

## GENEROSITY #3

### Generosity Changes People

#### Open:

- The lights at the County Fair, the ferris wheel, the smell of French fries, elephant ears, and corn dogs are so inviting ...
  - √ The games of chance promising a big stuffed bear.
  - √ The attractions lure us, one bite into that turkey leg, and we lose financial stability for a moment ...
  - √ Dollars pass from dad to game attendant while little children look on with great faith in their father.
  - √ To add more pressure to the situation, some folks are actually carrying the stuffed animals around.
  - √ You too can be a winner ... empty your wallet ... don't you love your kid?
  
- The Fair lures, attracts us and for a few hours, we are kids again.
  - √ And so the world operates ... slick advertisements give your family the good life ... you deserve it, you work hard ...
  - √ You even buy into the thought that God exists to make you happy.
  - √ Truth is you played "the game of life" and you've gotten mad at God when you didn't strike it rich.
  - √ You struggle while others are living the good life, and it's not "fair!"
  
- An occasional family trip to the County Fair isn't a sin ... might do some of you good ...
  - √ But know this: (the games are rigged) if all you do is live your life for yourself ... fight the crowd, ride the rides ... win the bear ... eat the sausage dog and top it off with cotton candy ... you go to bed with a tummy ache, wake up with an empty wallet only to discover sometime in the night, your dog Fido attacked the bear, and there is stuffing everywhere and your kid is crying.
  - √ It's the American life, but God has a better plan.

\* Thus far in our series we have said:

- God is a generous God.
- In life there are 2 kinds of people: givers and takers
- Today ... how generosity changes people.

(1) A lesson from Jesus ... (solo generosity) One God/man loving others.

- When Messiah comes, what will His ministry be like?

√ God would send His boy ... His Son. From Heaven to earth.

- Wouldn't you think He should live in royalty, stay in exotic resorts, eat at the finest dining establishments?
- Yet, we know He was born in a barn; He did not own His own home, since He walked everywhere He had to travel light.

√ He didn't come to be pampered; He came to transform lives and change eternal addresses.

- The prophet Isaiah said of Him:

**Isaiah 61:1-2a NLT** <sup>1</sup>The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. <sup>2</sup> He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord's favor has come ...

√ We see the fulfillment of this passage in **Luke 4:18-19** when Jesus read it one Sabbath in the local synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth.

- Having stood and read with all eyes upon Him: **Luke 4:21 NLT** Then He began to speak to them. The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!
- And so began His ministry.

- It is said of Jesus: **Matthew 20:28 NLT** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many.
- The One whom we call Lord, our Savior came to give of Himself, help others, find freedom from sin's grip ... He invites us to follow Him and give of ourselves to others.
- We are to put more into this life than we take out of it.
  - In my recent readings in Mark's gospel, I see how Jesus gave generously of himself to others, and many lives were transformed for the better.
- \* What happens when a group of believers become generous?
- (2) A lesson from churches in Macedonia
  - Sometimes it is helpful to see what another church is doing ...
    - √ Paul used a group of churches in Macedonia to encourage the church in Corinth to do their part in the kingdom work.
      - PowerPoint map of Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey ... see Macedonia ... churches Paul has in mind (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea).
      - They were taking a collection for the Jerusalem church.
        - √ The believing Jews of Jerusalem had fallen on hard times.
        - √ Many who became followers of Christ had been disowned by their families ... they were staying with other believing families.
        - √ These early believers were persecuted ... some lost their jobs, those with their own businesses were boycotted.
        - √ Things were tough already ... Rome took all they could from their conquered territories and placed a heavy burden of taxes on the people.
        - √ All this resulted in poverty.

- √ To help the church in Jerusalem, Paul was taking up a collection ...
- Because Paul's ministry was primarily to the Gentiles ... this gift of love would help strengthen the spiritual bond between the Jewish and Gentile congregations.
  - It would be a tangible expression that they were truly one in Christ.

**2 Corinthians 8:1-8 NLT** <sup>1</sup> Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. <sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. <sup>7</sup> Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.

<sup>8</sup> I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches.

\* The people of Macedonia were not rich people.

- They had their share of troubles as well.

**Vs. 2 NKJV** Great trial of affliction ... Word picture: the crushing of grapes ... they too were facing spiritual and economic pressures.

→ Our circumstances need not control our generosity ...

- √ Common sense says you cannot give what you do not have, but just because we might be having it tough doesn't mean you cannot be generous.
- √ Matter of fact: I believe God will reward you more when you give generously in spite of difficulty ... and the impact is even greater.
- Notice it says of these people they have **Vs. 2 an abundance of joy.**
  - √ To give, to help another brings inner satisfaction.
  - √ Selfishness will lead to discontentment but the giver is a happy person.
  - √ Besides, they are laying up treasures in Heaven.
- Generous living is exciting ... it positions me so God can bless me, and I get a front row seat in seeing how He will supply my needs.

**Philippians 4:19 NKJV** And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

- They gave voluntarily, not grudgingly or reluctantly ... out of a sense of duty.
  - √ The preacher made me feel guilty.
  - √ **It was of their own free will. Vs. 3**

**2 Corinthians 9:7 NLT** ... Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure, for God loves a person who gives cheerfully.

- Most importantly, they gave themselves to God.
  - √ I'm yours ... whatever you need me to do.

**Romans 12:1 NLT** ... I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

→ I'm not talking about tipping God a little on Sunday, throwing a few bucks in the plate or at the problem ... I'm saying ... my life is yours God ... display your glory through me!

**Close:** Generosity changes people! It changes you and impacts the lives of others ... changes them.

- Imagine the good this offering did when it reached the believers in Jerusalem.
- As well it was an example and motivation for the church of Corinth.
  
- Generosity is seen in what it does, not what it says.
- Generosity is contagious!
- May your generosity touch another this week!

**Next Week:** Final message in Generosity Series:

- Signs of a generous person.
- Plans of a generous church.

Message Notes  
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