

I'm thankful for God's supernatural work in and through us at St. John's Richmond over the years. He blesses us in so many ways by his generous and scandalous grace, especially as we are reminded week by week of his extravagant love expressed in Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and reign.

I see this grace at work in SJR in three significant ways. First, the generosity of our community is evidence of God's grace at work. I'm filled with thanksgiving to God for all those who have liberally given time, talents, and treasure year over year. Our ministry continues and flourishes because so many are 'prodigal' (extravagant) with time, and tithes and offerings. Consistent financial giving allows us to continue to meet and learn, to pray and praise, to have a place to welcome others, and to offer the gospel in so many creative ways.

Second, I invite you to participate in God's kingdom in an intentional way through regular giving. This is so important: Jesus clearly (and frequently) teaches the principle that regular and sacrificial giving to God's kingdom work leverages your financial contributions for eternal gain. He tells his disciples not to lay up treasure on earth, but in heaven. We 'lay up treasure in heaven' by turning what God has first given us back to him for his kingdom purposes. Regular and generous giving is "recognition of God's provision, a declaration of joyful dependence upon him, and a means of freeing ourselves from the idolatry of money." I want to encourage you, whether you have contributed regularly, occasionally, or not yet, to consider the words of Jesus on this topic: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:20). Jesus' desire isn't that you **give away** money, but that you joyfully **collaborate** with God through his church in his global mission to bring the good news to all nations. At SJR we take this task seriously, starting in our own congregation, and moving beyond to the city and to our mission partners located around the world. It's always been exciting for me to know that God doesn't want **donors**, but **partners**.

Third, financial generosity as a response to God's grace is exciting because it's so counter-cultural! Being generous with the money God has lent us is actually a form of witness to the world. Tim Keller said it like this:

"The early church was strikingly different from the culture around it in this way - pagan society was stingy with its money and promiscuous with its body. A pagan gave nobody their money and practically gave everybody their body. And the Christians came along and gave practically nobody their body and they gave practically everybody their money."

I pray (with thanksgiving!) that as we give generously we will understand more of the inheritance we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ,
Rev. Sean Love

