

Radiant Church, August 7, 2016
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Gospel Pictures #9
Generosity is a Picture of the Gospel
2 Corinthians 8:1-15

John 5:1-6 *After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there was in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids - blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?"*

Seems like a silly question. But Jesus knew something of the man's heart, that the invalid man would soon expose

John 5:7 *The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me."*

In the man's view, he was a victim
God hasn't done enough for me
Other people are competition
No one will help me

John 5:8-10 *Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."*

Like his, our society tells us it's okay and even preferable to see ourselves as victims. That had become his truth, and his society, like ours affirms our victimhood.

Now what follows a few verses later is strange...

John 5:14 *Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."*

What was the sin the man had been committing, for 38 years?

Pride

In his mind, his condition was not his fault. He had justified himself
as being the victim

God hasn't treated me fairly

Other people haven't helped me, instead, they are competition

And Jesus tells him to repent of this world view, and be changed

This story relates to what I am going to say next...

Greed, giving and generosity are touchy subjects.

All I have to do is start talking about money, and some of your heads will drop.

The Bible talks about greed almost 4 times as much as it talks about lust.

And there are more words of Jesus in the NT about money than on any other subject.

Yikes!

2 Corinthians 8:1-8 *We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints - and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you - see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also be genuine.*

Let's define a term that is mentioned in this: "joy"

Love (8:8) is the overflow of joy (8:2) in the grace of God (8:1) that meets the needs of others (8:2)

Joy over who God is and what He has done produces generosity

2 Corinthians 8:9-15 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."*

What Paul is saying here is that the church people in Corinth had previously been enthusiastic to give to the starving church in Jerusalem

But they hadn't followed through. They talked about how they would give, but never did the giving.

Why didn't they follow through?

Anger and bitterness negate generosity. A victim mentality results in greed. Here in Juneau we all put in long hours and work real hard. Why?

The Bible tells us why:

Ecclesiastes 4:4 *then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and striving after wind.*

We work long and hard because we're not convinced God has given us enough, and/or because we feel like other people are getting what we think we ourselves deserve.

And that makes us bitter. And bitterness results, oddly enough in a desire for revenge.

Revenge against God - I won't trust Him, therefore I won't listen to Him
Revenge against other people - I'll be greedy instead of generous

The desire for revenge (a prevailing narrative in our culture) is a desire to win by being able to self-justify

Ever been hurt or unfairly treated by someone else?

What is your memory of that person?

What is the story in your head of how you would like that person to end up?

What is our memory, our evaluation of former churches we have attended?

Would we label any of them "abusive," "demanding" or "toxic?"

Did we give our loyalty, our time and money to that church, only to end up feeling that it wasn't a fair and equal exchange, that we were treated unfairly?

1 Timothy 6:17 *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, not to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.*

Don't trust your money

Don't be arrogant

More stuff does not equal more joy

If we trust our money, even our ability to make money, then it becomes really hard to also trust God to provide

We all understand this. But our lives don't always keep in step with our understanding

1 Timothy 6:18 *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,*

Use what you have to help others

We are distributors, not consumers

If you close your hand, God will move on to someone else

If you have any left over, you are RICH

Godly people are generous people

1 Timothy 6:19 *...thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life*

It's not about the accumulation of things and experiences, but a legacy of generosity

Why does God give us commands? So that we can have peace, contentment and joy

Greed and a stingy heart are reflective of an authority problem

We may not trust the church to use the money well, or to our liking

We may not want to own a decision we did not have input into making

We may not really trust God to provide us what we need

When we don't trust leadership, it's ultimately because we don't trust God's leadership because of the leaders He places in our lives, in our homes, at work or in our church

And I'll admit to you...it's hard to trust the ideas others have that involve finances, when that same person does not give anything themselves. I have to repent of that distinction I make, all the time.

1 Corinthians 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come*

Three principles here:

1. You put something aside and store it up. You don't spend everything you make. This is intentional. This is planned.
2. You give according to how you think God has "prospered you."
3. And, you do it on the first day of the week. In our world, that means when you first get paid. This forces us to trust God to provide, even when we don't already know how we will pay for other things.

4 questions we each have to ask ourselves:

1. Is my spending marked by Christian generosity?

2. What does my spending say about what makes me most happy?

3. Does my spending suggest I'm collecting for this life?

4. Is my spending explicitly supporting the spread of the gospel in our lives and in the lives of other people?

But here are two more questions we each have to ask:

If we give to our church specifically, why do we give?

Are we trying to earn something?

And if we do not give to our church, why not?

Generosity is a litmus test for the condition of our heart.

But we still have not necessarily answered the question, How is generosity a picture of the gospel?

2 Corinthians 9:10-12 *He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.*

God gives common grace to all people: seed for bread, and plants that produce more plants

When we give we are saying “thanks” to God for what He gives us just to live

He gives to us so we can be counter-cultural, and give to others

Not on our terms, setting our own conditions, but directed by our understanding of God's grace to us

2 Corinthians 9:13-15 *By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*

Generosity is a picture of the gospel

Generous people are people who have submitted themselves to Jesus

Generous people are people who give to show the gospel in tangible ways

Generous people know they are recipients of God's generous grace that resulted in their salvation accomplished by Jesus

Generous people are thankful people, and look for ways to express that thankfulness by paying it forward