



ENTER God's presence

Our barns will be filled with every kind of provision. Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields; our oxen will draw heavy loads... Blessed is the people of whom this is true; blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.
– Psalm 144:13-14a,15

Lord God, you have always been generous to your people, pouring out blessing after blessing. Be generous again we pray, and pour your Holy Spirit out on us as we read your Word together. Use this time to speak your truth into our lives. Amen



SHARE life together

1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **What is the most generous thing someone has ever done for you?**

Gaps - life is full of them. Between intention and action, potential and performance, inexperience and wisdom, doubt and confidence, reality and dreams, fear and courage, the known and unknown, between life as it was and life as it is now. Gaps always take us to the edge of what we know, to the border of what we believe and to the horizon of what we can see. In many ways COVID-19 has revealed the widening gaps that are a part of our life and the spiritual poverty that exists. But if we are willing to step into that gap, letting go of our self-reliance, letting go of our need to control, letting go of our lives, we might just discover the riches of poverty - a God who graciously and generously bridges every gap in our life so that we can step into the gap and embody Christ-like generosity for others. We'll explore how faith-formed generosity can not only pull together the gap in people's lives today but fill it with the blessing of Christ's presence.

Week beginning:
Sunday 16th August 2020

Worship series:

Faith Formed



VERSE for the week

[Jesus said] "All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Luke 21:4



REMEMBER this week

Faith formed generosity does not begin in the hand but in the heart.



LISTEN attentively

Read Luke 20:45 – 21:4

- 4. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
- 5. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
- 6. How do you understand the phrase, 'out of her poverty she gave all she had to live on'? What role does the widow's poverty have to play in this situation?**

This week our focus is on faith formed generosity. In our modern, consumer driven world, we often associate the idea of generosity simply with money or physical 'stuff'; and while we might talk about 'acts of generosity', generosity itself is less of an action and more of an attitude or a way of life. Faith formed generosity, that is, generosity inspired by a love of, and trust in God, is a kind of generosity that has the power to transform lives.

There can be many things that drive our sense of generosity. Perhaps we give out of a sense of guilt. Some charities are very good at appealing to our sense of guilt to elicit donations from us. Perhaps it is a sense of obligation, a responsibility or civic duty to give back to the community which has provided more than enough for you and your family. Maybe it is more self serving than that? Perhaps generosity comes with its own rewards like tax deductions or a good public image, as it seemed to be for the Pharisees and rich people in the reading from Luke. However, faith formed generosity comes from a place of thankfulness and trust. It comes from the fact that we live on the boundry of poverty and abundance. We live with one foot firmly planted in a world impoverished by selfishness, sin, and death, but with the other foot equally planted and secure in the eternal kingdom and blessing of God our Heavenly Father, who reveals himself to us in Matthew 7:11, as a Father who wants to give good gifts to his children.

- 7. We don't often consider ourselves to be living in poverty, especially financially. In what ways or in what areas of your life (financial, physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, etc) might you be experiencing poverty at the moment?**
- 8. How might you harness that poverty and, like the widow in the reading, allow it to inspire generosity?**



GROW deeper

In verse 4 of Luke 21, our English translations tell us the widow gave 'all she had to live on'. Certainly this is a fair translation given the context of the verse, but it is interesting to note that the Greek word 'bios' which is used in this passage, from which we get words like 'biography' or 'biology', literally means life. Out of her poverty, with those two small copper coins, the widow gives all that she has to survive. She literally places her life in the hands of God.

Often when we are faced with a situation like this widow, we are reluctant to let go of the little that we have. We seem to believe that it is up to us to make something with our 'last two coins'. This is not a modern problem either. St. Augustine put it something like this, "God is always trying to give us good things, our hands are just too full to receive them." Whether we are too busy holding a giant pile of blessings, or clutching desperately to our last two meagre coins, unless we can acknowledge and come to terms with our poverty we end up being slaves to it and we fail to accept and receive God's blessings.

- 9. What area of your life might God be asking you to loosen your grip on at the moment?**
- 10. When we shift our focus from what we are giving away or losing, and instead turn our eyes toward Jesus and see everything that God has for us through faith in him, our attitude will shift. What are three ways God has been generous to you or blessed you today?**

Take a look at 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

The people of the Macedonian churches also gave like the widow in Luke's gospel. In verse 2 the apostle Paul, tells us how they gave out of overflowing joy and extreme poverty. Yet the key for us is actually in verse 5, where Paul tells us that, 'they gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to us in accordance with His will. Our ability to be generous comes from having complete trust in God's provision for us. When we know we belong to God and have faith in his promises to love and care and provide for us, we experience the freedom to not act as dams for God's blessings, places where they all get held up and collected in one place, but instead we are able to act as conduits or pipelines for God's blessings as they flow through our lives and into the lives of others.

- 11. Our connections and relationships with others are often the pipelines God wants us to use to bring his blessing into the lives of others. Who is someone you know that could be waiting for you to let some of God's blessings flow from your life and into theirs?**
- 12. As we have said all along, our generosity is only possible because of God's generosity to us. Look closely at 2 Cor 8:9, do you think it is possible that Jesus saw a little of his own sacrifice when he saw the widow give 'her life' in the story from Luke? In what ways?**



LIVE purposefully

Jesus was always pretty clear that it was hard for rich people to follow him and enter the kingdom of heaven. The problem for us is that we are rich in so many ways. While Coronavirus may have shaken the sharemarkets and left many people with less work or income than they were used to, the reality is that most of us in Australia are more well off financially than many people around the world. But our riches are not just in wealth and financial investments. We are rich in freedom; the freedom to express and practice our faith and beliefs. We are rich in opportunity, the opportunities to educate ourselves and to try new things and to some extent determine our path into the future. We are rich in relationships; in the midst of social isolation we have managed to stay relatively connected. All of these are things we can cling to too tightly. All of these are things which God uses to bring blessing to us, but also through us to others.

- 13. Take money out of the picture for a second. If you had absolutely no money to give, what else do you have that you could give generously to bless someone else?**
- 14. Sometimes we are blind to our own wealth. Do a 'shoes and shirts' stocktake of your wardrobe this week. Count how many pairs of shoes and how many shirts/t-shirt/blouses you own. Thank God for his generosity to you. Maybe you don't need them all and might find a way to pass some of them into the hands of those who need them?**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his extravagant, overflowing generosity to us and all people.
- Thank Jesus for his willingness to offer everything he had, even his life, so that we might enjoy the riches of the Father for ever.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to grow in you a heart of gratitude and generosity as you give him everything you have – your whole life.
- Pray for those in poverty in our country and around the world that the blessings we have received, may flow through us to them.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], may God's generosity to you flow through you. Amen