



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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August 9, 2009
10th Sunday after Pentecost
2 Corinthians 9:8-11
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: 2 Kings 4:42-44
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 84
Second Lesson: 2 Corinthians 9:8-11
Gospel: John 6:1-15

God Is Able

To make grace abound
To increase your harvest of righteousness

It was a couple of years ago when we built on to the school and one of our own members that worked for the construction company, Dave Beining, was the general foreman on site, right? I would guess that some of you went up and thanked Dave for all his hard work, because Dave worked pretty doggone hard. But did any of you walk up to him and say, "Can I see your hammer? I would like to thank your hammer for the work it did." Or, "Can I see your compressor? I would like to thank your compressor." Or, "Can I see the tool shed? I'd like to thank the tools for all the work they did." I'm guessing none of you did that, right? And if you would have heard someone else do that, what would you have thought? You would have thought they were absolutely nuts, right? We don't thank the tools. We thank the person that handled the tools, because you put those same tools in my hands and you aren't getting anything that looks like what we got, right? You are just getting problems after problems if those tools are in my hands.

This morning we have a reminder from our God that as we thank him for the gifts that he gives us, we thank him also that he gives us this precious promise that he will enable us to be tools in his hands, to be something that can bring about a greater good than we could ever do on our own. He will make all grace abound to us so that at all times and in all ways we are equipped for every good work.

But we also remind ourselves this morning that we want that to lead to thanksgiving to God, not just to the tools that God uses. God is the one who is able to make frail jars of clay like you and I, and like you, Tim, to be his servants. If it is just left up to us and our strength and our wisdom, we'd sit close to each other on a hot day instead of spreading out and filling up the front pews, right? We just aren't that bright left to ourselves. But God is able to do great things through us, to do more than we would ever imagine, and more than we would ever believe. We need that promise from our God. We need this reminder that he tells us that he can make grace abound.

They say repetition is the mother of learning, right? Do you notice God repeating himself here? I don't think it's just because he believes it's the mother of learning. I think it's because he knows us through and through and he knows what thick skulls we

have and how hard it is to hear his truths at times and how quick we are to discard his truths and look to ourselves.

You know the feeling, don't you? Someone you love is sick, let's say. It's so frustrating because you want to do more and there's nothing you can do. We always like to think we can fix everything by ourselves. We can't. But here comes God, and he promises us that in those times when we feel so frustrated and we feel so weak and we feel like we can't do anything, he is the one that is going to make all grace abound to us so that we can do more than what we would think. Sometimes, the more than what we think are the simple things, the humble things. Like handing out bread and fish and then collecting up the leftovers.

Sometimes when we are so frustrated and we face difficulty, the greatest thing we can do is to keep glorifying God and serving God faithfully by showing love to others around us and showing love to God by doing that. It doesn't have to be great and glorious. It just has to be out of love for God and according to his will, and he will make us abound in every good work as we do that.

Tim, think of what this means for you. I imagine you are facing a little bit of trepidation and uncertainty as you get ready for the classroom, right? It's been a few years since you sat in a classroom or taught and did this kind of stuff. Now you are going to have a room full, absolutely filled to the brim with little rotten sinners. That's what every last one of them is. And the other thing that is going to complicate matters is the person, the tall one in the front of the room, is also a filthy rotten sinner, right? So there are going to be times when you'll get really frustrated. You'll get concerned. You'll question yourself, I'm assuming, because I think we all go through that. "Why am I here? What am I doing here? They aren't listening to a thing I say. They aren't getting it." Whatever the case may be; "I don't see my wife enough," and all this other stuff that might go through your mind, right? That's when you need to come back to this beautiful verse. "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

That's an amazing verse, isn't it? That's an incredible promise that God makes, not just to teachers or pastors or called workers, but to each and every last one of us. When we have those moments when we are frustrated, when we are wringing our hands and we don't know what to do, it's probably because we are focusing more on ourselves and our ability and trusting less in God and his ability. Then we need to take a step back and say, "Okay, Lord. I can't fix it. I don't know how you are going to fix it, but use me the way that you see best, Lord. Make me the best hammer I can be. Use me as the instrument of your peace." Then we simply have to trust that, as we serve God, he will produce the results that he wants.

When we look at anything, like you'll look at your classroom, you'll see the results that you want to produce. I look at the congregation, and I see the results that I want to be there. In your daily lives, I'm sure you guys look and see the results that you want to be in your daily lives. But we have to trust that God will make us rich in every way so we

can be generous on every occasion and he will enlarge the harvest of our righteousness in his way, as he sees fit.

He knows better than we do. He is not a filthy rotten sinner like the rest of us. He is perfect and holy. And in his perfect love, he looked down and saw a world full of filthy rotten sinners and didn't say, "The hell with them all." He said, "I am going to die for them all. I am going to live for them all. I am going to be perfect because they can't. I love them that intensely and that immensely that that's what I am going to do." The God who loved us that much, we can trust that he will produce the results that he will see fit, and we leave that to his hands and we simply serve.

But as you and I go about serving God in our daily lives or as you go about serving God in the classroom, Tim, there is always this dangerous temptation of Satan to start focusing on our own belly button, to get self centered, to think about how our service reflects upon us instead of seeing that it's really designed to reflect upon God. It doesn't matter how great the parents think you are or how great the kids think you are or how wonderful they've learned and how much people pat you on the back. The ultimate goal isn't to have that happen. The ultimate goal is to say, "God has been good to us in giving us this called worker. God has been good to us in giving us this knowledge and this ability and this skill. God has been good to us in giving us a Savior." If people get done listening to you or me or any of our other called workers and all they can see is you or me or any of our other called workers, we've screwed up. Our job is to get them to see God.

It's the same thing in a congregation. We can have a beautiful church building, but our job isn't to get people to say, "Oh, what a wonderful church building we have" or "What a beautiful park we have where we can have outdoor services." Our job is to get people to see what a wonderful God we have who loved us when we were filthy and rotten and unlovable. That's our job. That's why we are here. When we accomplish that, it will result in thanksgiving to God. And God will say to all of us, "Well done good and faithful servant."

The fact of the matter is that at times all of us are a little self centered. All of us want that pat on the back; not that it's wrong to get that, but all of us probably want it out of sinful reasons. All of us want things to go well so we look good, out of sinful reasons. That's why today, when we come and kneel at God's altar or we sit in the back of the church and God's body and blood are brought to us, what a wonderful blessing this is. Our God says to us, "I know you've sinned again, but I still love you and I've forgiven you. Here's the body and blood that has taken away your sins." That strengthens us then to go forward and want to do the right thing for the right reasons so that the right person, God, gets all the credit and all the glory.

It's not easy for any of us to want to do that, but God is able to do it through us. So on this day, we can thank God that he's given us another person to share God's Word with us so that we grow in our faith.