

## “A Collection?”—1 Corinthians 16:1-2

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “A Collection?”, is 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 → *Concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord* (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

When was the last time you encountered a solicitation for money to support some kind of human care endeavor? If we were all sitting in our living rooms watching the TV the answer to that question for many of us would be, “fifteen minutes ago.” In fact, the solicitation of money is so commonplace that receiving letters in the mail, “Go Fund Me” requests on emails and social media advertisements, and seeing a donation basket for “free-will offerings” at events is a constant expectation. Collecting money for human care outreach happens by people in all walks of life, one of which is the Christian congregation.

So, what is it that makes human care outreach unique when it is carried out by the Christian congregation? All human care outreach projects desire to help someone in some way, collect money, recruit volunteers and/or workers, put on fund-raisers, and so forth. Christian congregations do the same. However, the difference is purpose: While many human care projects are intended to save or provide a better quality of life for someone, a Christian congregation's desire is to bring the message of forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ to people while helping them. For Christians, human care is a part of soul care.

Our text speaks about taking a financial *collection* within the context of the Christian congregation in Corinth, Greece. However, it was a human care collection which involved many Christian congregations in the known world around 55 AD. This was not some simple fund-raiser, dinner or poker run. This financial collection had been taking place for almost 15 years by the time Paul wrote this letter *to the church of God that is in Corinth*, described as ***those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*** (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2).

How did such a human care project come about? Acts 11:27-30 records the church in Antioch receiving a message from the prophet Agabus around 41 AD, stating *by the Spirit that there would be a great*

*famine over all the world. This struggle took place in the days of Claudius who ruled as Roman emperor from 41-54 AD. Based upon this utterance of knowledge (cf. 1Corinthians12:8), the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. As knowledge of this financial collection spread some of the other Christian congregations actually begged earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:4).*

Can you imagine people begging to give to a financial collection without receiving some goods or services in return? Usually it's those taking up the collection begging people to give. Yet, we have witnessed the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of Christians moving them to join in human care projects **because of a desire for Christ to be glorified as only the Church can give the Gospel of forgiveness of sins in Jesus.** Yes, we as Christians know this desire to take part in such "collections." This is why Paul referred to this *collection* as an *act of grace* (cf. 2 Corinthians 8 & 9). The desire flows from the Holy Spirit as you give yourselves *first to the Lord and then by the will of God to the collection* (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:5). It comes from *saints*—those who have been made holy through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.

Paul's directions according to verse 2 of our text were that each

member of the congregation should *put something aside and store it up..*  
*. on the first day of every week (i.e. Sunday) as he may prosper, so that*  
*there would be no collecting when he would come to visit them.* It is quite possible that he wanted to devote his attention to teaching and preaching while among them and not spend all his time gathering funds for this human care project. His reason for wanting this done *on the first day of every week* could have been because the Church gathered for worship on Sundays in celebration of Jesus' rising from the dead to give us new life, now and eternally. What better opportunity to pool their financial contributions in order to take *part in the relief of the saints* (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:4) with the other Christians around the world than at worship?

It is this command in our text, recorded by inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul, which gives credence to the practice in our worship of receiving an offering during worship each week. Notice it is not referred to in our liturgy as "the collection." It is referred to as "offering." While you may think of it as a collection from a business standpoint since it is through the avenue of this offering that the money is collected to pay the "bills" of the congregation, the context of our worship views it much differently.

1 Chronicles 16:29 says: *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering and come before Him! Worship the LORD in the*

*splendor of holiness*. Christians gather for worship in response to Yahweh's grace, both to receive the benefits of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation through the means of grace dispensed among them, as well as to worship, praise and thank Him. We also *present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God as our spiritual worship* (cf. Romans 12:1), along with all we have. Notice, we *worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness*, having been declared holy and blameless in His sight through faith in Christ. Thus, we are *saints*, that is, the holy ones, sanctified (i.e. made holy) by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, in worship we *offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name* (cf. Hebrews 13:15). In worship we bring a portion of the physical blessings with which the LORD has blessed us as an offering in His name. We leave our worship moved by the Holy Spirit and offer our time, energy, resources and so forth to bring the Gospel of Jesus to others in the daily vocations, conversations and relationship of our lives.

Aside from our offering providing for the on-going maintenance of this place for the purpose of growing *in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (cf. 2 Peter 3:18), we have expressed the desire to share the Gospel with others in conjunction with other congregations. Thus, we as a congregation have covenanted together under a common confession of faith with other congregations throughout North Dakota to

pool financial resources from our offering in worship to do so. Grace Lutheran Church sends 10% of our offering in worship to the District office where it is dispersed to support our mission projects which we adopt at our convention every three years.

While a portion of our 10% District mission giving also gets sent by the District to the Synod headquarters to support mission projects adopted at synodical conventions every three years, the 1-1-1 giving opportunity placed before you in our worship services is a collection to supplement **only** our District mission projects. You will find a brief description of each on your bulletin. 1-1-1 stands for each baptized member of the congregation giving \$1 each week at worship. Brochures are available by the collection box to explain it in more detail.

Much the same way as the Christian congregations of the first century gathered an on-going collection to minister to others, we, as the North Dakota District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, have an on-going collection to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of both *the saints* (i.e. Christians) and those who do not know Jesus. In light of the example of our text, we too keep this collection closely connected to our worship services. We are gathered here because Jesus offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. We are gathered here trusting in that atoning work for us. We are gathered here to be empowered by the Holy Spirit as we dispense and receive the

benefits of His atoning work so that we can respond with the desire to share it with others. The 1-1-1 collection is another expression of offering ourselves to our Lord and Savior Jesus so we get to share His Gospel with others. Amen.

Speaking about Christ's rule in God's kingdom,

Psalm 110:3 records this promise about *the saints*,

those clothed *with the garments of salvation*

and covered . . . *with the robe of righteousness* (cf. Isaiah 66:10):

*Your people will offer themselves freely*

*on the day of Your power, in holy garments.*

Amen.

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