

Day 4

Today's Scripture reading: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 NLT

"Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. 2 They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

3 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. 4 They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.^[b] 5 They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do."

Backstory:

The church in Jerusalem had never seen darker days. The region had been hit with a severe drought and widespread famine. Disease, malnutrition, starvation, thirst---these afflictions were the norm; no one was immune. And as often happens when resources are scarce and there aren't enough basic necessities to go around, those who are different are oppressed and persecuted.

So, because their religious convictions and worldview were not like everyone else's, Christians fell prey to all sorts of attacks. Merchants refused to sell them basic supplies. Families disowned them. Many lost their jobs. Some were tortured and killed. The church in Jerusalem was hurting physically, mentally, and emotionally. In their own strength, they could not survive; so a man named Paul began going from church to church in regions outside Jerusalem taking a collection to meet their needs and help them rebuild their lives.

As he made his rounds, Paul chose to skip over the Macedonian Church. They were extremely poor---suffering and struggling in their own right; so I assume Paul simply didn't want to put them in an awkward position by asking them for money they didn't have, making them feel bad for not being able to help.

But when they heard what was happening in Jerusalem and what Paul was trying to do, they took up their own collection *without ever being asked...for people they would never meet...and begged for the privilege of doing so.* In other words, they personally did without---they went to bed hungry, they went

without certain luxuries, they postponed home maintenance projects, etc.--- because they saw it as a privilege to join Jesus in bringing life to people in crisis.

Think about it:

The needs in our city are massive. The hurt tremendous. The wound gaping. And in this time of crisis and tragedy, we---the Christian Church---have the opportunity and privilege of bringing life, hope, love and healing to individuals, families, and communities.

It's possible that no one will ask for our help; so like our Macedonian brothers and sisters, we will look for opportunities to jump in and be part of the rebuilding effort.

It may be that we ourselves have limited resources and are barely getting by; so it's going to take some next level sacrifice and creative resourcing to give what we have to the relief effort.

And while many of us were directly impacted by the tragedy of October 1, others of us are several steps removed from anyone who was there. But as the Macedonian Church modeled for us, proximity should not govern our response. As people who've joined Jesus, we count it a privilege to bring life to *everyone, everywhere, every day*.

DAY FOUR JOURNAL

What does this say about God? _____

What does this say about people? _____

What am I going to do about it? I will _____
