

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The word of God for this morning is found in 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God. 6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 7 But as you abound in everything -- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us -- see that you abound in this grace also. 8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

So far our text. Dear fellow redeemed.

This past Thursday I received this message.

“Brothers,

In the Dakotas bad weather is a matter of course. 70 mph straight-line winds and marble-sized hail get a small headline on the bottom of page 3 in the local papers (right below the update on who visited Mable Hausauer and Elmer and Gertrude Schleckebeyer this past weekend). Then again there are storms like the one that went through Lemmon last night. Having just celebrated their 100th Anniversary on Sunday, the congregation there is busy cleaning up today. Golf ball to baseball sized hail shattered all windows on the west side of both the church and parsonage and spread glass throughout. In addition to roof damage (they just replaced the church roof, as I recall) the siding on the parsonage was shredded. Obviously that also means that crops, gardens, trees, and landscaping also got hammered – both at the church and at the homes and ranches of members. The Gantt’s took refuge in the basement of the church as the storm approached and were unharmed. They are in a motel room for the time being. To top it off, Franks is scheduled to leave on the upcoming Mission Helper trip on Sunday. Somehow the old “When it rains, it pours” seems applicable here. It would certainly be appropriate to share their burden through your prayers.”

What would motivate you to provide for someone in need? In the end it comes down to two different possibilities, I. The Law II. The Gospel. Often times we do things out of guilt. This in turn equates to doing something for the sake of the Law. But our text for this morning reminds us that **“Grace is the universal motivator.”**

The congregation in Corinth was a very troubled one. They had just gone through several very difficult issues. There was the toleration of false teachers, sexual immorality as well as other issues. The Apostle Paul needed to be careful how he used the word of God. Paul was careful in His approach. Not careful

in a way that allowed him to skirt around an issue but careful in not trying to motivate love by using the Law. This is terribly important for all of us to remember when we talk with people. Because **“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”**

Romans 3:20

Therefore how well would I be doing if I stood here and commanded you, “You shall provide for the congregation in Lemmon, SD.” I wouldn’t be doing very well at all. Just like Paul would’ve failed if he would’ve commanded the Corinthians to provide for the Christians in Jerusalem; let alone in the way that the Churches Macedonian did. Paul even said of himself that, **“I speak not by commandment.”** Paul wanted grace to be the universal motivator. For Paul, myself or anyone else to motivate with the Law would be to make a bunch of Pharisees out of the one hearing. It would make fear instead of grace be your motivator.

The Law does show us how to love, but it shouldn’t be the thing that motivates us. That motivator is grace. And as our text teaches us **“Grace is the universal motivator.”**

And the reason **“Grace is the universal motivator”** is seen in the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”**

What Paul described for the Corinthians and for us is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. To put it in terms that go along with the example I used today it could be said that Paul is describing the ‘charitable’ nature of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Before the Lord took on human flesh Jesus is rightly described as being rich. Many who are rich are rich because they have a tendency to hoard everything they have. They don’t desire to spend anything so they can retain what they do have. The Lord having all, that is the fullness of the Godhead was truly rich. Yet for our sake He became poor. That is to say when He became poor He didn’t use the full power of the Godhead. But it is truly important to remember that even though He became poor Colossians 2:9 tells us **“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”** And **“Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”** Phil 2:6-8

Even Jesus Christ was motivated by grace. The grace to love us when the Father asked Him to come and die for us even by the death of the cross. To take upon Himself someone else’s burdens like the churches in Macedonia and Corinth did for their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. Not by taking sins upon them but by having grace be the universal motivator.

I am in no way commanding you or even hinting that you help the church in Lemmon. I want you to understand that the example used was to only have something current for us to grasp onto. The request of prayers is the only thing some of us can afford to bring before the Lord. Paul rightly reminds the Corinthians that they were already letting grace be the universal motivator when he described other

actions as fulfilling this when he said of them, **“But as you abound in everything -- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us.”**

I remind you that loving someone is not only done by sending money to someone. Grace is completed even in something as simple, yet as powerful as prayer.

Pray that the Holy Spirit would be with everyone who is suffering through the aftermath of this storm. Pray that their faith is not shaken because of it. Pray that they lean even more upon the Lord to get them through what must be a very hard time. But in whatever you do let grace be our universal motivator. For Jesus sake. Amen.