Dec. 16th Message: Reimagining Generosity


As we resume our series on “Love Generously,” we turn our attention to a Jesus saying that is not found in the gospels, but is instead quoted by the Apostle Paul in Acts 20:32-35. Let’s stand and read the Word of the Lord. (show scripture)

We’ve all heard that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and I think in our minds we all know that is true. And yet, when it comes to living generously...what we believe to be true in our minds rarely makes its way to our hearts. Don’t get me wrong, we enjoy giving gifts to our kids or our loved ones, but as you know, true generosity...Christian generosity...extends beyond our own. Generosity is not providing for our own...that’s called parenting. Generosity is looking beyond ourselves and our own in order to bless those who cannot pay us back...and most of the time, that involves a wonderful element of surprise. Take a look at this.

Video: When You Give, You Grow (JC Penny)—3:37

Far too often we think of giving as something we should do, or even something we have to do. This attitude betrays a fear that if we give, we will have less. If we give, we may not have enough for ourselves. If we give, we may not be able to provide for those we are responsible for. If we give, we will be depleted. Yet that is actually untrue. Jesus modeled a life of self-giving, and He lived a perfect life of joy...a joy that began a movement that changed the world. Paul quotes a well-known Jesus saying from the first century, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Such was the way Paul lived his life...he was intentionally generous, he lived sacrificially, in order to show people the grace of Jesus Christ. And, as a result, Paul experienced immense joy, he cultivated deep, lasting relationships, and he brought glory to God. Paul learned that generosity was not a burden...it was a blessing. Check out this story.

Video: I like car—5:45 fade out (cost $25-- ilikegiving.com)

According to Paul, every believer...through the grace of Christ...receives a rich “inheritance”...one that allows us all to be generous and to serve “the weak.” When we live and love generously, it so powerfully affects people with the love and grace of Jesus that it often creates a ripple-effect...generosity begets generosity. Every believer has an “inheritance” to share...a means by which we can bring joy and hope into the world through sharing that which has been entrusted to us. What is your inheritance...what has God entrusted to you for the sake of serving the weak and bringing hope in His name? With a little creativity, you might be surprised how God will use your life to bless others. Check out the story of these young ladies.

Video: I Like Bugshells 3:30

I know we have a lot of older people in our congregation, and I suspect that many of you are used to using your age as an excuse for doing nothing when it comes to generosity. Well let me tell you something: If you’re not dead, you’re not done! Amen! So, here’s a story of a young, 98 year old woman...check it out.

Video: I like 98—3:35 fade out (cost $25-- ilikegiving.com)
It’s time to reimagine generosity, beginning with what you have...not what you lack. I want to challenge you to go home today and list your assets...including your hobbies, your interests, your relationships, your house, your workplace, your school, your baseball card collection, and anything else that is unique to the way God made you. And then ask God to show you how His investment in YOU can serve as the means by which you can invest in others.

That’s it: 1) Inventory your assets; and 2) Ask God to show you a way that you can begin to invest in others.

Remember that great song of the 70’s...“It only takes a spark to get a fire going, and soon all those around can warm up in it’s glowing...that’s how it is with God’s love, once you experience it...you spread His love to everyone, you want to pass it on.”

Let’s pray