

- **Generosity – the Heart of Jesus Church – part 3**

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2 Corinthians 8:1-12 ; 1 Chronicles 29:1-20

Last year I travelled to Kenya for the Anglican Church GAFCON conference. Over just 2 weeks, people from this church gave over \$4,000 to cover my travel costs. That is generosity.

2 weeks ago, over \$12,500 was given at the thanksgiving service for the future ministry planning of this church. That is generosity.

Since we partnered with Compassion Australia as a church, around 20 children have been sponsored by members of our church. That's a commitment of over \$12,000 a year. That is generosity.

Over \$2,100 was given to the Bible society last month for Bibles for the Persecuted church. Generosity.

Earlier this year, over \$1,000 was given to a family in need in our suburb after a young pregnant woman was killed, leaving behind her husband and son. Generosity.

Over a period of about 5 years, around \$600,000 was given to the redevelopment of this building site. Generosity.

Over the past 8 years, our offertories have increased from \$111,000 a year to around \$204,000 a year. Generosity.

Last Saturday, two guys from our Church came around and did some work on my front lawn. Generosity.

Last Sunday night, I arrived home after a very long day to find that one of our members had cooked and delivered dinner for our family. That is generosity.

I could go on, and on, and on. Because this is a generous church. It is easy to see this.

God's people, here, in this place, are generous. And we all need to know that. And hear that.

Yet, I know many of us sometimes find it awkward to talk about money in church. But around 10% of Jesus' teaching himself focuses on the issue of money. The rich young ruler, the poor widow, the tax collectors, the turning over of the money changing tables in the temple, the good Samaritan, the rich man and Lazarus, the sermon on the mount... the list goes on!

The Bible has a lot to say about money and wealth. Yet, we shrink at the thought of discussing it today. And why is that? Perhaps if we find it uncomfortable to talk about, it is because sometimes, we do not want to admit that money MAY be a false god in our life. But we need to talk about it. Because the Bible does!

- **III – creeping weeds**

At our house, we often have a lot of weeds coming through our fences and into our gardens. Weeds and vines creep through the fence and wrap themselves around the

plants in our gardens. And if we're not watchful, those weeds and vines start **choking** our plants. So we need to regularly spray the weeds or pull them out to make sure they don't kill our plants.

The god of money is like that. It can creep in. It's just over the fence. And UNLESS we talk about it, openly and from the Bible, there is a great risk that this god of money will creep into our lives and choke our faith. We need to talk about it.

And there are plenty of Bible passages that warn us of this, and passages that rebuke us for the love of wealth and the trust we place in the things of this world. But there are also passages like the ones we read today, that are **encouraging** and **inspiring** when it comes to generosity.

- **King David**

In 1 Chronicles, King David is preparing the people of God for building the temple of God. He is encouraging their generosity. And he speaks of the resources that have been committed by the royal treasury. But then he also adds his own generosity. He tells them how much he is personally giving to the work from his own wealth. And this inspires the leaders and the people of Israel to be incredibly generous themselves. His generosity inspires generosity.

- **Paul**

And in 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks to the Corinthian church about generosity. He inspires them with the story about the generosity of the Macedonian Church, who gave in the midst of severe trial. And 5 amazing things stand out in this account:

- 1. UNLIMITED**

They gave as much as they were able, and even BEYOND their ability. Their generosity was never LIMITED. Could our generosity be like that? Unlimited. A generous heart has no limits. A few years ago I visited a widow from our congregation. She heard about the victims of an earthquake and our Archbishop's appeal to help those in need. She handed me an envelope with \$1000 cash and said: "I was saving up for air conditioning, but I think that can wait another year or so!" That is unlimited generosity. Beyond expectation.

- 2. PLEADED**

The Macedonian church PLEADED with Paul for the privilege of sharing, and they **exceeded** his expectations. Do we PLEAD for the opportunity to give, or do we need prompting and pushing to be generous? Generosity is grounded in our heart. A heart that WANTS to give for God's work. A heart that says: "Let me give! I want to give!"

- 3. MODELLED**

Paul wants the Corinthians to model their giving on Jesus – who gave up the riches of his heavenly kingdom to become poor. He walked this earth and gave his life for the people of this world. And by doing that, by becoming poor for us, he was able to offer

us the eternal riches of heaven. The heart of generosity is motivated by the generosity of Jesus, who has offered us eternal riches.

4. CONTINUING

Paul asks the Corinthians to “finish the work”. The heart of generosity is not one that gives here and there, but a heart that continues in generosity. It is a sustained, continued generosity that recognizes the ongoing need for the work of the gospel.

5. GOD GIVEN

And finally, one “condition” – verse 12:

- *“12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.”*

The heart of generosity comes out of what we **have**, not out of what we do **not** have. It comes out of what God has given us. As David says in 1 Chronicles 29:14

- *“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”*

David reminds us that **ALL** we have comes from God. We can only give out of what he has given us. We’re not asked to give from what we don’t have. And what we give is from what God has provided.

So what do we take from all of this?

Hopefully, we can read these passages and be **encouraged** to be generous with what God has given us. Hopefully, our motivation for generosity is the model of Jesus.

Hopefully we will not feel uneasy or unsettled or even angry to talk about our giving as God’s people.

Hopefully we will be stirred to think HOW we can be generous.

Because the heart of Jesus Church is a generous heart.

Listen to these words of David from 1 Chronicles 29:17 –

- *17 I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. 18 Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.*

This is a heart issue. A generous heart is a loyal heart, a faithful heart, a heart with integrity. The heart is what matters. If we are not giving joyfully and willingly, with honest intentions, if we constantly need a push and a shove to **reluctantly** give from our wealth, then that is not a **loyal** heart.

A loyal heart, a faithful heart, needs no coercion. So today, I want to offer you encouragement. No guilt. No pressure. No push or shove. Just a gentle encouragement.

We have a lot of opportunities to give here in Waitara, don't we? Why?!
Because we are all different. And we all find joy in giving in different ways.

- **The joy of giving.**

One person may find joy in being able to give Bibles to persecuted Christians. Another may find joy supporting the mission work in Jordan or Malawi or Asquith. Another may find joy in buying toys and food for people in need at Christmas. And THAT is our aim as a church. To find ways for EVERYONE to express **joyful** giving.

We don't want people to feel **obliged** or **guilty** to give to every single thing. God wants to see **generous** and **honest** giving from all of us. The more **opportunities** we have for people to give, the more **opportunity** there is for **each one of us** to find a way to give with **joy**.

And let me encourage you, finally, to find joy in giving first to the work here in Waitara church. This is our "home base". Without this community, we do not have the "home base" to give to other work throughout the world. It's important that we support the ministry locally right **here**, so we can keep extending our reach "**out there**".

But always give with a joyful heart. Give out of what God has given you. And give remembering the generosity that Jesus has shown us!

- Let's pray.

"Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.
11 Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,

for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

12 Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.

13 Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

...

But who are we, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

Amen.

2 Corinthians 8:1-12

8 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. **2** In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. **3** For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, **4** they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. **5** And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. **6** So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. **7** 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.

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 through his poverty might become rich.

10 And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. **11** Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. **12** For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

1 Chronicles 29:1-20

29 Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God. **2** With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities. **3** Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: **4** three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, **5** for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves to the Lord today?"

6 Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly. **7** They gave toward the work on the temple of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron. **8** Anyone who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the Lord in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. **9** The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

10 David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,

"Praise be to you, Lord,
the God of our father Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.

11

Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.

12

Wealth and honor come from you;
you are the ruler of all things.

In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.

13

Now, our God, we give you thanks,
and praise your glorious name.

14 "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. **15** We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. **16** Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. **17** I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. **18** Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. **19** And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided."

20 Then David said to the whole assembly, "Praise the Lord your God." So they all praised the Lord, the God of their fathers; they bowed down, prostrating themselves before the Lord and the king.