



Sermon Series: Character Counts

To be used with Session 5: Generosity

Sermon Title Possibilities: “Divine Philanthropy!”

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

Connection To Unit Theme: This sermon is designed to complement the Bible study “The Generosity.” There are a lot of generous people in the world, and they often use their resources as a means to help those less fortunate. Moreover, there are those who are known for being liberal in their giving. These are known as philanthropists. People who regular use their resources to aid charitable causes. However, motivations for these donations vary. While some genuinely want to help, there are others who simply desire attention or to applauded for their actions. As the poet T.S. Eliot once asserted, “The last temptation is the greatest treason: to do the right thing for the wrong reason.” As we continue this series on character and center ourselves on this idea of Generosity, invite your congregation to engage not only the nature of their generosity, but the motivation behind it.

Introduction: Whenever someone extremely wealthy decides to make a generous donation, it typically garners national media attention. Whether it be a donation to a school, or to a charitable organization, it is usually a big deal when rich folks part with the funds in an attempt to help others. Consequently, a narrative has developed which suggests that only those with massive wealth can be philanthropically active. In other words, if you have a lot of money, you can donate a lot, but if you don’t, then you can’t. This leans into the partner narrative that solely associates generosity with finances. As God’s word teaches us, there are many ways to give. As we see here through Paul ‘s letter to the Church of Corinth, Godly character creates generosity that may include finances but is not limited to finances.

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 –Doing A Lot with a Little

Most of us are familiar with the miracle in Matthew 14, of Jesus feeding the 5,000 with only two fish and five loaves of bread. When one hears of the concept of “doing a lot with a little,” this story understandably comes to mind. Jesus was able to take what may have only been able to feed one person and multiplied it to the point that it could feed a crowd. While this is a popular narrative and story, there are those who believe that is just that, a story. There’s serious doubt among many that that sort of miracle can occur again. This contributes to the perception that unless I have a lot, there’s nothing I can do.

As Paul opens chapter 8 of II Corinthians, he testifies of the generosity and endurance of the church of Macedonia. Despite being afflicted and in dire straits, their giving persisted. They

refused to allow their lack of resources to interfere with their generosity. This not only touched Paul, but this inspired him, as this church was modeling the very Gospel that he was risking his life to spread. As he says of them in verse 2, "...their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their generosity." In many ways, these people were more committed to giving than some of the folks who had more money than they did. This was a testament to their heart and their commitment to Godly character through generosity. God desires that all of us get to a place where we have the same type of determination.

2 Corinthians 8:3-6 –Eager to Give.

When we get hungry, we are eager to eat. When we get sleepy, we are eager to sleep. When we get off work, we are eager to leave. These are all natural emotions. However, there's a special eagerness that develops when we have a particular motivation. College students are eager to complete their program so they can obtain their degree. Construction workers are eager to obtain their supplies so that they can start building. When someone is both eager, motivated, and their energy is focused correctly, positive results are all by guaranteed.

As we continue to explore our text in 2Corinthians 8, Paul shares of the eagerness that Macedonian church has. Specifically, as it pertains to their generosity. Despite not having much to give, they are excited to give what they can. There's no hint of hesitation or even concern that what they have won't be enough. They are so committed to God, and obeying Him at all costs, that they determined to do so by any means necessary. This made it abundantly clear that they were truly committed to God. In a likewise manner, our generosity, or lack thereof, goes a long way in indicating who we are in God and the status of our faith and commitment. Paul shares in verse 3 that the church was so eager to give that they literally "begged" for an opportunity to share what they had. They didn't view obeying God's will as optional, but rather a mandatory service that they refused to neglect. When God looks at our lives, does He see the same eagerness?

2 Corinthians 8:7-9 –Inspired to Give.

As discussed in a previous message, examples matter. For example, preachers grow and mature by learning from mature preachers. Moreover, many traits that we have are learned behaviors. A primary example of this is generosity. Most of us who excel at this learned it from someone else. If we were raised by generous people, then the likelihood is that it rubbed off on us. A lot of what we are presented with as children follows us into our adult years, whether good or bad. In this instance, having good examples of generosity can only benefit us as we get older, and drive us to want to keep the trend going.

Paul concludes this portion of the text by citing Jesus as the primary example of the Macedonian church's generosity. While they certainly encountered other generous humans, no example could ever surpass that of the Savior. And it was this excellent and unmatched example that inspired them to want to give. Likewise, Jesus' example should inspire us to do and say all we can to be

just like Him. When Paul speaks in verse 9 of Jesus, “becoming poor so that we may become rich,” he was in essence speaking to the depth of His love for us and how He was willing to leave His throne to ensure that we have a chance. Accordingly, our faith in Him should motivate us to give of ourselves so that others may be lifted up. When it comes to giving, there’s no greater example than Jesus. (John 3:16).

Conclusion: My all-time favorite singer, Mahalia Jackson, used to sing a song that says, “It don’t cost very much to place a gentle touch and to give a glass of water to a pilgrim in need of such. You may not be an angel, and you may not go to church, but the good you do will come on back to you. And it don’t cost very much.” In other words, generosity can be given in abundance even if an abundance of money is not available. All we need is genuine care, genuine kindness, genuine intentionality, and above all, faith in The Lord. There are a lot of Divine Philanthropists out there. They may not have a lot of money, but they make up for it through the abundance of their hearts. All of us can be generous. Therefore, all of us can be a Divine Philanthropist.

Author Bio

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