

Generous Lesson 3

Generosity is True Church Stuff!

A Great Church is a Generous Church. A Generous Church is populated with Generous People! Generous people are people who use what they **HAVE** for the benefit of others.

The Jerusalem Church: Acts 2:41-47 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. **42** And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. **43** And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. **44** And all who believed were together and had all things in common. **45** And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, **47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

JERUSALEM CHURCH:

- 1) They were devoted: teaching; fellowship; prayer; giving.
- 2) They developed glad and generous hearts.
- 3) They were extravagant in their giving.

They didn't just talk about giving, they found ways to share. They sold possessions and belongings just so they could help others that were in need. **THIS IS TRUE CHURCH STUFF!**

Even in the early years we see signs of a coming famine. Economically things were difficult and they were about to get worse. And yet, God is adding thousands to the church and the church is taking care of their own.

The Jerusalem Church took care of their own congregation during those early years. They shared!

25 years later – the Jerusalem Church is suffering. So Paul and Titus are raising funds. The very people that Saul of Tarsus was arresting and killing he is now helping survive.

2 weeks ago we saw that the Macedonian Churches gave even beyond their congregation to people whom they did not even know.

2 Corinthians 8:1-7 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. **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. **6** 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. **7** 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.

Note: because the Jerusalem church were extravagant givers, God did what she predicted he would do. John 6:38 because they gave, God caused others to give back to them... pressed down shaken together and running over... the measure they gave it was measured back to them.

Real Generosity

1) It's Provocative

2 Cor. 8:7,8 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. **8** I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

a) The rhythm of sharing

- i) The Jerusalem saints were extravagant generous givers but now they are tremendous need.

So the Holy Spirit was moving upon others living in different regions to send money!

Now churches in Greece, Galatia, and Macedonia are all sending money to help. They were extravagant givers... now they have become gracious receivers.

- ii) Think about 16 for 16 Project – CLC has given just under 30,000 dollars this year to plant churches in very poor regions.

(1) Venezuela is in a financial crises. Yet in the midst of this crisis the Lord is adding to the church. But we can help and we are!

(a) The same thing is true in Nepal and Liberia!

(2) Now we want to help plant 2 churches in Pakistan.

(a) There are Christians living in Pakistan... they are treated poorly because of their faith in Christ and they struggle financially. Once again out of poverty people are coming to Christ. They need to be pastors, disciple and cared for.

b) Giving outside of one's own congregation us True Church Stuff.

- i) Converge: This morning there are 2 Baptist churches have a very important meeting together as they strategize about coming together as one for a season. We found out about this meeting and Landon Fleming and our College and Young Adult ministry offered to come serve their nursery needs so that all the member could be in the meeting today. So we have a group of 20-30 college students who are serving the nursery and preschool needs of these 2 churches this morning.

Our Nursery Needs Helpers!

Isn't that ironic, we have generous young adults serving two outside congregations and we are struggling to find some people who will generously serve our babies in the back?

Some generous people stepped up last night. They are giving their time to serve in their own congregation.

Lets be generous with our time! Glad and Generous with our Time.

- ii) Thinking about needs inside and outside our congregation and giving your time generously to meet those needs... That's True Church Stuff.

Complaints: why are we helping others when we have so many needs here? Well why did the Macedonians give money to Jerusalem out of their own extreme poverty? Because we want to "excel in the grace of giving!"

Because Rich Generosity is TRUE CHURCH STUFF!

8:12-14 Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have. **13** Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. **14** Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.

- c) Seeing others making huge sacrifices should provoke us to good works

2) It's a Partnership

By the way, did you know that the famine in Judea was foretold by the prophets in Antioch years before it hit.

Acts 11:27-30 Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. **28** And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). **29** So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. **30** And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

- a) We partner with God: The Spirit spoke to the prophets about the coming need and He had the solution.

I want to encourage to listen to the Holy Spirit when he speaks to you about a coming need. Especially when he leads you to meet that need with extravagant generosity.

- b) Giving Systematic on Sundays was a pattern – Offerings on Sundays is True Church Stuff.

1 Cor. 16:1,2 NIV Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. **2** On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

i) Our giving should be a systematic, weekly practice on every Sunday when the church meets together.

ii) Our giving is to be proportionate—in **keeping with** one's **income**.

(1) Though Paul does not use the word “tithe” (10th of your income) he is clearly using the tithing principal within the churches.

(2) It's not about equal amounts it's about equal sacrifice. THAT TRUE CHURCH STUFF

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iii) Everybody should participate.

(1) Notice in v. 2 he says “each one of you”

“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income”

(2) What a glorious pattern. When everyone gives sacrificially the Kingdom of God functions powerfully.

c) The early church followed Old Testament “storehouse” mentality.

Malachi 3:10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

i) Note the word “full”. (10% not 2 or 5 %)

ii) God invites his people to test the tithing principle.

(1) Make the kingdom the priority of your life. Start with your finances and see what God does.

(2) Robbing God is bad enough, but when you are robbing God you are also robbing yourself of His blessing.

Mal. 3:8 Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions.

He goes on to say that your stinginess and neglect has brought a curse upon you. Mal 3:9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.

For a Christian financial prosperity always begins with giving the Tithe (1 Tenth).

Note: 10% is a substantial amount. God intends it to be that way. You can find a way to live on 90% until and watch God give the increase.

- d) One Caution about the storehouse mentality: The church was not to become a welfare organization where people who refused to carry their own weight were allowed to live of the generosity of others.

2 Cor 3:6-12 Now we command you... keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness... **7** ... you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, **8** nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. **9** ... give you in ourselves an example to imitate. **10** For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: **If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.** **11** For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. **12** Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

3) It is Precious

2 Cor. 9:12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

Phil 4:18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

- a) Generosity results in an overflow thanks and praise to God.
- b) Generosity is just smells good to God.
- c) Generosity is True Church Stuff!