

ADVENT AND GENEROSITY

I. 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 & 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

A. During the four Sundays of Advent we're taking a look at Hospitality, Generosity, Spontaneity, and Charity. On Christmas Eve we'll look at Divine Humility. Last Sunday we talked about Hospitality. Today we'll talk about Generosity. If you're thinking this is a message on giving bigger offerings to the church, you'd be wrong. If you think this sermon is about giving bigger seed gifts so God can bless you with a Mercedes, you're doubly wrong.

B. Generosity is a far greater than your wallet or bank account. Generosity can flow from people who have little or nothing. e.g. The boy who gave up his five loaves and two fish. The poor widow gave her last jar of oil and handful of flour to Elijah, she and her son's last meal. The poor widow at the temple who gave her last two copper coins, all she had to live on, giving more than all the others giving their offerings. So does Generosity have anything to do with Advent and Christmas? Everything!

C. 2 Corinthians 8:1-9: During a time when believers in Jerusalem were destitute, Paul and his brethren were collecting love gifts from churches throughout Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia. Some of the poorer churches gave more generously than the wealthier ones. Others made pledges to give to the need but hadn't followed through. The church in Corinth was one such church. Paul writes them accordingly...

1) **V1-2** "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part." (Grace to give had been given to the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea and they were walking joyfully and generously in that grace.)

2) **V3-5** "For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." (They prayed and assessed the desperate needs of others. They weighed the cost of their sacrifice. And then when they gave it was ridiculous!)

3) **V6-8** "Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine." (Grace is undeserved love and favor from God. It flows down into our lives and changes us. It propels and drives and inspires us to be gracious. Like a waterfall pouring into a pool at the foot of the falls, it flows out with intensive force.)

4) **V9** "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich."

D. Verse 9 is the Gospel. When the Lord of the Universe, God the Son, the Co-Creator of all things seen and unseen, becomes a man--conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary--we have incarnation. See that little boy wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger? He made everything you see through a telescope, under a microscope, and plenty more! That event caused myriads of angels to co-mingle with lowly shepherds. Jesus would end up on a cross yet would leave behind an empty tomb. Now He occupies that glorious place from whence He came. He became poor that we might become rich!

1) **Philippians 2:6-8** says this about Jesus: "...Though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

2) **John 1:14** says: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

E. 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 is the continuation of Paul's exhortation...

1) **V6-7** "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (One who gives out of joy, not out of ought or manipulation. Not one who gives to get or impress others.)

2) **V8** "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." (Receive the waterfall! Did His grace bring supply? Generously supply others! Did His grace redeem your time for all time? Be generous with your time! Did His grace bring forgiveness for your filthy righteousness and rebellious treason against God? Generously forgive those who've trespassed against you! Did His grace bring reconciliation between you and God? Reconcile with others or help others reconcile with each

other! Has grace brought you unexpected blessings from God through Jesus? Generously bless others when they least expect it! Freely you have received, now freely give!

3) V9 "As it is written (Psalm 112:9), "He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." (Did He come to give Cadillacs to the poor or His very own righteousness to we poor wretches who would believe?!)

4) V10-14 "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you." (**Generosity glorifies God!**)

5) V15 "Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!" (**That Gift is Jesus Christ!**)

II. Communion

A. The inexpressible Gift, generously given by God the Father, was God the Son. We come to the Bread & Cup to celebrate Him, worship Him, and remember full well what He has done to make us His own. Our Father in Heaven freely gave. Jesus freely gave Himself to die for us. Let us therefore give ourselves freely back to Him and to one another as we take this Bread & Cup together.

B. The words we sang last week are apt for us again this morning: Give thanks with a grateful heart. Give thanks to the Holy One. Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son. And now let the weak say, "I am strong!" Let the poor say, "I am rich because of what the Lord has done for us!" (**Oh how generous is our great and mighty God!**)

* Pray and Serve Communion...

* **Benediction Verse: Luke 10:37-38** "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." (**Freely and generously you have received. Now freely and generously give!**)

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

2 Corinthians 8:1-9 (ESV)

1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, **2** for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. **3** For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, **4** begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— **5** and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. **6** Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. **7** But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. **8** I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. **9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.

Philippians 2:6-8 (ESV)

6 ...who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

1 John 1:14 (ESV)

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (ESV)

6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **7** Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. **9** As it is written, "He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." **10** He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. **11** You will be enriched in every way to be

generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. **12** For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. **13** By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, **14** while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. **15** Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!

Luke 10:37-38 (ESV)

37 Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; **38** give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.

Film Clips & Other Links

The King's Descent - IgniterMedia

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOce6Nlgmjc>

The Epicness of Christ's Birth - City Life Media

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kp0wyLYghkY>

God Became Man To Die - John Piper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TD6RDsINMkA>

The Incarnation: What We Celebrate at Christmas - R.C. Sproul

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptDUo4whdmU>

"Mary Did You Know" - Pentatonix

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifCWN5pJGIE>

Bonus Stuff

John 1:1-18 (ESV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. **6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. **8** He was not the Light, but came to bear witness about the Light. **9** The true Light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. **11** He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. **12** But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. **14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. **15** (John bore witness about Him, and cried out, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me.'") **16** For from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. **17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known.

Philippians 2:1-11 (ESV)

2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, **2** complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. **3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hebrews 1:1-4 (ESV)

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word

of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Colossians 1:15-20 (ESV)

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. **17** And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. **18** And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. **19** For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

Quote by Wayne Grudem

"[The incarnation] is by far the most amazing miracle of the entire Bible--far more amazing than the resurrection and more amazing even than the creation of the universe. The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe."

- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Zondervan, p. 563.

Quote by Athanasius

"He became what we are that He might make us what He is."

Quote by Martin Luther

"The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that He sunk Himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding."

The Supreme Mystery

J.I. Packer

"The real difficulty, the supreme mystery with which the gospel confronts us, does not lie in the Good Friday message of atonement, nor in the Easter message of resurrection, but in the Christmas message of Incarnation.

The really staggering Christian claim is that Jesus of Nazareth was God made man— that the second person of the Godhead became the 'second man' (1 Cor. 15:47), determining human destiny, the second representative head of the race, and that He took humanity without loss of deity, so that Jesus of Nazareth was as truly and fully divine as He was human.

Here are two mysteries for the price of one— the plurality of persons within the unity of God, and the union of Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus. It is here, in the thing that happened at the first Christmas, that the profoundest and most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie.

'The Word became flesh' (John 1:14); God became man; the divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child.

And there was no illusion or deception in this: the babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation.

This is the real stumbling block in Christianity. It is here that Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many of those who feel the difficulties concerning the virgin birth, the miracles, the atonement, and the resurrection have come to grief.

It is from misbelief, or at least inadequate belief, about the Incarnation that difficulties at other points in the gospel story usually spring. But once the Incarnation is grasped as a reality, these other difficulties dissolve."

- J.I. Packer, excerpted from *Knowing God*, Downers Grove, IL, IVP Press, 1973, p. 53.

Quote by Charles Swindoll

"Some gifts you can give this Christmas are beyond monetary value: Mend a quarrel, dismiss suspicion, tell someone, "I love you." Give something away--anonymously. Forgive someone who has treated you wrong. Turn away wrath with a soft answer. Visit someone in a nursing home. Apologize if you were wrong. Be especially kind to someone with whom you work. Give as God gave to you in Christ, without obligation, or announcement, or reservation, or hypocrisy."

- Charles Swindoll, *Growing Strong*, p.p. 400-401.

Sweet Charity's Bread

Author Unknown

"Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread;
For giving is living," the angel said.
"And must I be giving again and again?"
My peevish and pitiless answer ran.
"Oh no," said the angel, piercing me through.
"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."