

Generosity – 2

Again, God devoted approximately 2300 verses to the subject of generosity in money, giving of your time and talents.

God loves generosity because that is Who He is!

Last week the main message was that generosity has to do with the heart of the giver. It is not so much about the need of others, it's about your heart and where you are.

Remember the story from last week about Alexander the Great coming upon the beggar and giving him several gold coins and Alexander's servant said: "Emperor, the need of the beggar would have been met by a few copper coins, why did you give such a lavish gift of gold coins to him?"

Alexander's response was: "Yes a few copper coins would have been sufficient to meet the needs of a beggar, but several gold coins meets the giving nature of an Emperor."

Alexander understood the point that giving is not really a matter of the need as much as it is a matter of the nature of the giver.

1. We are to be **GENEROUS** because we are created in the image of God.

- We are redeemed with the royal blood of Jesus flowing in our veins.
- The Lord is incredibly generous.

I don't believe it's possible to be too generous.

But some people do think it's possible to be too generous: you can tell it by the way they act towards someone who is extraordinarily generous:

- They look at them like they did something wrong.

The Bible has many stories, but we will look at one in John 12:1-8

- This story tells the good news and everybody needs to know the good news of this story.

John 12:1-8

"Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the

fragrance of the oil. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simons son, who would betray Him, said, why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.”

This is a great story about generosity because you have two extremes of the attitude towards generosity.

Two extremes:

- Mary’s extravagant **GENEROSITY**.
- Judas’ **SELFISHNESS**. Total opposite of generosity.

Most folks fall in between these two extremes:

- We are not as stingy as Judas.
- But there are not very many of us like Mary either.

You may think you’d be like Mary and pour perfume on Jesus’ feet.

But do you understand the level of her generosity?

- These 300 denarii were the equivalent of a year’s wages.
- You know what your income for a year is; go to the bank and withdraw that amount and purchase this perfume and pour it out in one setting on Jesus’ feet.
- That is how incredibly generous Mary’s offering was.

The question is **Why** would she do this?

- Why would someone be that generous? Take a moment and answer this question!
 - She wanted to worship Him.
 - She wanted to express love to Him.
 - She wanted to express her faith in Him
 - She wanted to give all to Him.

I suggest to you it was LOVE that made her give such a generous gift to Jesus.

- Nothing else could motivate a person to be that generous.
- Unless you were so prideful, you did it to be noticed by others.

On the other end of the spectrum was Judas, who was such a selfish person that he got up into Mary's business.

- Why did she offer this much when there are the poor to take care of?
- If it had been one of us, we may have questioned Judas – “What's it to you? this is my Jesus time.”

Question? Why would anyone care how generous someone was being?

- Jealousy!
- Shame of what was in his own heart. What was in Mary's heart revealed what was really in his own heart of selfishness.
- Her bright light was shining on him and he wanted to take the pressure off himself.
- He blamed her because he didn't want anybody to look at him.

V6 – “He said this because he was a thief and he wanted the money box because he would take what was put in it.”

- He was disguising his own selfish motive.
- Her generosity was shining light on his darkness.

The same spirit that Judas had is alive and well today:

- Looking at someone else's generosity and feeling ashamed of your lack of generosity and wanting to blame someone else.
- “Well, they could have really done a lot with that money for the K.O.G. if he hadn't of spent it on himself.”
“Who does she think she is wearing those kind of clothes?”
“How do they justify living in a house like that with all the poor in the community?”

All of that is a revelation of something inside of us because we never feel a need to judge someone else unless we feel guilty about our own life.

Judas' real problem was he wanted to steal the money out of the money box.

Jesus is telling this and there is a modern day context to this story:

- People put money into Jesus' money box to help finance the earthly ministry of Jesus. Food – travel from place to place.
- The same thing is done today with the offering; money is placed in the offering to finance the ministry of Jesus in the earth.

How outrageous it would be for a man to take money out of the money box that belonged to Jesus.

But the question is: Just as Judas robbed God by taking money **out** of the box, some of us rob God by refusing to put money **into** the box.

- This gets personal because our money is personal!

Why did God put this story here?

- Why did He tell of such extremes of Mary vs. Judas?
- Perhaps they were placed together in this story by God for the purpose of asking ourselves: **WHICH SIDE OF THE STORY DO I LAND ON?**
- Am I more like Mary the generous-extravagant giver, or am I more like Judas the selfish one?

- Selfishness tries to get the focus off the selfish one and onto the extravagance of others.
- Selfishness drives by others houses and criticizes others blessings.
- Selfishness always looks after self, by pointing out someone else.

This is not who we are supposed to be, we have the DNA of Jesus who is generous.

There is a real war inside of us:

- Some of the first words we speak are not dad or mom, but MINE!
- Kids don't care how many toys are on the floor, they cry out MINE!
- We are born with that selfish nature that we will always have to fight against.

2. Selfishness will never pass the TRUST test.

Testing is a big thing with God.

He never tempts us to sin, but He does test us to see where our heart really is.

Judas obviously had a problem with money. He was one of Jesus' disciples, so where does Jesus assign Judas to serve? On the Finance Committee!

- He's a thief and Jesus gives him the money box to hold.

Today, if Jesus was a pastor, and He let that go on:

- Someone would say: "He obviously is not in touch with God. He doesn't have any spirit of discernment; or He's know not to let Judas handle the money."
- He must not have prayed when He was selected Judas, He hired the wrong staff!

Jesus knew what He was doing, He knew Judas had this problem.

- God's main concern is never stuff, it's always PEOPLE!
- Jesus was not all worried that Judas might steal some of the money.
- Jesus knew he was going to steal from HIM.
- Jesus was not worried about stuff – “There was not anything made that was not made by His hand.”
- If Jesus needed something, He could have just created it.
- If it's about stuff, He can give you stuff – whether it's money, a new kidney, whatever.
- God is concerned with PEOPLE!
- He's concerned with where you are in your maturity process.
- **That's why God will always test you in your area of weakness!**

He is not worried about if you mess up something, because He can fix anything you mess up!

He's interested in you maturing!

That's why He tested Judas with the money box. That's why He tests you with money.

Money is a big test for ALL of us:

- It is one of the foundational tests of serving God

Luke 16:11-12

“If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon – **worldly riches**, who will commit to your trust the **true riches**?

And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own.”

- The test is whether you can be trusted with the worldly riches so that you can be trusted with the true riches.
- Do you know that your money is another man's – Jesus Christ's?

The heartbeat of Jesus is: I want to do great things with your life, I want to build you into someone awesome, I want to use you to accomplish great things in the Kingdom of God; but if you can't handle your checkbook or your account; **I can't do much with you.**

If you don't understand something as basic as generosity; I can't do anything with your life.

God's tests are so that He can promote you: one of the foundational tests is the generosity test – the money test.

If you don't pass there, you won't be able to move on to the greater things He has for you to do.

Good News: If you fail the money test, Jesus allows make up tests.

- True with every test from the Lord, He wants you to pass it so much, He will allow you to take a makeup test on all of them.
- THIS MAY BE WHY SOME FOLKS ARE IN A PERPETUAL MONEY TEST – ALL THE TIME!
- Because they always fail the money test, they are always in the money test.
 - They cry and ask: “Why is God always punishing me.”
 - God is saying: “I believe in you, but you have to pass the test before you can move on.”
- Maybe you need to go home and let this marinate in your head: Where have you been the last 10 years in your finances?
- There are people here today that have failed the test for years, but when they finally got it – they began to TRUST GOD – BE OBEDIENT TO GOD – TO BE GENEROUS – ALL OF A SUDDEN “THINGS CHANGED”

But there are some who will live their entire life failing God's TRUST TEST.

3. God wants ALL of His children to be **EXTRAVAGANT givers.**

Like Mary

Two Reasons why?

1. God wants all His children to be like Him:
 - The ultimate aim of every believer should be to be more like God and God is the MOST extravagant GIVER in the history of the world.
2. We see God highlighting the lifestyles of the extravagant givers found in His Word: King David – with all his heart, he wanted to build God a Temple. But he was not allowed to do so because he was a man of war. God said NO, you can't build it.
 - Most of us if our life dream was bashed, will take our toys and go home!
 - But David, said OK – I can't build it, but I can give an offering for the temple to be built. I can just leave the money for my son Solomon to do the work.
 - David's offering in modern day equivalency was equal to \$12 Billion.

Solomon - The wisest man there ever was. WHY?

- He was supposed to offer a bull as an offering, but instead he offered 1,000 bulls as a sacrifice.
- He wanted to do a thousand times what God required, that very night God came to Solomon and asked him to ask anything that he wanted the Lord to do for him – 2Chron. 1:11 “God said to Solomon, because this was in your heart, and you did not ask for riches, wealth, honor, or the life of your enemies, neither for long life; but have asked for wisdom and knowledge that you may judge My people; I will give you that and all that you did not ask for.”
- What if God said that to you?
 - Some of you would tell God, “I’ve had my list ready for a long time Lord.” There’s a car down at the dealership, a house, a condo at the beach.

Why could God write a blank check to Solomon before he ever asked and know that Solomon was going to pick wisdom?

- Because Solomon had already passed the **TRUST** test.
- He had already shown he was generous and not selfish, but an extravagant giver.

Another expression of generosity that rivals David’s and Solomon’s:

Luke 21:1-4

“As Jesus looked up, He saw the rich putting their gifts into the Temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow putting in two very small copper coins. I tell you the truth Jesus said, this poor widow has put in more than all the others. These gave their gifts out of their wealth, but she gave out of her poverty has given all that she had to live on.”

- How was her gift bigger than \$21 billion?
- If two pennies is all you have, it would be a big offering. That is **all** she had.
- She had a generous spirit; it is not about the amount.
- It is about the spirit and about the heart.

God gave His Son and angels did not save Him, but He gave His life on the Cross.

God set the bar high in that He says to us:

- “I’ll never ask you to do something that I haven’t done for you.”
- I’ll never ask you to be generous in any way without showing you the most amazing display of generosity the world has ever known.

There are three ladders of giving:

1. Tithes

2. Offerings

3. Extravagant offerings

Tithing is the bottom rung of the ladder, offerings are the next rung and extravagant offerings is the top rung.

Sadly, most people never get on the bottom rung of tithing. They're not willing to tithe and trust God.

But those who get on the bottom rung of tithing usually go to the second rung of offerings – because when you give to God – He gives back to you.

You see these principles begin to work and you want to bless somebody.

Then there are a few people who go all the way to the top and they give extravagant gifts.

Mary was an extravagant giver.

Jesus said about her that wherever the gospel is preached, Mary's story would be told.

The natural by-product of being generous is that you will be drawn closer to Him.