

SPIRITUAL IMPORTS AND EXPORTS (2)

(2 Corinthians 8-9)

Intro: For our stewardship emphasis.

-On these Consecration Sundays.

#Last week.

#Today.

-We've been using the theme:

#Spiritual Imports and Exports.

*What gifts have we received from God?

+Imports.

*What gifts do we have to share?

+Exports.

=You've been given two tools.

-To assist you in that endeavor.

#Time and Talent Sheet.

#Statement of Intent Giving Card.

-You're asked to:

#Fill those out.

#Return those today.

*If you didn't do it last week.

I've done something a little bit differently for today.

-I changed the lessons.

#From:

*Old Testament Reading.

*Second Reading.

*Gospel.

#To an extended reading.

*2 Corinthians 8-9.

-I've broken up my homily.

#Into three mini-homilies.

*I'll have a little something to say.

+After each of the three readings.

But there is one constant through all of 2 Corinthians 8-9.

-Grace.

#What St. Paul has to say about Spiritual Imports and Exports.

*Begins with grace.

*Is accomplished through grace.

*Ends in grace.

I. Let Me Set The Stage.

A. Some Background.

1. One of the major issues in the Early Church.
 - a. What to do about:
 - Gentiles.
 - Non-Jews.
 - b. Should they be?
 - Welcomed into the community of faith.
 - Allowed to become Christians.
 - #If so.
 - *Under what conditions.
2. First Churchwide Assembly.
 - a. Was held in Jerusalem to address these issues.
 - Galatians 2:1-10.
 - b. Several resolutions were adopted.
 - Circumcision was not required of the Gentiles.
 - #Gentiles didn't have to become good Jews.
 - *In order to become Christians.
 - Leadership would be divided.
 - #Peter would be the chief missionary to the Jews.
 - #Paul would be the chief missionary to the Gentiles.
 - *But Paul was encouraged:
 - +To remember the poor in Jerusalem.
 - +To help them financially.
 - =He was glad to do that.

B. In 2 Corinthians 8-9.

1. Paul is writing to the Corinthians.
 - a. About a collection for the poor in Jerusalem.
 - b. Why were they poor?
 - Just a bad economy?
 - Probably more than that.
 - #Those Jews who professed to be Christians.
 - *In Jerusalem.
 - *Living in the heart of Judaism.
 - +With the Temple.
 - +With the Jewish priesthood.
 - +With the Jewish religious leadership.
 - =Pharisees.
 - =Sadducees.
 - *Likely were discriminated against.
 - +Employment.
 - +Business.

- #How well received would:
 - *Martin Luther.
 - *Protestant adherents of the Reformation.
 - +Been?
 - =In Rome.
 - =In the 16th century.
 - #So they needed help from the outside.
- 2. Paul was looking for help from Corinth.
 - a. On the tiny isthmus.
 - Connecting the Peloponnesian Peninsula.
 - #Achaia.
 - With the mainland of Greece.
 - #To the east.
 - *Saronic Gulf of the Aegean Sea.
 - #To the west.
 - *Corinthian Gulf of the Ionian Sea.
 - #Today there is a canal.
 - *Has been dug across the isthmus.
 - b. He appeals to them.
 - By lifting up the example of the Macedonians.
 - #In the north of Greece.
 - Macedonians.
 - #Greeks.
 - #Gentiles.
 - #Poor.
 - *In a Roman world.
 - +Where Christians were a minority.
 - +Where Christianity was often illegal.
 - *Christians would have had:
 - +Work permits denied.
 - +Businesses boycotted.
 - Yet they were generous in their giving.
 - #For those foreigners in Palestine.
 - #For those Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.
 - They wanted to help.
 - #How could they do it?
 - *When they were poor.
 - *When they were discriminated against.
 - #Paul says that it was the grace of God.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:1.
 - *Grace that gave them joy.
 - +In the midst of their suffering.
 - *Grace that gave them generosity.
 - +In the midst of their poverty.

- Paul plays the Macedonian card:
 - # "If the Macedonians can do it, I know you can do it."
 - # "If they wanted to help, I know you will want to help, too."
 - * By the grace of God.
- Paul plays the Jesus card.
 - # Look at what Jesus did for you.
 - * He was rich.
 - + With all the glories of heaven.
 - * But he became poor.
 - + Giving it all up.
 - = To live in this broken, sin-filled world.
 - + He even gave up his life.
 - = To death on the cross.
 - * So that you might have the promise.
 - + Of riches in heaven.
 - # What Jesus did for you.
 - * Was by the grace of God.
 - # What you have the opportunity to do.
 - * For the saints in Jerusalem.
 - + Will also be by the grace of God.

II. The Grace Of God Empowers Us To Give Willingly.

A. Corinthians.

1. Invited to give a voluntary gift.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 9:5.
 - b. That's really the only kind of gift one can give.
2. It's not:
 - a. Taxes.
 - b. Dues.
 - c. Membership fees.
3. I know that some people say the church should be run like a business.
 - a. I understand the thinking behind that statement.
 - b. But if that were the case, wouldn't we?
 - Impose fees.
 - Assess dues.
 - Charge admission.
4. Corinthians are invited:
 - a. To give a voluntary gift.
 - b. To respond to grace with grace.

- B. Aren't We Inclined To Be More Generous If Our Gift Is Voluntary.
1. It has been suggested.
 - a. Our checkbook is a good reflection of our:
 - Priorities.
 - Gods.
 - b. Maybe that would be a good exercise for all of us.
 - To keep tabs on where our money goes.
 - To be honest about what our priorities are.
 2. I'm not too eager to pay my bills.
 - a. I do pay my bills.
 - b. I try to pay my bills on time.
 - c. I know I need things like:
 - Heat.
 - Light.
 - Phone.
 - d. But I don't pay the utility companies anymore than I have to.
 - Maybe it's not extortion.
 - But it's not voluntary, either.
 - These are:
 - #Necessities.
 - #Obligations.
 - #Duties.
 3. There are other areas where I feel more generous.
 - a. My son Josh and his wife Divya.
 - Expecting their first baby next spring.
 - #She's had two miscarriages.
 - *So we're all praying everything continues to go well.
 - +With this pregnancy.
 - With a first baby.
 - #They're going to need all kinds of things.
 - *Crib.
 - *Car seat.
 - *Stroller.
 - *Etc.
 - *Etc.
 - #I'll be honored to help out with some of those things.
 - *I'd be disappointed if I couldn't help.
 - b. My other son Joel has been talking about buying a house.
 - It's a good time to be thinking about that.
 - #With interest rates as low as they are.
 - I told him that I would help him with his down payment.
 - #Just as I helped Josh and Divya.
 - *With the down payment on their house.

- I'm happy to be able to do it.
- #Nobody ever helped me with a down payment on my house.
- But I'm grateful.
- #That I'm in a position to be able to help.
- *To respond to grace with grace.

4. Paul invites the Corinthians.
 - a. To make a voluntary gift.
 - b. To respond to grace with grace.
5. We are invited to do the same.

III. The Grace Of God Empowers Us To Give Generously.

A. So Paul Tells The Corinthians.

1. 2 Corinthians 9:6.
 - a. "The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly."
 - b. "The one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."
2. Who sows more bountifully than God?
 - a. Sowing enough for the Corinthians.
 - b. Sowing enough for the Corinthians:
 - To share with the saints in Jerusalem.
 - c. Sowing enough for the Corinthians.
 - To overflow with many thanksgivings to God.
3. Isn't that also the grace of God?
 - a. Not necessarily that the Corinthians get thanked.
 - For their generosity.
 - Although that is not an unimportant thing.
 - b. But that God gets thanked.
 - For putting this whole exercise of grace into motion.

B. How Do We Thank God?

1. By recognizing where the gifts come from in the first place.
2. By sharing those gifts as each of makes up our own mind to do so.
 - a. Actually the Greek word is not *voûs* (mind).
 - b. Greek word is *καρδία* (heart).
 - We don't give simply from our mind.
 - We ultimately give from our heart.
3. By sowing generously.
 - a. I would like to shift our thinking away from money.
 - Lest we get into a heretical prosperity gospel.
 - #Popular among:
 - *Some TV evangelists.
 - *Others.

- Which promises material wealth.
 - #If you make a generous financial gift.
 - *That's poor/backwards:
 - +Theology.
 - +Stewardship.
 - *We don't give.
 - +So that God will be generous to us.
 - *God is generous to us.
 - +So that we can afford to be generous.
- b. I would like to have us think for a minute about our time and talent.
 - If we don't invest much time in prayer.
 - #What do we think we will reap?
 - If we don't invest much time in Scripture study.
 - #What do we think we will reap?
 - If we don't invest much time in devotions/spiritual reflection.
 - #What do we think we will reap?
 - If we don't invest much time in service to others.
 - #What do we think we will reap?
 - If we don't invest much time in thanksgiving.
 - #What do we think we will reap?
- c. Is this not all grace?
 - Praying.
 - Reading Scripture.
 - Reading/sharing a devotion.
 - Serving others.
 - Giving thanks.

Concl: God invites us to this altar.

- To receive:
 - #Lord's Supper.
 - #Holy Communion.
 - #Eucharist.
 - *Word that means "thanksgiving."
- It's all grace.
 - #Invitation.
 - *Grace.
 - #Bread and wine.
 - *Grace
 - #Forgiveness.
 - #Life.
 - #Salvation.
 - *Grace.
 - #Opportunity to give thanks.
 - *Grace.

And our Spiritual Imports and Exports.
-It's all grace.

