

Practicing Generosity

Luke 6:36-38

August 4, 2019

Professor John Killinger in his book, “Letting God Bless You,” tells the story of a very generous woman. She is in her nineties. He says that she helps foreign students, sends flowers and food to those who are experiencing distress either by sickness or by difficult life situations. She often holds a dinner party and invites different people so that they may get to know each other. She sends theater and concert tickets to people she knows would appreciate them but can’t afford to buy them. She is always doing something nice for other people. Everyone loves her because of her selflessness and generosity.

John Killinger once said to her, “I am amazed by your generosity. You are so good to everybody.” “Oh no,” she said, “it is God who has been good to me. He has given me so much more than I can ever use. The more I give, the more I have. It is wonderful! I am so thankful that I can do this.”¹

When we say the word generosity, we often think of donating money or helping the needy. It is true that these are generous acts, but where does the generosity begin? It starts with mercy.

Our Scripture this morning says, “Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful. Do not judge...do not condemn...forgive and share generously.”² Be generous with your tolerance, be generous when you share. Why? Because that is the act of mercy. “Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful.”

The motive behind generosity is sacrificial love. Our love, whether that is toward our family, or friends, or church, or nation, or humanity, our love needs to be a sacrificial love; because we are the recipients of Christ’s sacrifice. The gifts of love, gifts of redemption, gifts of forgiveness, gifts of joy, peace and hope...they are all the gifts we have received from the Lord, and we have received them without any cost. Our act of generosity is nothing but our response to God’s kindness, bounteousness and mercy.

The movie, “I Am Sam” has a wonderful scene about generosity and sacrificial love. This is the movie about a mentally challenged man named Sam raising his daughter Lucy. Sam works at Starbucks. He has four friends who have

¹ <https://sermons.com/sermon/generosity/1341305>

² Luke 6:36-38.

similar disabilities. Lucy is going into first grade and needs a new pair of shoes. Sam and his friends wanted to help Lucy find the perfect shoes for her school. They all go to the shoe store together.

Everyone searches for what they think is the perfect pair of shoes for Lucy. They bring everything from blinking shoes to leopard skin shoes. The salesman is polite but somewhat frustrated. Eventually Lucy finds a pair of shoes she likes.

Sam asks how much they are and the salesman says, “They are \$16.19 with tax.”

Sam pulls out all his money and what he has is \$6.25. That is all he had. He begins to explain why he did not get his whole paycheck. Seeing that, all of Sam’s friends, who are not in any better shape financially, contribute what they have. They lay it all out on the counter and ask if it will be enough. It is a wonderful scene. They all leave the store with balloons.³

What a wonderful scene that shows sacrificial love. No one asked those men to help Sam, but because of their love for Sam and Lucy, they gathered what they had and offer it to Sam and Lucy. That is love, grace and mercy.

When we say generosity, it is not always about material things; it could be about giving of yourself. Sometimes just being present and available to a loved one who is having a hard time is the greatest gift you can give.

One of the ways we can practice generosity is by practicing generous listening. We all long to be heard and understood. We know that the epidemic of loneliness is very prevalent in our society. Loneliness is not only experienced when you don’t have anyone to associate with, but also you feel lonely when others don’t seem to hear or understand you. We all have a need for connection. We thrive when we receive kindness and caring, and when we feel heard and understood.

In order for people to feel heard and understood, it requires other to truly listen. We need to practice generous listening. Generous listening is about extending our attention and presence toward someone who needs caring. It is about listening with the ears of the heart.

3

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=lucy+finds+shoes+in+I+am+sam&view=detail&mid=8F0FD2C6A2661FEC9C9F8F0FD2C6A2661FEC9C9F&FORM=VIRE>

Listening offers the gift of being heard. It is a powerful practice of generosity.

One more thing I want to share with you regarding generosity is about generosity of tolerance.

If you live long enough and attempt many things, you will experience failure. People fail every day. People use inappropriate expressions, make mistakes, do things that they regret later. We are human beings full of error and shortcomings.

As a result, we suffer brokenness. We suffer broken relationships, broken marriages, broken health, broken careers. Most of us can identify with failure. We know from experience that failure is hard to cope with in a world like ours. Recovering from the failures is very difficult. So when we fail at something, most of us think of it as the ultimate and irreversible tragedy. It is not; but that is how we feel. Perhaps we feel that way because we are not tolerant enough toward each other.

Someone compiled what happens with a child when he grows up with various experiences.

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.
If a child lives with pity, he learns to feel sorry for himself.
If a child lives with jealousy, he learns to be selfish.
If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be self-confident.
If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
If a child lives with praise, he learns to be appreciative.
If a child lives with acceptance, he learns to try new things.
If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with recognition, he learns to have a goal.
If a child lives with fairness, he learns what justice is.
If a child lives with honesty, he learns what truth is.
If a child lives with sincerity, he learns to have faith in himself and others.
If a child lives with love, he learns to love and value others.⁴

⁴ <https://sermons.com/sermon/parenting-what-a-child-lives-with/1460969> It is slightly modified from the original source.

This may also apply to adults. The Lord wants us to be merciful and kind toward one another. He says, “Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful. Do not judge...do not condemn...forgive one another...and when you share, give generously.”⁵ Let us practice that.

⁵ Luke 6:36-38.