2nd Corinthians

Series: More Than Extravagant

July 22, 2018

Message 4:

**The Joy of Generosity**

2nd Corinthians 8

*Guests - Handout designed with you in mind - Info and notes especially for you - won’t call or visit -*

*Growth Track - Step 4 today*

*Generosity - Heard from Paul Singh -*

*Notes on Handout and in YouVersion App*

Shortly after World War II came to a close, Europe began picking up the pieces. Much of the continent had been ravaged by war and was in ruins. - Perhaps the saddest sight of all was that of little orphans everywhere… - Early on a chilly morning, an American soldier was making his way back to the barracks in London. As he turned the corner in his Jeep, he spotted a little lad with his nose pressed to the window of a pastry shop. Inside the cook was kneading dough for a fresh batch of doughnuts. The hungry boy stared in silence, watching every move. The soldier pulled his Jeep to the curb, stopped, got out and walked quietly over to where the little fellow was standing. Through the steamed-up window he could see the mouth-watering morsels as they were being pulled from the oven, piping hot. The boy salivated and released a slight groan as he watched the cook place them onto the glass-enclosed counter, ever so carefully. The soldier's heart went out to the nameless orphan as he stood beside him. "Son...would you like some of those?" The boy was startled. "Oh, yeah...I would!" The American stepped inside and bought a dozen, put them in a bag, and walked back to where the lad was standing in the foggy cold of the London morning. He smiled, held out the bag, and said simply, "Here you are." As he turned to walk away, he felt a tug on his coat. He looked back and heard the child ask quietly, "Mister...are you God?"

We are never more like God than when we have a heart of generosity.

Series Title comes from 2nd Corinthians 9:10-11 MSG - This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. He gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God.

We’ve seen this month that -

* We’ve been given a tremendous gift and an urgent task.
* We can RISE ABOVE attacks, disunity & defection.
* God wants to bring DRAMATIC CHANGE into our lives through His love, grace and our REPENTANCE.

**Big Idea: Generosity releases great joy!**

T.S.: 5 facts about generosity that a lot of people miss -

**> An amount is not a measure of abundance.**

2nd Corinthians 8:1-3 - Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will.

If someone were to ask you, “Are you a generous person?” How would you answer the question -

On what would you base your answer?

The first thing we think of is an amount -

AN AMOUNT IS NOT A MEASURE OF ABUNDANCE.

Mark 12:41-44 - Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.

 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.”

**Generosity is not measured nor limited by how much we have!**

No matter how much you have or don’t have you can be generous!

The Philippians were generous though they were poor -

**> Only desire determines the donation.**

2nd Corinthians 8:4-7 - They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.

 So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.

Paul pulls no punches - he points to what others have done - and the others have been very poor …

The enemy of generosity is selfishness - and all of us are born selfish … we all start in the same condition - we all have to overcome it.

“Mine!”

God is the One who desires to promote us, protect us, and provide for us. When we are selfish, we are doing that ourselves! We are believing in our ability to provide for ourselves instead of God - this become idolatry!

John 12:1-8 - Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany,

where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.Here a

dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was

among those reclining at the table with him.Then Mary took about a pint

of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and

wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance

of the perfume.

 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray

him, objected,“Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the

poor? It was worth a year’s wages.”He did not say this because he

cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the

money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

 “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she

should save this perfume for the day of my burial.You will always have

the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

About 2 months since Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead - grateful -

Two hearts here - generous and selfish -

Didn’t Judas want to give to the poor? No - he was stealing from the company treasury!

Someone drives by a house - it’s nice - and they comment on how nice the house is …

Someone else in the car - “I know them - they are great Christians - they love the Lord!”

“Well, shouldn’t they have spent their money on the poor instead of having such a nice big house?”

If the person who says that really cared about the poor, they would sell their house and give it to the poor.

We judge others to avoid examining ourselves! We judge by what we think others have and we don’t have - but generosity is not connected to or limited to how much we own!

I don’t want the attitude of Judas to be my standard -

**> The generosity of Jesus is our standard.**

2nd Corinthians 8:8-9 - I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches.

 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.

It’s not about what we have or don’t have -

It’s not about what others have in comparison to us -

It’s not about what others are able to do in comparison to us -

The generosity of Jesus is our standard -

* Think of His generosity -

 He came from eternity … gave everything …

* Think of His teaching -

 - the widow who only put in 2 coins -

What Mary poured out on Jesus was the equivalent of one year’s wages!

We can all relate to this - She gave an offering of one year’s salary to the Lord!

I don’t know if you make $20,000 or $120,000 - one year’s wage is one year’s wage! That would be an extravagant gift for anyone!

And wouldn’t it bring joy to do that?

Dangerous! Yeah - but what a rush!

I’m not saying to do that - but I am saying, look at the Bible - listen to the Holy Spirit - and determine to have a joyful spirit of generosity!

It’s not just about money - it’s about us. How much of ourselves have we given to God?

If we have given all of ourselves to God, then money is never an object no matter how much God asks of us.

\*\* Boy who stepped in the offering plate …

I pray that I will always have that kind of eagerness.

**> Let eagerness live!**

2nd Corinthians 8:10-15 - Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don’t have. Of course, I don’t mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal. As the Scriptures say,

 “Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over,

 and those who gathered only a little had enough.”

Do you remember a point in your life when you had a desire to give - and you gave - and it felt great?

Don’t let that die out!

* Proportion is ok - planning is ok - that’s why God set up the tithe - Paul doesn’t contradict that teaching here - he endorses it - just like Jesus did in Matthew 23 -

Matthew 23:23 - …For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.

You see - you can give just as much as everyone else - if everyone gives a tithe! That’s God’s plan -

And His promise is that all will be provided for -

Malachi 3:8-12 - “Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me!

 “But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’

 “You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

This is a promise of blessing! Give as God tells you to give - give all of yourself - the faith of that is represented in the tithe … and He will provide everything for you and for His ministry!

Everyone else will be able to see the blessings of God upon your life -

Then they will want those blessings!

Your giving - your generosity - will open the door for your to lead other people to Jesus!

If the generosity of Jesus is our standard - then a tithe is a small amount, because Jesus gave all.

So many people today who say, “We’re not supposed to give 10% - we’re supposed to give all!” - They are the ones not even willing to give 10%. You can tell their attitude is not one of joy.

You can’t have joy with a clenched fist - you only have joy when you release a gift - give it for the sake of others - give it for Jesus’ sake - quit worrying about yourself - trust in Jesus - and receive joy!

Right now - the Corinthians are pretty well off - while the Jewish Christians are suffering -

Paul says, “You can help them now - someday the shoe is going to be on the other foot!”

“DO ALL THE GOOD YOU CAN, BY ALL THE MEANS YOU CAN, IN ALL THE WAYS YOU CAN, IN ALL THE PLACES YOU CAN, AT ALL THE TIMES YOU CAN, TO ALL THE PEOPLE YOU CAN, AS LONG AS EVER YOU CAN.” - Origin unknown

**> Accountability insures the joy.**

2nd Corinthians 8:16-24 - But thank God! He has given Titus the same enthusiasm for you that I have. Titus welcomed our request that he visit you again. In fact, he himself was very eager to go and see you. We are also sending another brother with Titus. All the churches praise him as a preacher of the Good News. He was appointed by the churches to accompany us as we take the offering to Jerusalem—a service that glorifies the Lord and shows our eagerness to help.

 We are traveling together to guard against any criticism for the way we are handling this generous gift. We are careful to be honorable before the Lord, but we also want everyone else to see that we are honorable.

 We are also sending with them another of our brothers who has proven himself many times and has shown on many occasions how eager he is. He is now even more enthusiastic because of his great confidence in you. If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner who works with me to help you. And the brothers with him have been sent by the churches, and they bring honor to Christ. So show them your love, and prove to all the churches that our boasting about you is justified.

Insurance is a good thing -

Don’t like to pay those premiums … until you need a payoff.

Accountability is the insurance for the joy that generosity gives.

Be generous - receive joy - and have accountability so that you don’t lose the joy!

Our accountability …

God give us a spirit of generosity - because that leads to great joy!

**Invitation** - if watching by video pray with us.

Connection Card - if watching on video - let me know via email.

**Blessing**