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Upper Thames Missionary Church
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We The Church: Radical Generosity - NOTES

Generosity - What is it?

what generosity isn't:

- not just giving things away.
- you can give something away with a terrible attitude or because you are compelled

Generosity itself is not rooted in an *action* but in an *attitude*.

-2 Cor 9:7 "*god loves a cheerful giver...*"

-"*generosity*" follows, and flows from this posture

Isn't meeting the need the important thing?

-When we imitate our heavenly Father,

Is our heavenly father generous? (we've got a song and worship companion this week you should have a listen to! [Worship Companion - August 29 2021 - Upper Thames Missionary Church \(utmc.ca\)](http://www.utmc.ca))

Matthew 20:15: "are you jealous because I am generous" Jesus gives us a picture here of what God's generosity looks like through a parable we're confronted with the generosity of God that actually upsets those of us who struggle with a pharisee type mindset.

A fresh perspective from the Scriptures:

Defining the Greek terms

Aphelawtace – sometimes this word is translated as “generosity” in your bibles, like Acts 2:46 (glad and generous hearts) -it literally means “not stony” – a word picture, or metaphor meaning (without hindrances or stumbling blocks / it describes a piece of ground that is cleared of stones so you can grow crops in it or walk on it.

-we want a harvest at the end of our lives, and we need good ground

-Paul talks about it in this way 2 Cor 9:10 "he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness."

-God gives the seed, and we clear the ground for good growth through generosity - we get rid of all the things that will hinder the growth God has planned for us

-we keep a clear path to walk with Jesus, free of stumbling blocks.

Haplawtace – sometimes this word is translated as “generosity” in your bibles, -like in 2 Cor 9:11 – it means literally “not folded” like a piece of cloth that is laying flat. It's a word picture, a metaphor that gives us the sense of - (not complex) it or “simple”

I was very intrigued to learn this week that both these Greek words we sometimes translate as “generous” into English are actually more commonly translated as “simplicity” or “sincerity”

-in the biblical worldview – “Simplicity” is the name of a generous lifestyle.

The church is not called just to random acts of generosity - those are fine, but the church is called to something deeper, to **be** a community marked by simplicity –

The church is called to be a people who practice a generous and simple way of life.

Acts 2:44 sets the tone from the very beginning

“And all who believed were together and had everything in common”

-they take seriously Jesus' call to not serve the God of money (Luke 16:13)

-and this posture is imitated throughout the New Testament in different settings

-the Christians all shared with each other in *acts 2:44*

-The Christians in Corinth shared with other churches in *2 Corinthians 9*

-the Christians in Philippi shared with missionaries like Paul

-we are called to share in certain ways today – you share with Alli and I so we can be here and help you follow Christ Jesus, you share this building with various ministries and community groups, you share with missionaries Jesse, Alyssa, Michael, Stan and Sally, Eric and Veronica, and Victoria.

-we need to always be reflecting on ourselves and on us as a church community:

Do you have too much of something?

Do we as a church have too much of something?

Has something good become a stumbling block or stony ground?

The big question for us to consider individually and collectively - "Is your treasure tripping you up?"

Sometimes we can muddy the waters to get out of answering this question.

Lie #1 – “Being Generous requires that I have a lot of something before I can be generous”

-doesn't have to be a lot - two of the exact same hammer is still "extra"

-you only need a certain number of tools for a given job

-giving that tool away to someone in need of that tool is a wise decision

- generosity is a lifestyle means we plan ahead and live daily do that we don't accumulate stumbling blocks of “stuff” and money around

Lie # 2 – “Generosity is really just about money.” No way! It means much more than “cash donations.”

- perhaps you are in a season when you have extra time
- giving that tool away to someone in need is wise

What other “treasures” could we be talking about here:

- items, objects, stuff
- time, schedule
- money, investments
- property, house/apartment, cottage
- skills and knowledge

How many of you have walked into a shed or storage room with way to many things and your tripping over it all just trying to get that one thing you're after?

It's time to clear out the room!

A little bit extra of all these different things can clutter up our lives – likes rocks of all shapes and sizes in the soil, they can become hindrances to spiritual growth if we don't give away the excess.

Biblical generosity is not an event; it is a way of life.

Simplicity is not an event; it is a way of life.

Generosity and simplicity are two sides of the same coin.

Tripping

Some of us are having trouble though, our treasure is tripping us up.

We're sinning, living selfishly and this can look like:

Addiction – excess treasure can lead to despair, because having it all doesn't mean we are fulfilled, it doesn't mean we're living the life God has made us for. Despair leads to trying different thing to numb the pain

-for some people its drugs or alcohol, for some people its more shopping (retail therapy), for others its becoming a workaholic – all of these make the cycle of despair worse in the end

Apathy – is the life turned inward as a way of pushing away the despair. It's a way of cauterizing the wounds that excess wealth leave on our souls. We detach, we adopt an attitude that nothing really matters, its all just going the way its going to go, and the best I can do is ignore it and enjoy was little things I can treat myself with.

resentment - anger toward others can become the final stage of the damaging effects of wealth, we can try all the therapies, we can try apathy, and when those fail, we can begin hating even the good things around us – even the Good God who is at work in the world.

We talk about experiencing “hell” even now in this life, and I think this is something like the beginning of it, rejection of God doesn’t feel good, it feels empty and tragic and soul-destroying.

This is what the path looks like of following the master of Money instead of God, as Jesus puts the comparison *in Luke 16:13* – you will *come to hate God*, and if you hate the creator of all things, you’ll come to hate everything, even yourself.

But that is not the final word...

Simplicity

The **Gospel** is Good News for everyone who is stuck under the master of money, wealth, everyone trapped by their own hoarding, lost in addiction, apathy, and resentment.

Jesus came for you and I, that we may have life, and have it in abundance.

-Not material abundance, but

-real connection with God and others

- deep purpose

-deep love

-feeling the heights of love and the depths of pain, but both of them with the bright hope that goes far beyond any circumstance.

This goes beyond “**tithing**” a helpful but limited idea.

-**all** our wealth is on the table, to be generously gives as need appears and God is the supplier of the seeds we sow

-it means beyond charitable giving, beyond tax receipts and accounts

-how far will living simply go for each one of us?

– God will direct your path, but I know it means responding obediently to the prompting the Spirit of God puts on you today, and tomorrow, and everyday after that.

How can I sum it all up for you today?

Be generous as your Heavenly Father has been generous.

Don’t just give generously – LIVE generously.