

John 3:13-18

“Generosity: The Quintessential Text”

In this year’s generosity series will spend little time talking about percentages and formulas. However, I do want to share the most recent data on giving and volunteerism in the church. Please note this data was farmed using ChatGPT, source data The National Congregations Study, Barna Group Surveys, Lifeway Research, and Pew Research Center. 2022 survey data found that 10-25% of church attendees regularly tithe (donate 10% of their income). Tithing figures by denomination is as follows: Evangelicals-20-25%, Non-Denominational-20-25%, Pentecostal and Charismatic-20%, Mainline Protestant (includes Presbyterians)-10-15%, Catholic-5-10%, Orthodox- no percentage to report as giving often centered on community support and special collections. 2022 survey data found that approximately 40% of church members volunteer in some capacity. Volunteerism figures by denomination is as follows: Evangelicals-60-70%, Non-Denominational-50-60%, Pentecostal and Charismatic- 50-60%, Mainline Protestant (includes Presbyterians)-40-50%, Catholic- 30-40%, , Orthodox- 25-35%. These differences in figures seem to boil down to theology and curriculum. Simply stated, what we believe and what we are taught. Though many would describe themselves as generous, few achieve the standard. I am sure of this given these statistics and what our series will reveal about generosity, biblically. Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson of The Generosity Project, Notre Dame write, and I quote, “Generosity is the virtue of giving good things to others freely and abundantly.”, end quote. If this is so, and I believe it is scripturally, then God is the quintessential example to be followed and our text is the

quintessential text on what generosity actually looks like, in practice and results. Turning our attention to our text I want to share three lessons this foundational text teaches us about generosity.

**First lesson, generosity is God's initiative.** V13-16 <sup>13</sup>“No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” How generous is God? Infinitely generous. So generous God gives His Son and in the giving of His Son, Jesus, shows us the way of generosity. This act of God is the primary example to be followed.

Three important things about God's example. First it is heavenly in origin. That is to say, there was no earthly reason for God to do what he did. He does so freely. Generosity does the unexpected. Second, it is more than enough. He had everyone in mind and the gift is sufficient for all. Third, it was the best God had to offer. God held nothing back. God could not have given any more than He gave. This is what generosity looks like and this is its impact. Generosity is God's initiative and as disciples of God's Son, we should embrace and follow this example.

**Romans 5:8** <sup>8</sup>“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

**Romans 8:31-34** <sup>31</sup>“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who

died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”

**Romans 10:12-13** “<sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”.”

**Second lesson, Jesus is generosity personified.** V17 “God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.” God isn’t just generous; generosity is an aspect of His very character. And since it is an aspect of God’s character it is a characteristic of Jesus. When we examine the life and ministry of Jesus, among other very important things, we see generosity personified. Considering the aforementioned definition of generosity given by Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson of The Generosity Project, Notre Dame, “Generosity is the virtue of giving good things to others freely and abundantly.” This is not only what God has done by giving His Son, but also the life Jesus actually lived. And since we are his disciples should we not live such a life, too? Given God and Christ’s example how could one who follows Christ be greedy, selfish, uncompassionate, and discontent? I want answer that question for us. Jesus is generosity personified.

**John 6:37-40** “<sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

**John 10:11-15** “<sup>11</sup>I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

**Third and final lesson, how one views self, determines how one responds to God generous gift. V18** “<sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” To reject Christ, God’s ultimate act of generosity is equivalent to someone who is stranded in blizzard conditions on the highway telling the person who stops to give them needed assistance I am good, I do not need your help. Church, such a response by a person in this situation would be a death sentence. And before you say to yourself, I am not in a blizzard if you are without Jesus, you sir, ma’am are in a blizzard stranded on the highway looking at death lest you accept God’s generous assistance. To reject God’s generosity will be costly. Maybe the opportunity for us all this stewardship season is to gain proper understanding of how generous God has been towards us by the giving of his Son. And no one comes to proper understanding of the sheer generosity of God towards him or her without first coming to proper understanding of his or her own depravity. If you believe you are a good person by your own merit, then what God has done through Jesus may very well seem small, not generous at all. But if anyone recognizes his or her sinful captivity and how God through Jesus has set him or her free that person is a position to do as the

hymn writer declares: All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give!  
How one views self, determines how one responds to God generous gift.

**Luke 5:30-32** “<sup>30</sup> And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” <sup>31</sup> And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

I leave you with this question to ponder. What if God wasn't so generous? In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.