

"Sharing with a Generous Spirit"

Luke 10:25-37

Nov. 22nd, 2020

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Note: Today's sermon begins with a time-lapse video of the Harvest Table coming together on Saturday and a prayer of thanksgiving over the table. Below is the prayer of thanksgiving that was lifted up after the video.

Lord of the Harvest, we rejoice in the bounty of your world; we thank you for the rich harvest it produces. We thank you for fertile soil and we thank you for fruitful lives that bear witness to your goodness in us and the bounty you provide.

We thank you for all that is on this table - overflowing, and spilling onto the floor. We thank you for all that is in these baskets and the hands that have brought them, that these offerings might be sacrifices of praises that bring joy to your eyes and a blessing to those who will receive them.

May the fruit on this table do more than fill a stomach, may they bring a smile onto their souls. May the vegetables in these baskets enrich whatever dish they garnish. May the bread that is here be broken in loving fellowship and as it is broken, may it remind them of another table where Jesus poured out His love.

Heavenly Father, this morning we pray for those who do not have enough, for those who are hungry for sustenance, for those who ache for human fellowship and for those who are lonely or afraid.

Show us what needs to be done and how to share in the Lord's harvest, and in this, teach us to seek your kingdom here on earth, as it is in heaven. Lastly Lord, we ask you to bless the pledge cards that have been given before you. We ask your blessings as we have given in joy, in gratitude, in love and in faith. That the ministry of our church would be able to continue on in accordance to your will and pleasure.

This we pray in Jesus Name. Amen.

On this Thanksgiving Sunday we are wrapping up our Stewardship Sermon Series by looking at the last part of the parable Jesus told in Luke 10, also known as the Good Samaritan.

And on this Thanksgiving Sunday, I've prepared a very simple message that looks at the final actions of the Good Samaritan in the parable as an encouragement to all of you to be Generous this Thanksgiving.

Luke 10:25-37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" Jesus replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

"But the man wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply, Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So to a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.

The next day he took out two silver coins and gave it to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "And when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

The Good Steward.

The main character in our story, the Good Samaritan, was also a Good Steward.

He was a good steward of the heart that God gave him, shown by his compassion when he first saw the injured man.

He was also good steward of the hands that God gave him, demonstrated when he bandaged the man's wounds and poured oil and wine on them.

And finally, he was also a good steward of the personal resources that were in his possession, when he took the injured man to the nearest inn, and not only took care of him but after he left, he paid for several more nights, so that the man could stay a little longer until he fully recovered.

The Good Samaritan had a compassionate heart, had a servant's heart, and this morning, I'd like to share that he also had a generous heart.

The passage said in vs. 35:

"The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him" he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

In the original language, instead of two silver coins, it was actually two denarii and a denarius was equivalent to one day's wages. So, if you made \$20 an hour and work an 8 hours day - that's \$160 dollars times that by 2, and that \$360 dollars that the Samaritan gave to the innkeeper.

That's not even counting the charges for the previous night, that's also not counting food and incidentals, plus - the Samaritan said: "*When I return, I'll reimburse you for any extra expenses you may have.*" (consider things like room service, movie rentals, parking.)

I read an article this past week that said the Samaritan's actions mirrored the actions of Jesus, in the sense that the Samaritan paid the man's debts, and not just the past debts but all the man's future debts too, just like how Jesus would pay for our past transgressions as well as for the sins, we have yet to commit.

The Samaritan was generous

The Samaritan went way beyond what any of us might normally have done.

First, he provided road-side assistance - tending to the man's injuries. Then he provided transportation, taking the man to the nearest inn. Then he looked after him - getting him thru the night and then the next morning he paid for a few extra days so the man could get back on his feet.

That's more than being good. I'd say - that's being generous.

The Samaritan was a very generous person.

He was generous with his time.....

He was generous with his talents,

He was also generous with his treasures.

This coming week and this coming Thursday on Thanksgiving Day, we are all supposed to be grateful. Well, I'd like to do one better and say: "BE GENEROUS!"

If you're in charge of the food this Thursday and putting food on people's plates - "BE GENEROUS!" Instead of "one scoop" of mashed potatoes and gravy give them "two scoops!"

If you're in charge of pouring drinks - instead of filling up their cups, just a little over half way, fill 'em up to the rim!

And if it's your job to clean up after the meal, don't just simply do the dishes, but take out the trash, vacuum the carpet, wash the car, clean the gutters, and maybe while you're at it, put up the Christmas lights!

Don't just be "grateful" this Thursday - "Be Generous!"
That is my charge and my challenge to all of you this week - "Be Generous!"

The Apostle Paul once said to the church in Corinth:

"Remember this! Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." (2. Cor. 9:6)

In this particular passage, Paul was talking about farming. When he said you can sow sparingly or you can sow generously, he was talking about sowing seeds. But he used that as a metaphor about giving and supporting others, and when you do, to do so - generously.

Generous with Time

The Good Samaritan was generous with his TIME.

He not only stopped to help the injured man, which the Priest / Levite didn't do, then he took the man to an inn and stayed the night with him.

The next morning he told the innkeeper that he would be back, showing that the Good Samaritan was very generous with his TIME.

Sometimes it's easier (or it's more convenient) to throw money at a problem or situation, than it is to throw TIME at it. Sometimes it's easier to give some a few bucks, than it is to give them a few hours.

"Here's \$10 bucks... go get yourself something to eat."
What if instead, we took the time to go and get the food ourselves?

Be Generous with your time.

Jesus once said in His Sermon on the Mount:

"If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."

In other words: "Go the extra mile" even though it's going to take you twice as long to get back.

Be Generous with Talent

The Good Samaritan was also generous with his TALENT.

He bandaged the man's wounds. He treated the man's injuries, then at the inn - he continued to look after the man showing that the Good Samaritan was also very generous with his TALENT.

He went above and beyond what was expected of him. He even put the man on his own donkey, using his strength, his skills and his abilities to help the injured man.

BE GENEROUS WITH YOUR TALENTS.

If your talent is a physical ability - share it, don't squander it.

If your talent is a technical skill, - let others benefit from it.

If your talent is music - use it to bless people's lives!

If your talent is artistic expression - express it generously to others!

Jesus had this talent for being able to tell stories.

He had this ability to look at the natural world and somehow connect it to the spiritual world in ways that normal people would understand. And from sun - up to sun- down, whether it was at the temple or whether it was on a mountainside, Jesus spent hours and hours sharing that talent with others.

Generous with Treasure

The Good Samaritan was finally generous with his TREASURE.

He not only paid for the first night's lodging, but saw to it that the man could stay there a few more nights. Then he offered - when he returned, to pay for any extra expenses.

That was being generous w/his TREASURE.

Be Generous with your TIME, with your TALENT, with your TREASURES.
Whatever God has given to you - use it for his glory!
Whatever God has entrusted to you - exercise it for his kingdom!

Benefits of being Generous!

If you need extra motivation to be generous this week, if you need an extra reason to be a generous person, let me share a few.

Generous people have a greater satisfaction in their lives.
Generous people tend to be happier, tend to be healthier than those who are stingy.

Secondly, generous people tend to have more friends than those who are not generous (which kinda makes sense!) but being generous has a huge positive social impact.

Being Generous also reduces your blood pressure, also reduces stress, and is said to improve your immune system!

Who knew that being generous, is actually good for you!

My charge and my encouragement
to all of you this week is to be GENEROUS!

Be Generous with LOVE

Now, some of you may be quietly saying to yourself: "*Well, I don't have a lot of time, and I don't have a lot of talent and I don't have a lot of treasure, so - how can I possibly be generous?*"

That's a good question. If you don't have a lot of time and don't have a lot of talent and don't have a lot of treasure, than I would encourage you to be generous when it comes to LOVE!

BE GENEROUS WITH LOVE!

John 3:16

There's a little verse in the Bible that some of you may know - John 3:16. Do you know that verse? Of course you do!

*"For God so loved the world,
that he gave his one and only Son,
that whosoever shall believe in Him,
shall not perish but have everlasting life."*

(This was the version I grew up with)

Did any of you notice how the verse began?

The first line says: "*For God so loved the world.*"

The first line didn't say: "*For God sort of loved the world,*"
the first line also didn't say: "*God kind of loved the world*"
the first line says: "*For God soooooo loved the world!*"

That's being GENEROUS!

Mom's and Dad's if you're worshiping at home and your kids are next to you, go ahead and look at them say their names and then say: *"I soooooo love you!"*

Or spouses, if your partner is right next to you, go ahead and look them in the eye and say: *"I soooooo love you!"*

Pet owners, I don't care if your dog is sleeping, go ahead and wake them up, grab them by the cheeks and say *"I soooooo love you!"*

Be Generous with Love! Love Generously!

Now that may have been fun to do, but what does generous love look like? It can look like a lot of things I'm sure.

There's a quote I read this week written by someone named Donald Barnhouse (it's a variation of the Fruit of the Spirit)

LOVE IS THE KEY.

JOY is love singing.

PEACE is love resting.

LONG-SUFFERING is love enduring

KINDNESS is love's touch.

GOODNESS is love's character.

FAITHFULNESS is love's habit

GENTLENESS is love's self-forgetfulness

SELF-CONTROL is love holding the reins.

Be generous with Love.

There's a story I once heard about a mother who took her kids to a restaurant one evening. When the food came out, her 6 year old son asked if he might say the blessing.

So as they bowed their heads, the little boy began to pray: *"God is good, God is great, thank you for the food. And I would be so thankful, if mommy would get us ice cream for dessert and liberty and justice for all! Amen.*

Well, a woman sitting at a nearby table happened to hear the boy's prayers, and then said in a voice loud enough for others to hear: *"That's what's wrong with our country! Kids these days don't even know how to pray. The nerve of asking God for ice cream, why I never!"*

The little boy upon hearing this, began to cry and asked his mother: *"Mommy, did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?"*

So his mother took him in her arms, held him and reassured him that he had done a terrific job w/prayer and that God was not mad at him.

At that very moment, an older gentleman walked right up to their table. He winked at the little boy and said: *"I happen to know that God thought that was a great prayer!"*

"Really- mister?" the little boy asked.
"Cross my heart" the old man replied.

Then in a whisper, he said in a loud voice loud enough for the cranky woman to hear: *"Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."* Then he walked back to his table.

Well after dinner the mom decided to order ice cream for all of her children. When it came out, that little 6 year old boy stared at his bowl for a moment, and then he did something unusual.

He picked up his ice-cream sundae and without a word, walked over and placed it in front of that woman. Then with a big smile on his face, he said to her: *"Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul, and my soul is good already."*

BE GENEROUS WITH LOVE.

In one of the most eloquent verses on the topic of love, the Apostle Paul said: *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, and it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records of wrongs."*

Love (generous love) does not keep records of wrongs.

When the Disciple Peter - once asked Jesus how many times we should forgive someone who sins against us, he asked: *"Shall I forgive them 7 times?"* Jesus responded: *No, you should forgive generously - - not 7x, but 77x!"*

Love generously! Forgive graciously!

Speak Generously

My 2nd encouragement to all of you this week is to be generous with WORDS. To speak generously to those around you.

There's a verse in the Bible from Prov. 16:24 that says:

"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."

Isn't that a great verse? Not quite the same, but there's a phrase in the English language:

"You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar."

Generous words are like honey!

Back in Seminary, I signed up for a "Preaching" class, and every week, the professor assigned a passage. Then on Fridays - we got together in small groups and took turns preaching a 5 minute sermon in front of each other. Then after each sermon we were supposed to go around and give each constructive feedback.

Well, on one particular Friday, our professor showed up to our small group, and listen to all of our sermons. Most of the sermons were as you might expect from entering seminary students, but there was this one student, when he gave his sermon - let's just say that preaching wasn't his gift!

So when it was time to go around and give each other feedback, some of the other students were quite frankly - brutal! Boy, that student was devastated!

But when it was the professor's turn, he put on a big smile and then he said: *"Wow! That was very unique! "I never heard that passage preached that way before!"*

That was what my professor said to one of my classmates and can I tell you that classmate went on and is now the head pastor of a very well known congregation in N.Y.C. !

Be **GENEROUS** with your words!

The words you speak can build someone up or they can tear someone down.
The words you speak can give someone hope or they can crush their dreams

The words you speak can help people walk on water or make them feel like they're drowning.

They can let people know they are forgiven and loved by God and set free to start over or they can make them feel like they've never existed at all.

Generous words can feed a soul - even though their stomachs are empty.
Generous words can bright the darkest day and make the clouds disappear.
Sometimes the smallest compliment is worth more than a pay check.

Be generous with your words and speak generously to those around you.

The Apostle Paul once said:

*"Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

May the Lord Bless all of you as you go into this Thanksgiving week.

May you be surprised by joy - may your prayers be unending and may you be
good stewards and generous stewards with all that God has given you!

Amen.