



November Sermon Series: Live to Give

Message #4: Generosity: Excelling in Grace

Getting the Nod:

Opening Video: **Church Without Volunteers**

Turn with me in your Bibles to Acts 6. Ever since the first century... the church has been successful in impacting people for Jesus and staying strong for the following generations. The success has been tied to **the power of Jesus... the presence of the Holy Spirit... the leadership that has been called to lead... and the volunteers** that stepped up to serve.

This series has been about living to be generous. **The Church could not have survived without those 4 elements. Especially the last one. The Church could not have survived without those volunteers who were generous with their time. I can prove it!**

Transitional Statement: I can take you to the place where the Christian Church began its volunteer army status. You see, the new Christian Movement had developed a big problem. People's needs were not being met, and it led to some hard feelings. In fact, the problem threatened to split the church right down the middle. Only the church found a way to deal with the problem; and instead of splitting up, they grew even bigger and stronger. It's found in Acts 6. Let's read it.

God's Take on Generosity:

NKJV | Ac 6:1-4 **Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."**

Background from Barclay:

- **As the Church grew, it began to encounter the everyday problems** of doing ministry. In this case it had to do with the neglect of the widows in regard to a distribution of food and assistance.
- **That distribution was called the "Kuppah"** which is translated "Basket". **You see,** In the synagogue, there was a routine Jewish custom where two collectors went round the market and the private houses every Friday morning and made a collection for the needy, partly in money and partly in goods.
- **Later in the day, this collection was distributed.** It was for those who were temporarily in need... and those who were permanently unable to support themselves.
- **It is clear that the Christian Church had taken over this custom.** But among the Jews themselves there was a rift.
- **In this passage we see that the Hellenists had a problem with the Hebrews. Let me explain:** In the Christian Church, there were two kinds of Jews. There were the Jerusalem / Palestinian Jews, who spoke Aramaic. They were the Hebrew Jews of the ancestral language and they prided themselves on the fact that there was no foreign element in their lives.

- **There were also Jews from foreign countries who had come up for Pentecost and made the great discovery of Christ.** Many of these had been away from Palestine for generations; they had forgotten their Hebrew and spoke only Greek.
- **Here's the problem:** The Hebrew Jews were spiritually snobbish Aramaic-speaking Jews who looked down on these foreign Jews.
- **This rift affected the daily distribution of food and money.** Grumbling and complaining arose among the foreign Jews (Hellenists) saying their widows of the Greek-speaking Jews were being—possibly deliberately—neglected.
- **Get this picture:** The apostles were not only preaching and teaching and praying... but they also were also cleaning up after the meals... and trying to handle the complaining and grumbling that was going on.
- **The Apostles** felt they ought not to get themselves mixed up in a matter like this; so seven lay-people were chosen to find a solution to this situation and to take over the local needs in the ministry.
- **It is very interesting to note that the first volunteers** needed in the early church were chosen not to talk, teach or sing, but for the everyday practical needs of service.
- **The Church leaders were called to the BIG PICTURE of the Word and the GREAT COMMISSION; while the people were called to the local tasks in the church.**

Illustration of the Global Cab Driver: A fellow comes up to a cab driver in New York and says, "Take me to London." The cab driver tells him there is no possible way for him to drive the cab across the Atlantic. The customer insists there is. "You'll drive me down to the pier and we'll put the taxi on a freighter and when we get off at Liverpool, you'll drive me to London, and I'll pay you whatever is on the meter." The driver agrees and when they arrive in London, good to his word, the passenger pays the total on the meter and gives him a thousand-dollar tip.

Now the driver is roaming around London and doesn't know what to do. A Britisher hails him and says, "I want you to drive me to New York." The cab driver can't believe his good luck. The passenger says, "First, we have to take a boat..." The driver says to the British man, "That I know. But where do you want to go in New York?" The passenger says, "Riverside Drive and 104th Street." And the driver responds, "Sorry, I don't go travel to the west side of New York." (James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited, p. 389)

That's silly! But that's no more silly than churches who have a world-wide vision, but neglect the needs of people right in their own backyard.

Illustration of Coke: You can buy a Coca-Cola everywhere. You can buy a can of coke in almost any store here in the United States and also in most places overseas. Do you know why? Coca-Cola has a world-wide marketing strategy that works. It is embodied in their motto, it's posted at the company headquarters: **"THINK GLOBALLY, BUT ACT LOCALLY."**

That's good advice for a church. We must think globally – have a world-wide mission and vision. But at the same time, we must act locally – not neglecting the needs of those people right in your own back yard.

Transitional Statement: A generous church is a church that understands these four things...

Our Response to God's Word:

The Unchangeable Values of a Generosity Church

1. It makes disciples out of lost people.

- **The first church in the New Testament knew why it existed.** They were called to a Commission that was GREAT! To lead people to be Born Again and to teach them the Word of God as a lifesaving... life-changing Book.
- **Is it more important to worry about the weak believers in Africa than those right across the street in Court House? Of course not! Yes, we should help to make disciples across the world... but also here in central Ohio!**
- **To them:** If lost people weren't being saved and the newly converted weren't being disciplined for the purpose of leading more people to Christ... they would be a failure to God.
- **If a physician can't heal people...** he will ultimately lose his job. If a carpenter can't build anything... he has failed. If a lawyer never wins a case... eventually no one will hire him.
- **And if churches never lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ or never develop a disciple... lock the doors and move on... because it has not followed the mission of its Creator.**

2. It meets the needs of people.

- **The first church chose seven men to feed the Greek-speaking widows.** They also became the ones who met the felt needs of their congregation, as well as met the needs around them to show the love of Christ! We must do the same.
- **We have a lot of needs right here in Fayette County.** We have a need to reach families in turmoil; children who need to find Jesus before they fall deep into sin; elderly folk need us. We have a growing Hispanic community. We have people who need food and help with utilities, because they are out of work. We have a whole host of needs that surround us every day.
- **So, do we ignore these very practical, felt needs, solely because we're focused on the task of "making disciples of all nations?" Of course not.** On the contrary, if we're going to accomplish all that Christ has called us to do, we must meet people's needs. We must address their personal concerns.
- The question is: How do we do that? And again, the answer is very simple. A generosity Church...

3. It mobilizes God's gifted people.

- They said, "It would not be right for us... Choose seven men from among YOU..."
- **Instead of doing it themselves, the leaders put qualified people to work.** They were spiritually qualified – "full of the Spirit." And they were intellectually qualified – "full of wisdom."
- **More than that, they were also close to the situation.** They were those who understood and felt the needs more than anybody else. The Greek-speaking widows needed food. So who did they pick to feed the Greek-speaking widows? Greek-speaking men!
- Did you notice that in verse 5? "They chose Stephen...Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas." **They're all Greek names!**
- **Who better to meet the needs of Greeks than Greeks themselves?** They understand the needs of Greeks the most, and they feel the needs of Greeks more deeply than anybody else.

- **Who better to meet the needs around us...** than ourselves? Those who understand the needs of this community.
- **Illustration of Michael Jordan's Return to the NBA:** When Michael Jordan re-entered the NBA in 2001 with the Washington Wizards, they had to implement a no-shooting rule for Jordan during one of their scrimmages. It wasn't because Jordan was hogging the ball, trying to be a superstar again. It was because Jordan's teammates stood around and waited for him to perform. Jordan and Coach Doug Collins put a stop to that. Jordan said, "Everybody wants to sit back and watch. But one [reason] why we became successful in Chicago was... we had to play as a unit instead of just watching. "What makes me more effective is other guys stepping up and being a threat. If I'm the only threat, then I'm doing all the work. Obviously that's not going to work."
- **If the Church is to succeed, it must be recruiting a volunteer army...** willing to fight and touch and to bless the lives of those around them. There is so much that needs to be done... **WILL YOU CONSIDER BEING GENEROUS AND GIVE SOME TIME TO JESUS?**

4. It maintains its priorities as God's people.

- What that means is a Generosity Church maintains the priority of the first three points of this outline!
- NLT | 2 Co 8:7 **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.**

Transitional Statement: I would like to challenge us all to the PRIVILEGE OF GIVING YOUR TIME FOR ETERNY SAKE. Here are just a few of the wonderful opportunities to serve at Heritage...

Drawing the Net:

Slide Opportunities:

- **Youth Nation / Heritage Kidz**
- **Rose Avenue**
- **Heritage Food Pantry Annual Christmas Boxes / Heritage Food Pantry**
- **First Touch Ministry**
- **Media Team**
- **Other Heritage Events Like...**

And these are the people that you look for to get involved!!!

Let me close with this... There was a church that had four members: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. But Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it. But Nobody did it.

May that never be known of us!