**Generous Hearts and Open Hands – February 2-3, 2024**

**QUESTION:** *What has God’s Word been teaching YOU about YOUR OWN generosity through this series?*

Part 1-The challenge of generosity (Malachi 3:6-12)

* The condition of God’s people
* The challenge for God’s people

Part 2-The joy of generosity (1 Chronicles 29)

* Joyful generosity is purposeful.
* Joyful generosity is sacrificial.
* Joyful generosity is contagious.

Part 3-The grace of generosity (2 Corinthians 8:1-7)

* The motivation of the generous Christian
* The devotion of the generous Christian
* The dedication of the generous Christian

**PPT: *While we read the passage***

**8**I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. **9**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. **10**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. **11**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. **12**For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. **13**For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness **14**your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. **15**As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.” (2 Corinthians 8:8-15)

We’ll now continue in this series with…

**Part 4-The equity of generosity (2 Corinthians 8:8-15)**

1. The **reason** for generous giving.
2. The **readiness** for generous giving.
3. The **recommendation** for generous giving.
4. The **result** of generous giving.

Let’s start with point #1: PPT

1. The **reason** for generous giving. (verse 8)

Notice Paul starts first with what is NOT the reason for generous giving. (*“not as a command”)*

* We should never be commanded, manipulated, or shamed by other people to give generously.
* As we’ll see shortly, giving should always be FREE WILL or from the heart of the giver.

The **REASON** is that generous giving proves our love is genuine. (agapē)

* PPT
* But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (Galatians 5:22)
* The act of generous giving puts all of our fruit on display.
* (*as we heard last week*) The Macedonian church through their “earnestness” was the model for genuine love because they gave even though they had very little.
	+ We can learn a lot from positive role-models…
* But more important than their example, Paul reminds them of the ultimate sign of love provided through the grace of Jesus Christ.
* Let’s look again at verse 9 PPT
* 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. (verse 9)

Paul refers to an incredible truth here and it’s important that we understand this profound statement. Let’s be clear on the type of riches and poverty he is referring to when it comes to Jesus. I’ll give you a hint…it is not about being materially rich or poor.

1. **Christ was rich** *because He is the eternal God.*
* John 8:58, Jesus said, “Before Abraham was born, I am.” In John 17:5, He says, “Restore Me to the glory I had with You before the world began.” In [John 10:30](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2010.30), He says, “I and the Father are one.” In Colossians 1, He is the premier one, He is the supreme one, He is the one above all others who is called the image or the representation of the invisible God. [Colossians 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Col%202.9), “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Deity.” [Hebrews 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Heb%201.3), He is the express image of God.
1. **The poverty of Christ -** *What about the poverty of Jesus?*
	* The incarnation. That’s how a rich, eternal God became poor. When He was born of a woman, [Galatians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gal%204.4); when He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, [Romans 8:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%208.3); when He had to come to the cross, [Colossians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Col%201.20); when He needed to descend from David, [Romans 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%201.3); when the Word became flesh, [John 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%201.14); when He was made for a little while lower than the angels, [Hebrews 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Heb%202.7); when He was manifested in the flesh, [1 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Tim%203.16) – that was the poverty.
* He laid aside the free exercise of all of His prerogatives. He left being face to face with the Father, took on human form.
* Perhaps no better passage explains this than Philippians chapter 2…PPT
	+ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202&version=ESV#fen-ESV-29380a)] **6**who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202&version=ESV#fen-ESV-29381b)] **7**but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%202&version=ESV#fen-ESV-29382c)] being born in the likeness of men. **8**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Phil (2:5-8)
* It’s that which is on Paul’s mind when He says, “He was rich, and He became poor.” Not material wealth or poverty.
* So, the eternal God, rich, becomes poor, humbled into human flesh, killed, executed at the cross. That’s His poverty. Although free and sovereign over all the created powers of the universe, He Himself comes under the powers, tastes the full measure of their thrust, even to the cross. And for our sake, He did it.
* When we CLUTCH our possessions and don’t share generously, we are not following the example of our Lord, Jesus Christ.
1. **Therefore we are rich:**
* The purpose was clear, that we, through His poverty, might become rich.
* To make poor sinners rich. Materially rich? No. Spiritually rich? Yes. Eternally rich? Yes.
* Rich with the same riches that he possessed and possesses.
* Rich in salvation, forgiveness, joy, peace, life, light, glory. Rich in honor. Rich in majesty. We are so rich we are called joint heirs with Christ. We are promised an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled that doesn’t fade away, and is laid up in heaven for us.
* In his first letter to these same Corinthians, Paul spoke of their richness…PPT
	+ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7**so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **8**who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:6-8)
* **Friends…We are rich.** We are as rich as He is rich, and we were really poor. This was all thanks to Jesus’ self-imposed poverty because of God’s love for us.
	+ **Some of you here today** are still poor…in spirit, is today the day that you will call on Him to share in His riches? He is ready for you.

Ok, speaking of being ready…let’s move on to the second point…

#2: PPT

1. The **readiness** for generous giving. (verses 10-11)
* Paul leaves his theological reasoning here and turns back to the practical.
* It seems that the church in Corinth had stalled on their commitment of generosity…there could be many reasons for this…
* “I give my judgment” – Paul knows them and cares for them…so he’s direct w/them.
	+ *Do you have someone in your life who can be direct with you?*
* “benefits you”- Because of the accusations directed towards Paul by false teachers, he reiterates that this is about their benefit, not his.
* “so now finish doing it well” – He wants them to finish what they started.
	+ *Personal admission: some of my life’s greatest regrets are when I have made a commitment to do something and did not follow-through.*

#3: PPT

1. The **recommendation** for generous giving. (verses 12-14)
* “it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have”
	+ Whether you have a lot, or very little…the free will gifts given from a generous heart are acceptable to God.
	+ ***Do we plan our giving?*** *Many of us, NOT ALL, but many have a sense for what our income will be in the coming months or years. It’s a healthy exercise to set a budget for your giving as a baseline and then when God provides you with more you can honor Him by giving even more generously.*
* Paul continues…verse 13-14a
* “your abundance at the present time” (PROVIDED BY GOD) “should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.
	+ it is proportionate and that’s where the idea of fairness or equity comes from.
	+ Also then in our generosity we are supplied with the gift of joy associated with the giving.
	+ It’s a win-win-win. (Others are helped, our faith is active with good works and God gets the glory)

#4: PPT

1. The **result** of generous giving. (verses 15)
* “As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.” (v15)
* So this seems like a riddle when you first read it, but for those of you who have cross-references in your bibles you can see that it’s a quote from Exodus 16:18.
	+ **PPT:**
	+ But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. (Exodus 16:18)
* This is a reference to God’s provision of manna during the time of Israel’s wondering in the wilderness. Most of you are familiar with this account of how God provided a fine, almost like dew substance in the morning. When prepared it tasted like wafers made with honey.
* ***(Note to Speaker) Share an illustration about gathering it daily***. (To learn more about manna, see Exodus 16)
* Paul is drawing on this story because much like the Israelite families would share their manna, the “family” of the new covenant, that is the body of Christ (Us), need to share generously with one another.

So, to review…we’ve heard The **reason** for generous giving, The **readiness** for generous giving, The **recommendation** for generous giving, The **result** of generous giving.

Now let’s find a relevant **APPLICATION:**

* ***PPT:***
* Benevolence Fund
* Cornerstone has a Benevolence Fund, which is a fund outside of the church budget for above-and-beyond giving to meet the needs of people in our congregation. (*For example, our Christmas Eve offering went 100% into the fund*)
* Some of these needs are help paying medical bills, car repairs, funeral costs, to cover while unemployed, gas, food, etc.
* It’s led by a committee of six church members (two Deacons) who accept requests submitted by those who are seeking help.
* The committee exhibits good stewardship & wisdom in who and how they distribute these resources. (SHOW FORM) They also discretely meet with the requestor, pray with them and follow-up with them over time.
* So when we give to this fund we can know that we are loving God’s people with more than our money.
* Consider a gift to benevolence in the coming weeks as your heart for generosity grows. (Write benevolence on the memo line or envelope when you give to designate the fund)
* TAKE AN ENVELOPE HOME AND PRAY ABOUT THIS.

**FINALLY…**

Paul tells us in Galatians 6:9-10

***PPT:***

[9] And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. [10] So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10)