

Devotion 7 You Matter

Saturday, Week 1

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:8-9)

Pastor Brad Cusson shares this personal experience: “I cannot remember the details or even the situation. I am not even sure how long we had been married. I can only remember how I felt. For some reason, I had interpreted my wife’s body language and mannerisms as being very negative toward me and whatever was on the plate in our life at that time. (Of course, I had not asked her about these things—I just assumed I was right in what I perceived. Do you know what I mean?) Well, this went on for a few days, with me being more and more certain in my condemnation of her heart towards me—and, of course, I began to have anger within me. Imagine my surprise when after dinner she came to me, shared with me how very concerned she was for me, and asked if everything was ok—and if not, asked what she could do to help me! Oh yeah, I remember how I felt. I had totally misjudged her heart —and her intentions—towards me. After that, I made a commitment to talk—and really listen—often.”

This text is startling! God says that he wants to test the sincerity of the Corinthian Christians’ love by comparing it to the earnestness of others. Imagine if someone in the church would want to do this to us? To you? We would (probably) be incensed. How dare anyone do this! Yet, this text and the principle behind it stands. The question then becomes, “What are we to do with this text?” Are we to ignore it? Forget it? Throw it out? How are we to use it? And what is God’s message to us here?

It seems to me that the key to understanding this text and applying it to our lives is to pause and to understand anew God’s heart towards us. “*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*” (John 3:17). God is for you—for each one of us. He wants the best for you—for each one of us. He is not out to embarrass you—or any of us—to put us down, or to make us feel inferior. No, God loves us. Yet, he is also out to empower each of us to “*excel in this grace of giving.*” It seems to me that what God is lovingly saying in this text is, “you matter—every single one of you matters.” “Test yourself. Look at others for good examples. Struggle with it. Wrestle with it. Grow. You matter.” Your Heavenly Father desires that you and I “*excel in this grace of giving.*”

To me, one of the most disturbing statistics with respect to Christian stewardship is that, in most congregations, only 20% of the members practice financial Christian stewardship. My prayer is that God would use these words to make that statistic 100% here at Trinity. For this gift is for each one of us!

What is the greatest example—and therefore the greatest motivation—for Christian giving? You know. It’s our Savior, Jesus, who, “even though he was rich became poor *at the cross*, that we might be rich *through life in him!*”

Prayer: Dearest Jesus, when I read the words of this text, help me to remember Your heart toward me. And remembering, help me to do what they say that I too might “*excel in this grace of giving.*” Help me to see as gifts those examples in the faith to whom I can compare myself. For I know that by Your grace, I matter, and what I do matters. Amen!