

St Martins C3 – July 20, 2023

Generous Giving – Generous Living

Sermon Notes:

Money is one of the main things Jesus talked about. Not because he thought money was more important than anything else, but because it was a way of getting to people's hearts and encouraging them to bless others.

Today we explore how to give generously. Generosity is giving freely of ourselves, with extravagance to help not hurt others.

Free Generosity

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul speaks of an offering that was being taken for the poor people of Jerusalem and holds up the giving of the Macedonians as an example for all.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:3, 12-14; 9:7-8; 1 Timothy 5:8

The Macedonians were very poor but they still gave a free gift. It was free from guilt or compulsion and willingly given to bless others. Generosity that is free blesses everyone, but giving that is not free leads to resentment and bondage for the giver.

Our free generosity should never come at the expense of the people in our household. They come first always.

Generous Generosity

Paul further reflects on the giving from the Macedonians. They didn't use their giving as an excuse for stinginess, but they gave of themselves with generosity.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:3-4, 9

They were so filled with generosity they even called it a privilege. The gifts that will make the most profound impact are the gifts that are from a generous heart.

*You can always give without loving, but you can never love without giving. **Amy Carmichael***

Giving money might be a generous gift, but it often needs a relational connection to produce positive effects

Helpful Generosity

Read 2 Corinthians 9:11-13; Luke 4:17-21

For giving to be generous the gift has to be focussed on how it meets the deep needs of others. This is what Christ has done for us. The value of the gift is how much it helps the recipient, not just how much it costs the giver.

Jesus healed all of our hurts and needs. All generosity commits to healing the whole person. That is why we need to ensure our generosity fills the deep needs of others not just the surface complaints.

By focusing on symptoms rather than on the underlying disease, we are often hurting the very people we are trying to help.¹

We are called to be blessing machines – generously giving to others in our lives.

¹ Corbett, Steve; Fikkert, Brian. When Helping Hurts (p. 10). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

Questions for Connect Groups:

What stood out to you from today's message?

Why do you think Jesus talked about money so often?

Discuss what the purpose of money is for a Christian.

Share a time when you have felt pressure and guilt to give to a cause. How did that affect you?

How do we ensure we give freely not under compulsion?

*Are you more likely to be over-generous or under-generous?
What is the reason for that?*

What does it look like to give generously but not disadvantage your family?

How do you plan for generosity, making space for it in your budget?

How can we ensure a heart connection with our generosity?

If something is extravagantly given but perpetuates poverty of spirit in the recipient what should we do about it?

*How do we help people in a way that doesn't harm them?
Think through scenarios.*

Songs from Today:

Majesty (O The Mystery), You Light Me Up, King of Kings, Christ Be Magnified, Here I Am To Worship

Monday Devotion: Tithing

Read Matthew 23:23

During this series, some have been surprised we haven't used it to do an extra push for church giving. Seeing as the question has been asked let's talk about tithing for a moment. In the Old Testament a tithe (or 10% of income) was given to worship God (Genesis 28:20-22; Leviticus 27:30-32), provide for the Levites (Numbers 18:19-21), and care for the poor (Deuteronomy 14:22-29). God blesses those who tithe (Malachi 3:7-12).

Nowhere does the New Testament require Christians to tithe in the sense of giving 10 per cent to the church. However, it does reiterate tithing principles: those who minister are entitled to support (1 Corinthians 9:14); the poor and needy should be cared for (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Galatians 2:10); those who give can trust God to supply their needs (2 Corinthians 9:8-10; Philippians 4:19).

Jesus refocused attention from Law following to inward attitudes. He criticized some who tithe tiny grains of spice but neglected justice, peace, and faith (Matthew 23:23). Jesus says our giving needs to be about more than following a rule but connected to our hearts and seeing His Kingdom come in the world.

As a church, we don't require members to tithe. However, the work we do in discipling church members and reaching St Martins greatly benefits from the generous gifts of church members. Therefore, we encourage members to contribute but only as their means allow. Some choose to give 10% to honour the Old Testament command, however, giving is completely voluntary and there is no set percentage.

Whatever we give it should be done with a heart of worship and gratitude to God for all He has given us.

Tuesday Devotion: A Generous Attitude

Read: 2 Corinthians 9

Like all positive character traits, generosity does not begin with an action, but with an attitude.

This passage is the continuation of the scripture that we studied on Sunday morning. Here again, we see that our generosity is an overflow of God's grace (see verses 8, 14).

As we give to others, we see that God honours our gifts and responds in many ways (verses 6-11). He does not abandon those who respond lovingly to Him.

Our motivation for giving should not be about trying to "play the system" – giving to be seen by others or to get more from God. Instead, these words should give us confidence that as we give to others with the right attitude, God will do good things in our lives enabling us to bless others.

Generosity comes through more than financial giving (verse 12). It comes through a heart for others overflowing into giving acts. Ultimately it is exuberantly meeting the needs of other people.

Today, pray and ask God to give you the grace to be as generous as the people in Macedonia were, and the people in Corinth became.

Wednesday Devotion: Be Generous As He Is

Read John 3:16; 1 John 3:16-18; Ephesians 5:2; Acts 20:35

Let's take an inventory of God's gifts:

Life. *Check.*

Forgiveness. *Check.*

Peace. Hope. Beauty. Joy. *Check. Check. Check. Check.*

Relationship with God. *Check.*

Eternal Security. *Check.*

You can't be more generous than God. John 3:16 shows this to be true. He gave the greatest gift the world has ever seen.

1 John 3:16 is a great companion to John 3:16. In it John states that we know what love is only because of Jesus' sacrifice. He then states that we ought to do the same thing for each other. This grandiose expression of love is then given a very real application: "If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion – how can God's love be in that person?" (1 John 3:17).

Love always brings generosity; it is its nature to do so. May we be those who have experienced this love and as a result can share it with those around us who most need it. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Today, ask for God's resources to love others well. Spend time in prayer thanking Him for His gifts and asking Him to pour them out even more.

Thursday Devotion: Planning for Generosity

Read Matthew 9:37-38; Acts 4:32-35

As we seek to emulate the generosity of God, we see that our actions will follow our attitude. If we know and experience the love of God through Jesus, and our attitude is one of generosity, then the result will be love shown in actions and truth.

This means when we see someone who is in need, we are ready to respond. Caring for those who have less than us is a significant recurring idea in the Bible. The People of God, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, were encouraged to reach out with financial care for the most vulnerable in society.

Knowing that these moments are going to come, we should take time to consider the best way for us to respond to the barrage of needs that our world brings. Consider these questions:

- What amount of money can you realistically put aside for generosity each month?
- Will you give this money to one cause or split it between many?
- Will you have the capacity to respond when an important, but unexpected, need comes up?
- Is your significant other in agreement with you over your approach?

Thinking through how to create space for generosity now makes it much easier to respond when the time comes.

Friday Devotion: A Generous Heart

Read Mark 12:38-44

As Warren talked about this series with me the image that kept coming to mind was the woman who gave so very little and so very much at the same time.

The Widow's Mite Coin is a bronze lepton currency discovered in Israel and used in the New Testament times. It was the lowest and smallest bronze currency in Jesus' time and was probably what the widow gave.

Usually, the focus of the story is on the widow, however, there is a case that this story is about the Pharisees and other rich people. The Pharisees and rich people gave large amounts "to God" but were the same ones who in their other dealings "shamelessly cheat widows out of their property." (verse 40)

These rich people were happy to do a good thing in the collection plate, but their dealings outside of the Temple were not consistent. The challenge for each of us is to have a generous heart in all areas of our lives.

A generous heart lives with integrity, it looks out not only for its own interests but the interests of others. May we be aware in all our dealings this week of how God can help us be more generous and look out for those who need it the most. Pray and ask Him to show you who needs help and the best way to help them without bringing them further harm.