

2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-14 *We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² 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. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints- ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. ⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ 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. ⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹ 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. ¹³ I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.*

A man and his ten-year-old son went on a fishing trip miles from home. At the boy's insistence, they decided to attend the Sunday morning worship at a small rural church. As they walked back to their car after the worship service, the father was full of complaints. "That service was too long," he lamented. "The sermon was boring, and the singing was off key." Finally the boy said, "Well you know Dad, I thought it was pretty good for the dime you put in."

A funny story, and yet a revealing truth at the same time. Yes, this story teaches the same thing that our text teaches us. Namely, that true giving flows from conviction and not from compulsion. Those dragged to church and guilted into giving give poorly. Those who understand the riches that are theirs in Christ Jesus give generously. It is just that simple.

The Macedonian Christians were Paul's example. Out of the recognition of the riches they had in Christ Jesus, they gave willfully, entrusting their very lives to Christ. They gave sacrificially, giving more than seemed logical. And they gave generously, giving even beyond what their means would seem to suggest.

The boy said, "Well you know Dad, I thought it was pretty good for the dime you put in." Our Jesus is more than pretty good. He became absolutely poor so that we might become rich. He willingly, sacrificially, and generously gave His everything for us and our salvation. And if you believe that, your giving will follow. No amount of compulsion, rule giving, or guilt laying will cause true cheerful giving. No long sermon or laying

out of the financial situation of St. Paul's will cause it. Only this conviction can cause true cheerful Christian giving: Jesus is more than pretty good. Amen.