

## **WELCOME 16<sup>th</sup> August 2020 – 11 Pentecost '20 A**

Luke 21:1-4 & Colossians 3:16-17 & 23-24

Welcome back to the On-line well of Living Water! I'm glad you're here AND I pray you experience God's grace in this brief time on-line. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups & other important information about our ministry.

We're continuing with our adapted worship...so as usual there are Group Study/Discussion resources available on our website & I hope you've got those handy. I trust you'll make your way through the songs we've linked to this morning. We're also in the Guide Hall today so you're experiencing here what we've experienced there. Our aim is to equip you so your home becomes a place of the Spirit working leading you & those you've gathered in your homes into the fullness of God's word & his work in your lives & then out into this city to share what God has done for you.

**As we move into this week...**

Can you identify the person who said this: (these 2 same slide)

*"I want you to consider making your life one long gift to others...A life of giving—not just money, but time and spirit—repays."* If you guessed Jesus...nope. Paul, Peter, one of the apostles? Nuh-uh. If you thought "That sounds just like an author of more than 60 books...best-sellers aplenty...some made into blockbuster movies...almost killed when he was hit by a van while taking a walk." You'd have been spot on...It was Stephen King. (next 4 same slide)

<sup>W/O</sup> really knowing it, he simply said what the Bible teaches. Generosity adds richness & joy to our lives. Getting leaves us empty & wanting. Generosity is the overflow of a heart that knows it has received generously & abundantly. Getting is simply getting knowing all we've got is eventually lost to us...slip through our hands...turns to dust about the time we do King would say it's all "smoke & mirrors...on loan anyway" – he's right.

Let's be honest though...We're much better at getting than giving. Giving for too many is an afterthought, while getting is a top priority. Which is why Paul wrote to the church in Colossae: *Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives.* Why? When Christ fills your life you are truly filled...abundantly pressed down shaken together overflowing into the lives of folks around you...blessing as you've been blessed...giving as you've received...forgiving as you've been forgiven. The ONLY life Jesus offers is a life of giving yourself away...a generosity that imitates the generosity of the Father who *"causes rain to fall on the just & the unjust"* & *"who did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, (so) won't he also give us everything else?"* Generosity is the trademark of God's people because it is the character of God who is generous. The OT prophet Jeremiah, in the ruin of his nation, would cling to that generosity: *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning...*

**FAITH FORMED GENEROSITY** is living in imitation of the Father...*who loved the world so much that he gave his only Son*

**FAITH FORMED GENEROSITY** is living in the way of Jesus that takes the focus off of what we acquire/accumulate & puts it back where Jesus said matters...on the lives we lead, on hearts aligned with his, on lives given completely to making his abundant love & saving grace known to everyone we know

**FAITH FORMED GENEROSITY** is living in the passion of the Spirit to live above & beyond the strictest demands of law, duty or obligation...to be made new in a way shoulds/oughts/have to-s can never accomplish.

**FAITH FORMED GENEROSITY** is a journey in grace that puts us safely in the hands of our Saviour who daily comes to us to meet our needs with his abundance & reshape us heart & soul until we look just like him in our lives.

We'll explore and experience that together today... Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

**PRAYER OF THE DAY: PSALM 84 (NLT)**

*How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Heaven's Armies. I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord. With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God. What joy for those who can live in your house, always singing your praises. A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else! For the Lord God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The Lord will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right. O Lord of Heaven's Armies, what joy for those who trust in you...through Jesus Christ, our Lord...Amen.*

Let's hear God's Word then we'll sing...

### **FAITH CHAT:**

1. Who is a person you consider generous? What sets them apart from others?  
With what are they generous? (time, listening, \$\$, help...)
2. How is someone's generosity a reflection of their faith?

**BIBLES**

## 11 Pentecost '20 A - FAITH FORMED GENEROSITY

While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. Then a poor widow came by & dropped in two small coins. "I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given **everything she has**."

2 quick observations...because what we're about to **DO** is as important as what I'm going to say...

1<sup>st</sup> – Jesus neither applauds nor condemns any of the givers here. He makes a straightforward observation. The big givers in the Temple have \$\$ left over/plenty to spare. They have paid their bills, bought the kids new soccer boots, fed their Super, down payment on their long-service leave holiday...**AND** made an offering while still having ample left over for a meal & drinks at a restaurant later that night...& then some. They could be any one of us. They are your average church person...no applause - no condemnation...That's our reality viewed from the outside. We're not sleeping under a bridge or missing a meal...We make an offering **AND** have some left over. Let that sit...

2<sup>nd</sup> – Those last words "**everything she has**" are tricky in the original Gk...word is "*bion*" bios biology "life"...Reads something like "all of her living" "all she has to live" "all her life"...*she, poor as she is, has given all her life*. Let that sit in your heart for a bit...*she, poor as she is, has given all her life*. Notice where she has given "**all her life**?" Not the Temple offering...it's worship...she has given all her life to the Father...her 2 coins are just the latest in an on-going lifelong relationship lifelong offering of trust reliance depending on the Father. *she, poor as she is, has put all her life in God's hands*

Jesus observes her gift is of greater magnitude (not more holy not more pleasing...just more) than the other gifts because her gift is evidence of a relationship of trust in God for her whole existence. In every instance when Jesus talks about generosity he always points to the heart that trusts God even when the gifts are small. A widow's last 2 coins are notable because they reveal the largeness of her heart-deep reliance on God. Her gift is not going to alter the temple budget that year, but her heart-deep reliance on God has already transformed her into a display of faithfulness. Only a heart filled by the Father w/ his love & strengthened in trust for God & devotion to God can give "**everything/all her life**."

To put this in the context of the Bible...You & I live somewhere <sup>b/t</sup> Solomon & Job. King Solomon was someone who had everything imaginable. He had it all. I don't think that's any of us. But having it all...he wanted to see if that was enough...if all was really all...& came up with a 1 word description; "meaningless." King said "smoke & mirrors" OTOH - Job lost it all & ended up sitting on the rubbish tip scratching his boils with a broken beer bottle. I don't think that's any of us either. We live somewhere <sup>b/t</sup> those 2 extremes. And the danger in the "between" is we get tempted to think well maybe just a bit more than I have will set me right – satisfy – happy – content...just a bit more...But here's what happened...Solomon said having it all wasn't enough...it was meaningless & Job discovered that having nothing meant God still had hold of him...still had God's heart set on him...still had Job in mind for God's purposes right here & **THAT** was enough. That relationship was enough. That daily assurance daily reliance daily trust daily dependence was enough so Job could turn loose of everything frustration grief anger disappointment confusion knowing God still had him firmly safely securely in his hands. Job discovered you can't buy your way out of grief – despair – depression – happiness...There's never enough to guarantee health & satisfaction forever... *she, poor as she is, has put her life in God's hands* ...Why?

Over & over again the NT uses 3 words: "**how much more**" & in every case the question being asked is given this circumstance "how much more" will God generously give to provide for you...feed you, clothe you, give to you, forgive you, provide for you, bless you...how much more valuable are you to your Heavenly Father than sheep sparrows flowers ...how much more good will he pour out on you than any earthly father? God's abundance is never-failing & when we invest this life that God has loaned to us...put at our disposal for His purposes according to His will - the supply to us is unending. "**My God will richly fill your every need in a glorious way through Christ Jesus.**" – *Php 4:19* Because you see...the gold standard of God's abundant generous love & provision for us is in fact Jesus...God comes to us in Jesus to rescue & recreate all things through his life death & resurrection...to rescue us from sin & death & evil & make our lives reflective of that never-failing never-ending love & goodness & mercy & generosity & forgiveness & blessing...How much more is God desiring to do for you & for me than we could ever hope or imagine or dream...?

Who is a person you consider truly generous? You shared that earlier...I may or may not know that person but I bet I know this...their lives are marked by joy, gratitude, openness, & magnetism about them...they radiate a sense of calm contentment. I know that...I know those folks. Now...think now of someone who is the opposite of generous. I'll wager they're critical, complaining discontent & miserable to be around. Joy is not possible if you're frightened of "running out" & clinging to what you have & see it all as yours...Joy is not possible if the heart is small no matter how large the gift.

When I get finished here in about 2 minutes...ok...8...we're going to baptize Elwood Ross Heffernan into the generosity of Christ's death & resurrection for him. It's great because he has nothing to trade or offer to Jesus for the gift of new life & salvation he's going to receive...Baptism is straight up generosity. Elwood makes no promises he can't keep – prays no sinner's prayer after a stirring sermon & mood music – doesn't have to turn away from a life of crime/drugs/foolishness  
*Tit 3:4-7 - When God our Savior revealed his kindness & love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth & new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight & gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.* True for Elwood & true for every one of us...believe it or not.

(next 2 same slide)Baptism into Christ is straight up generosity because it unites us w/ the cross of Jesus which is the definition of God's generosity. What could you or I offer to God that compares to the willing gift of Christ's life for ours? What promise could you make greater than the one freely made in Jesus crucified & risen for you? What could you do to suggest you're worthy? *Because God's children are human beings, made of flesh & blood, the Son also became flesh & blood. For only as a human being could he die, & only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.* – Heb 2:14-15

*Rom 6:3-4 – "...when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death...For we died & were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives."* Baptism is straight up generosity & it prepares us for a life of generosity placing all we are & all we have all our life in the Father's hands for his purposes & for the good of the folks all around us.

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Let's pray with that in mind: **Lord Jesus you held nothing back, not even your own life so that we could belong to you as loved children of the Father. Grow your spirit in us so that we too hold nothing back from the work of your kingdom or the needs around us. Let us excel in the grace of generosity and live solely from our trust in you. We pray this in your name... Amen**