens, you sort of realize, when you give, when fulfillment comes to you as you empty yourselves for others, you'll find that you're a part of something greater than yourselves. And actually that's how you sort of find the fulfillment you're after. It's connecting yourself to something much larger than who you are as a person. I know the whole world teaches us that we are the center of the universe. I understand. And the gravitational pull towards that idea is very, very difficult to overcome. I get it. I get it. But I'm telling you right now, we are after something that we cannot buy and we cannot hoard and we cannot save and we cannot invest. We are after something much larger than ourselves.

What else do we learn in this passage? Generosity shows, demonstrates that your values are authentic. You want to prove that you believe something to be true? Generosity can show it. Verse eight.

Paul says, "I say this, not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others, that your love is also genuine."

Paul is saying here that you can prove that your love is genuine through this, generosity. Now people say, listen, I don't need to be generous. I can just love people. You know, I've done young adults, pastoring. I was a pastor of a really young church in the past. And this is often a comment when there's sort of the war going on in the mind and maybe you're there. Or you're trying to war with yourself over "Do I really have to give?" Let's see, I'm single. I'm finally making a good amount of money. Do I want to give to a church? Do I want to give to this person in need? Do I want to give it to this nonprofit? How do I, I don't know. I mean, I could just love those people. I don't think I have to give. And sort of the, the the reasons for not

giving sort of mounts up. And you're like, I'm making actually a pretty compelling case. Like if I set my timer and pray for them, if I just love them, you know, from a distance, send an email, a nice email, maybe I don't actually have to give. And that's true. And you should do all of those things by the way. Those are all great things you should do. But if you've got a gut feeling that you're supposed to be giving, and you're not, God's calling you to it. He's calling you to give. You know, you can tell how much, you can tell how much someone loves something by sort of the proportion of a gift. Like if, if someone gives you a gift or let's say gives a gift to a charity or something, you can tell how much they love by the size of the gift. For instance, if Elon Musk were to come in and say, I want to donate a thousand dollars to this cause, you'd say, man, that that's super kind of you. Thank you so much. But in the back of your mind, you're thinking Elon, man, 138 billion, and you dropped a thousand dollar check. I mean, come on, man, that's your slush fund. He's got that much in his ashtray of his Tesla. Oh, they don't have ashtrays. Do they? I don't know. I've never been in one. But if someone with a thousand dollars gave a thousand dollars, you would weep. You would say, oh my gosh, like you care so much about my charity. You care so much about me that you would give everything you have just so I can have it so we can feed these children, so we can keep these lights on. Oh my goodness, thank you so much. They gave everything. Now, some might say, you know what? That's not really fair. A thousand dollars is a thousand dollars. That's just like, you know, it buys the same amount of food. It buys the same amount of resources. That's true, but is it the same? I don't know. Let's see what Jesus says. Mark 12 verse 41. It says this about Jesus.

"And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny." Not very much. "And he called his disciples to him and said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'"

Jesus could look at this woman putting two small copper coins in, which make a penny, and say her values are authentic. I know exactly what she cares about because she gave everything she had to this. She led with her checkbook. She led with her, if you're a lot younger, your HDH, your Venmo, your debit card, she led with her cash. This is why people actually make bets to sort of solidify arguments sometimes. Right? You ever say, I bet you this, that that's not going to happen. You ever said that? I bet you, right. Or you've heard the phrase, put your money where your mouth is. Right. We do this. We, we use bets to solidify positions. Put your money where your mouth is. We can tell we are serious by looking at our pocket books. We can tell. So if we looked at your pocket book, what could we tell you're serious about? If we looked at your pocket book, what could we tell you're serious about? Car debt? Take out food? Clothing? What is it? If people are authentically generous, we would be able to see it in our bank accounts. Jesus says where your treasure is, your heart will be also. And listen, I, my guess is that Jesus knows how difficult this is for us to accept. I think he knows that. And yet he still says it because you can't serve two masters. And some of us, man, we are straddling that line hard right now.

What else does this passage teach us? And this is the last thing it teaches us. Our generosity helps us understand how generous God is. Our generosity helps us understand how generous God is. Verse nine.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

I don't know if you know this, Jesus before he sort of descends down into bare flesh as a human, he is seated at the right hand of God. He is the preeminent son of God who was present during the creation of the world. The word was with, the word was God and the word was with God in the beginning, and the Ruah, the Spirit, was also there, it hovered over the earth, that the holy Trinity was all present at the creation and founding of the world. Jesus is preeminent. And so therefore he's rich. Any king, any person that you think is rich, Jesus helped create that person. So he's rich. And yet he became a peasant. And yet he decides to come down into human history, building a ladder down, and bears flesh. And I don't know about you, but my flesh is weak. The things I want to do I don't want to do. The things I don't want to do I do do. So Paul says, we're like that. We break, we have backaches. We have knee injuries. We need surgeries, cancer. He became poor. And not just like any human flesh, he actually was poor on earth. He was homeless. He had to pay his taxes out of a fish's mouth once. None of us are that poor. That's what Jesus did. And yet he became, and there's nothing more poor on earth that you can possibly do as a human being than to die. And he did that as well. He died and his glory of being the son of God emptied out from him. But where did that glory flow? Where did that glory go? Who ended up with that glory? Anyone who would believe that Jesus Christ is Lord received that glory. Anyone that understood that Jesus Christ came into human history for us, lived a perfect life, died at the hands of other sinners like us, and then resurrected, conquering evil, conquering death. Anyone who would believe that receives the riches of his grace. So by, for his, he became poor for our sake, and we became rich as a result. That's what happens. So anyone who would believe that Jesus was the savior gets this glory. So Paul says, those who are generous, they understand that they can only be generous first because he was first generous. Do you understand? When you understand that the blood of Jesus was shed on your behalf. I'll tell you what, paying in dollars and cents and check even Bitcoin, you pay in that, that hurts. You pay in your blood? That's emptying the account. Jesus emptied the account on our behalf. Fully. It is impossible by the way, it is fundamentally impossible to not be generous and know the generosity of the father. If we really understand what Jesus did for us, if we really understand the blood shed on our behalf, that would motivate us to be even more generous as a result, because we know that this world, for those of you, that call yourselves Christian, this world is not the end. This world is momentary. We share our resources together as we look toward glory, as it comes. This is not forever. Even the legacy we hope to create will one day go away. The legacy of the eternal riches in heaven will not. Now I know maybe for, I think many of you at Doxa to be honest. I think you guys know this. I think Doxa has some really incredibly generous people with your time, with your energy, with your money. I mean, we get to do a volunteer rally out there at 8:30. Those people get up the Sunday of Thanksgiving, they come early, many of you, you sing, you pray. There's people praying back here as a volunteer mechanism over this sermon so that you might hear what I'm saying. It's generous people back watching your children so you can hear this exact message right now. That's generous. I think Doxa understands this as a whole. So thank you, if you're here. Thank you for following Jesus and being generous. You have a lot to teach me and our team, our leaders, and all of us in here. You have much to teach us. But if you claim to be transformed by Jesus and you are not generous with your money, your time,

your effort, your energy, I think you, I'll say it nicely, you lack an understanding of how large the gift of Jesus is. And I want that for you. I want you to really know what Jesus did for you. Okay? You might say, okay. Why? Maybe you're here and you're not, you're not a Christian or that's okay. Maybe you're on the fence or you're sort of deconstructing your faith, And you're trying to really understand this. And you say, well, I'm not a follower of Jesus, well, why would I give anyway? And I'll say, well, when you're generous, the thing you're after you can find. You want meaning, you want value, you want purpose? Try to craft it at your job. How's that going? How about in your marriage? How's that? How's that going? Do you want to try to craft your meaning with the items you grab the sort of Christmas spirit that you can have, where we cozy around the fire and, and put marshmallows in our hot cocoa and try to mimic the sort of transcendent spirit of God? How's that going?

I had an English teacher who one Halloween came dressed as a pagan, true story. She said, I am a pagan for Halloween. Crazy. Anyway, no one gets it. That's fine. I understand. You don't know her, but I remember her. We were having a conversation about Christmas. This was in high school and she says, you know, Christmas is just one of those seasons where there's so much anticipation. I'm looking forward to so much good stuff. And then there's always this just huge let down after Christmas that it's all over. Yeah, it is over. Unless you know Jesus. If you know Jesus, this season of anticipation continues your entire life. You get to look forward to the coming of a season, but instead of a fat man coming down a chimney, you look forward to a king of kings and the Lord of Lords coming down from heaven, bringing fire, bringing judgment, and bringing a renewed world and creation. I'll tell you what. The thing you're looking for in the Christmas spirit is Jesus. We can pretend the whole time that we're not doing that. And I understand that there is a lot of reasons why you might think that, but I'm telling you right now, people for a long time of history have thought, been a lot smarter than any of us, have eventually decided that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. And that the thing they sought was actually in him. It's shocking that you could say Merry Christmas as someone and utter the name of Christ and not even know that that's what you're looking for in the first place. You want meaning? That's where it is. Verse 13 says this.

"For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness."

You want to participate in that? The ebbing and flowing of all of people's needs being met. Well, sometimes I'm in an abundance and I'm giving you and you're in an abundance and you're giving me, and we're going back and forth, back and forth in a system like this. You do not have to do life alone in this system. That is comforting. You want fulfillment, you want joy, you want authenticity? Then you've got to be a part of a created system that breeds love, that helps the weak, that shares the gospel. And it begins with generosity. Let's pray.

Lord God. It's a season of happiness and hope and joy. And I just deeply want us all to understand that. I want us to understand that you actually are the reason for the season. That you are the beginning, the alpha, the omega, Lord. And as we sort of get these sort of hints and wafts and aromas of what it means to be in the Christmas spirit, Lord Jesus, they're actually smelling the Holy Spirit. And would the Spirit come upon this room right now in this moment and help us grasp and understand that what we're seeking, what we're looking for, isn't in the Christmas season, it's in the Holy Spirit. So Lord God, I pray for a spirit of generosity

over us that we can know our generosity is important because we saw how important generosity was to you. We love you, Lord God, we thank you. We're so thankful for everything you've done. And in his name, we want to pray. Amen.