



November Sermon Series: Live to Give

Message #3: Giving the Gift of Me

Getting the Nod:

Opening Video: **Inspiring Acts of Everyday Kindness**

ILLUS: A grocery store check-out clerk once wrote to advice-columnist Ann Landers to complain that she had seen people buy "luxury" food items—like birthday cakes and bags of shrimp—with their food stamps. The writer went on to say that she thought all those people on welfare who treated themselves to such non-necessities were "lazy and wasteful." A few weeks later Lander's column was devoted entirely to people who had responded to the grocery clerk.

One woman wrote: I'm the woman who bought the \$17 cake and paid for it with my food stamps. I thought the check-out woman in the store would burn a hole through me with her eyes. What she didn't know is the cake was for my little girl's birthday. It will be her last. She has bone cancer and will be gone within a few months.

Transitional Statement: In this culture, generosity has to fight against critics and pessimists to get any respect. But that doesn't change the fact that generosity is one of God's greatest tools to touch hurting people. Even Jesus preached about this in Luke 6: 35...

God's Take on Generosity:

NKJV | Lk 6:35-38 **But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most-High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. 37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."**

Background of the passage:

- Jesus has been to the mountain to pray all night and speak to the Father... and to conclude who His disciples will be.
- He finished His prayer and called all His closest followers to Himself... and chose His 12 closest disciples who He called Apostles.
- He then came down from the mountain and stood on a level place with a large multitude before Him; He touched some; cast out demons; and healed them all.
- He then preached what is called "The Sermon on the Plain." It has many similarities to the Sermon on the Mount... but was a different sermon by Jesus.
- It was a message for the new movement of those following Him. It included messages to the poor... the broken hearted... to those cast out of the synagogue.
- The portion we read today is directly connected to generosity. In fact, generosity is more than just giving money and help to someone else. **Notice the forgotten generosity list ...**

The Forgotten Generosity List:

1. **Be generous with the love of Christ.** Love unlovely people; and enemies. He died that they may live.
2. **Be generous with your mercy.** It's renewed everyday because so much is needed. Give them a break.
3. **Be generous with your evaluations.** Judging is accomplished by tainted evaluations.
4. **Be generous with your forgiveness.** If we want God's forgiveness to be generous... forgive.

Transitional Statement: So how can we increase our generosity? By giving the gift of me!!!

Our Response to God's Word:

How to Increase Your Generosity:

1. Look beyond you.

- **See them!!!** But love your **enemies**, do good, and **lend**, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most-High.
- **This is the first step to increase your generosity.** I personally believe that the greatest challenge in living generously is to develop the habit of looking beyond ourselves and prioritizing God's plans & purposes rather than our own preferences.
- **Illustrative Example in 2 Corinthians 9...** the very poor Macedonians who begged Paul to let them support his ministry!
- It takes tremendous faith to generously give away "the gift of me" and trust that –as I do so- God will take care of me.
- **Application:** What does the focus of your life point to? Is it mostly you? Or mostly God & others? **Here's a tip: Pray for the Lord to give you a sight of what He sees.**
- NKJV | Mt 6:31-34 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.
- **Illustration of the White Boys in Macon, Georgia:** Trouble making... fighting... frustrating boys at a summer camp. They drove me nuts, but adopted me as a big brother. I saw them as troubled boys from a troubled home... until I saw them a couple months later. When they saw our college van, they ran to me and hugged me. There were rats on their kitchen counter; dirty dishes everywhere; horrific living conditions; and a grandmother too tired to change this all by herself. I looked beyond my frustration and saw three young boys crying out for help. **I looked beyond myself and saw their pain.**

2. Reach beyond you.

- "...do good, and **lend**..."
- **This is the second step to increase your generosity.** In Luke 6... Jesus is saying: open your hearts; don't just use God to improve you personally, but let God use you to help others!

- **Illustrative Example of Nehemiah.** Nehemiah had a pretty good gig going with the king with regard to being in the palace and tasting the food. But when he heard of the Jewish plight back in Jerusalem... he approached the King to do something about it.
- **Listen to Paul's words in NKJV |** Php 2:3-5 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...*
- **Application:** What breaks your heart around you? What needs to be done that you can do?
- **Illustration of the generosity of a beggar:** A young lady worked in Chicago got off the commuter train to go to her job when a scruffy-looking panhandler stopped her, asking for a quarter. Never one to cast judgment or ignore a need, she faced a dilemma. Looking straight in the man's eyes, she said, "I'm sorry but I don't have a quarter. I don't even have any money to take the bus to work today." She was quite touched when the man, without saying a word, reached into his pocket and gave her a quarter.

3. Give beyond you.

- *"Give, and it will be given to you..."* "Give" is a Greek word that means to provide a gift for something or someone that supplies a need.
- **Jesus challenges our culture's ethic that getting is better than giving.** He says: If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.
- NKJV | Mk 8:34-36 *When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"*
- **Illustration of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath:** God sent Elijah to Sidon to stay during the drought and famine. There he met a widow, preparing to make her last meal with her son... and then die. But Elijah told her to give him a little water from her cup and a small morsel of bread. He saw her need... and gave her a blessing of perpetual flour and oil until the drought was over. He gave beyond his needs... and blessed someone else.
- **Application: Budget to give:** Create time for others, use energy to bless others, invest money to help others, set aside reserves to invest in others. That's what Jesus is saying!
- **Illustration of the Restaurant Blessing to the Homeless Blessing:** There was a man who had ordered a meal at a restaurant when they brought him the wrong meal. They quickly fixed the order and gave the man the mistaken meal to take home. Feeling blessed with a meal for later, the man walked out into the cold and stumbled over a homeless man. The Lord nudged the man to give him the meal. It was the homeless man's favorite food. We've all been blessed by God... in order to bless others.

4. Serve beyond you.

- NKJV | Ga 5:13 **For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”**
- **Jesus is looking for people and churches who have His heart:** to see, care for, give to, and serve the needs of others.
- **He directs us to go and show His love to our families,** neighbors, the needy, and our world by giving the gift of “me” to them.
- **Find a need:** If you’ll look, listen (and ask when suspicious) God will reveal to you the needs around you.
- **Do what you can with what you have where you’re at right now.** One can’t help everyone, but everyone can help someone. And don’t be afraid to ask.
- **Generosity grows your hearts, and it also grows your relationships.** So, if you desire to become rich in character and in friends, grow generosity –it’ll grow you.

Transitional Statement: Let me close with a great story on servant generosity...

Drawing the Net:

Illustration of the Lonely Thanksgiving that Turned into a Lifelong of Friends: For his first Thanksgiving alone **in 1985, Scott Macaulay** was thinking that he would have to heat up a frozen turkey dinner and turn on a football game to stifle the silence in his apartment. With his parents recently divorced and “nobody talking to anybody,” he said, “I was looking at a pretty rotten Thanksgiving. And I absolutely hate to eat alone.”

Then Macaulay had an idea: What if he took out an ad in the paper and invited 12 strangers to join him for Thanksgiving dinner? It seemed like a manageable number to host at the First Baptist Church he attended—and, yeah, it was a little crazy, but it had to be better than being lonely.

Since those 12 strangers gathered around his table for turkey, stuffing, and pumpkin pie 33 years ago, Macaulay has made his free feast an annual event. Through the years, he has fed plenty of lonely friends like widows, widowers, homeless people, and college kids who can’t make it home.

One year an elderly woman paid \$200 for an ambulance to drive her to the church from her nursing home. She arrived decked out in fancy clothes and said she hadn’t been out in seven years. She cried when dinner was over. Infants have spent their first Thanksgiving with Macaulay, and more than a few elderly people have sat down for their last.

Scott has his lonely friends write notes of thanks. “Sometimes, they’re grateful they no longer have cancer or that they finally found a job or have a place to live,” he said. “One year, a guy wrote that he was thankful his son was speaking to him again. That one was a tear-jerker.”

Geoff Shanklin, 65, lives alone and has attended every dinner since the tradition began. He said, **“For people like me with nowhere to go, Scott is family.”** Source: Cathy Free, “This man hosts a free Thanksgiving dinner for all who RSVP. It’s his 33rd year,” Washington Post (11-19-18)

This week’s challenge: Pray that the Lord opens your eyes to see needs around you... and then bless them. Be the feet of Jesus this week!