

In God's Image: Why Be Generous
Genesis 1:26 -27
Sunday, February 1, 2026

We just finished up our WWJD sermon series, what would Jesus do? Today we're starting up a new series, "In God's Image," which is about generosity. And, in a way, this series is just a continuation of the other one, just more narrowly focused on generosity.

And so, let's start this series asking: when it comes to generosity, what would Jesus do?

Now, I hope by now you know why we would be asking this question. It's not just a tired slogan from a long time ago. It's a question that's aimed at helping us get in touch with who we really are.

And who we really are is people created in the image of God; in the image of a God who IS generous, unselfish love.

And, we see that generous love made flesh in Jesus. As the apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 2, even though Jesus was part of God, he did not consider that equality as something to be used or exploited, but instead *emptied* himself. Because of his love for us, in what has to be the greatest example of generosity in the history of the universe, he left the fullness of eternity to enter into the constraints of time and space as a human being.

And then, as a human being, he continued to give of himself. He was generous with his time. On many occasions, Jesus would be trying to get away for some time by himself, but instead ministered to his followers. Maybe the best example of this is from Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus is heading off for some alone time with the Father but he sees the crowds that

have gathered and he has compassion on them. So, he teaches them all day, and when it's too late for them to get back home in time for supper, he feeds them all—up to 20,000 people—with a few loaves of bread and a few little fish.

Which is also a good example of how Jesus was generous with his abilities. He didn't keep his teaching and healing to himself or his close friends. There's a story in the Gospels about how Jesus healed Simon-Peter's mother in law of a fever. Of course, as soon as people heard about it, they were practically beating down Simon-Peter's door to get healed themselves. Jesus didn't turn anyone away. He healed everyone who came to him.

He was also generous with his attention. He was always paying attention to the people around him. In chapter 4 of John's Gospel, he spends an extended period of time talking with a Samaritan woman. As a Jewish man—and a teacher at that—he shouldn't have had anything to do with her. She was a hated Samaritan and a woman. But that didn't matter. She needed spiritual and relational healing and Jesus was there for her.

In chapter 10 of Mark's Gospel, Jesus was passing through Jericho, about to enter into Jerusalem for the last time. He might well have been preoccupied with his coming death. You might expect he would have been focused inside himself. Instead, in the midst of the crowd, he heard a blind man named Bartimaeus calling out to him. Instead of just continuing on to his appointment with destiny, he called blind Bart to him and healed him.

And Jesus was generous with his money. Now, this one isn't self-evident, because as far as we know, he didn't really have any money. But that's the point. He could have had all the money he wanted. He was God incarnate, for goodness' sake. He could have gotten himself

born into power and wealth. He could have gotten any job he wanted, up to and including Emperor. Instead, he made his living as a tradesman until he was 30, and then gave even that up to become an itinerant preacher, working not among the elites in Jerusalem, but the poor peasants of Galilee.

And remember, he was a miracle worker. He could have charged pretty much any amount he wanted for the healings and the exorcisms, but he didn't.

So, that's what Jesus did. Of course, it's just a short and incomplete summary, but it's enough to give us an idea of what we should do, how we should be generous, right?

Well, some would argue that's not quite fair. I mean, he is Jesus, and we aren't. We shouldn't be expected to do everything he did. And, in one sense, that's right. He lived a long time ago in a different culture. Certainly we aren't to imitate *everything* he did. And his mission included becoming an itinerant preacher and dying. That's not a call that God puts on very many of us.

But in another sense, the fact that he's Jesus and we aren't is the whole point. He is the one who shows us the image we're created in. He's the one who shows us how to live the kinds of lives we were created to live. Living like Jesus doesn't mean moving to the middle east and wandering around with sandals on our feet. But it does mean generally following Jesus' way of living.

So what does that mean for us?

Well, it's one of those things that's easy to say, but not quite so easy to do. It means living generously; living out the one real commandment Jesus gave us: Love God and love people.

It means being generous with our time and attention. First to God, setting aside time for God. Taking time to be with God in prayer and silence, worship and praise. And it means being intentional about it, not just giving God whatever might be left over at the end of a long day, but making our attention to God our top priority.

Likewise, it means being generous with our time and attention towards others. I've got to admit, this is a hard one for me. I've got my agenda. I've got my to do list. I've got my lists of tasks that need to be accomplished, and if I'm not intentional about being with others, it's likely not going to happen. I need to constantly remind myself that I'm not the center of the universe, that if my to do list for the day doesn't get accomplished, it isn't the end of the world. I need to remind myself that I wasn't created to accomplish agendas, I was created for relationship. If someone needs a kind word, a few dollars, or just someone to listen, that's what we're here for.

Being generous also involves our skills and abilities. Very few of us have the ability to miraculously heal physical illness and cast out demons, but there are plenty of other ways we can bring healing and wholeness into the world around us. Some of us are doctors. Some of us are lawyers (yes, even lawyers can do good for the world). Some of us are carpenters or plumbers or artists. God has given us all abilities and gifts, and God doesn't want us to hoard them just for ourselves. God did not give them to us so we could just use them for our own benefit. We were created to share our different gifts so everyone can be enriched.

And finally, generosity involves our physical and financial resources. Just as Jesus resisted and tirelessly preached against his culture's obsession with hoarding wealth, we must do the same. After all, everything we have—our lives, our time, our skills and talents, and our money—are absolute gifts from God. Our focus should be, as Jesus' was, on using them *for* God.

We were created for generosity, so let's live it.