

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:8

Message: Be a Blessing

April 28, 2019; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON

GEMS Sunday

Pastor Jack Van de Hoef

Sometime last fall, at the beginning of your GEMS season, you received a plant that you put into a decorated pot. One of those plants was left in the kitchen. When no one took it home after a couple weeks, it made its way into my office. I thought maybe it would come in handy on GEMS Sunday. And here it is. Still alive. And it has grown.

The thing about a plant is that it does not take care of itself. It needs some water (thank you, Ellen, for faithfully watering this plant!) It needs to be turned once in a while, because it likes to lean toward the sun. I was also advised by one of the counsellors to clip the top out of the plant at one point, because then it would fill out better. I'm not sure how successful that was. But it's still alive, and growing.

Does anyone remember why you were given a plant to take care of?

It's part of learning what it means to be a blessing. You could say that I had to be a blessing to this plant by taking care of it, by sharing myself and my energy with this plant, to keep it alive and to help it to grow.

Taking care of a plant helps us to understand being a blessing. To bless someone is to give them a gift of kindness. It's about caring for someone. It's about sharing ourselves, our time and energy with someone.

As GEMS, you have been putting this into practice with more than just plants. You have been a blessing to many people in our community.

Counselor Henny shared some of the things you have done. Does anyone want to share something that you did that was a blessing to others?

You made things by hand and sold baked goods to raise money to give to agencies in Brockville who help people who are having a hard time.

You collected food for the Food Bank. You sang in a senior's home.

How did being a blessing make you feel? What did you enjoy about helping others, about being a blessing? How do you think it made Jesus feel when you were blessing others? Why do you think Jesus wants us to be a blessing?

Being a blessing is more than just doing nice things. As people who know Jesus, being a blessing is to share God's kindness with others. It's not just being nice because that's a

good thing to do. It's caring deeply for others because we know that Jesus has cared deeply for us.

That's what we can learn in these verses we read in Paul's letter to the people in Corinth. First of all, we realize that being a blessing doesn't start with us. It starts with being blessed by God.

We don't look at ourselves and what we do and pat ourselves on the back for how good we are. We look up and bless God by thanking him for the blessings he gives to us. We know how much Jesus has blessed us and we want to share that with others.

"And God is able to bless you abundantly." What does "abundantly" mean? It means: a whole lot, lots and lots, plenty to go around.

God is generous in blessing us. This can be true about who we are and the different abilities we have: some of us can draw well, others can write stories, some can sing well, others are good listeners. We are all different, because that's how God makes us. He gives different blessings, but he *does* generously give blessings.

This is also true about the things that we have. Some of us have more than others, but what we have is from God.

It is also wonderfully true about the blessings that are part of our relationship with God. We know Jesus Christ as our Saviour. We can trust God as our Father. We have the Holy Spirit living in our hearts. We have freedom to worship, to talk about our faith in our families, to publicly walk with a cross through downtown Brockville, to share this good news in our community.

"God is able to bless you abundantly, so that..." What good is all this generous blessing from God? Why does he bless us? What do we do with it?

"...so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

There's a little word that comes up three times in this verse. Did you hear it? Listen again: "...so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

"All." The greatest possible amount. Everything. In all things at all times, having all that you need. There is nothing missing. There is nothing short. There is nothing that we have to add. There is nothing that we *can* add.

It comes up a little differently a few verses later as well (verse 11): “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion.” Instead of the word “all,” we read the word “every.” Same idea of the greatest possible amount.

God is generous is giving his blessing to us. There is an overflowing abundance from God.

And God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others. God is able to bless you...so you will abound in every good work...so you can be generous on every occasion. So you will be a blessing.

It goes something like this: we have all that we need as a gift from the kindness and generosity of God. Then we can't claim that it's our own. We don't hoard these blessings. What we have is God's. We know that he wants us to share these blessings he has given us. We are blessed so that we can be generous. God makes his grace abound, giving you all that you need, so that you will abound in every good work.

Also, when we're a blessing to others, it changes us. We become more and more into who God has created us to be. Being a blessing to others makes us more compassionate. We see people not just as someone in need, but as a person made in God's image. We understand their situation and how it can be complicated. We become people who think about 'we' instead of 'me'. It's not just about what I want, but about how God intends for us to be together and to work together. It helps us to live grace-filled, thankful, generous lives.

Being a blessing points people to God and to Jesus. “Your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God” (v. 11). And “others will praise God...for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else” (v. 13). When you bless people with your words, deeds, compassion or other ways, they come to see God's love. It shows others that we're followers of Jesus. People see the blessing we give as a blessing from God.

Look up! Bless God by thanking him for all the blessings he gives us.

Reach out! Bless others with the blessings God has given you.

Thank you for being a blessing.

Thanks be to God for his abundant, generous blessings.

Amen.