



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 17.03.2024

“Grace & Generosity”

Preacher

Ps. Nathan Bean

Scripture

“And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. 5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. 6 So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 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 through his poverty might become rich.”

2 Corinthians 8:1-9



Thought

As we read the words of the apostle Paul through this passage, we may naturally conclude that he is speaking on the subject of money - yet Paul, when writing in the original Greek language, managed to avoid using any word that translates to money, rather choosing words that had broader meaning. It was as if he didn't want the reader to conclude that his plea for generosity was limited to finance, rather that the listener would apply generosity to their whole lives.

Could it be that Paul is far more interested in the Colossian church developing hearts of generosity in every area, rather than just a single dimensional facet of giving? God doesn't just want one part of us - He wants our whole lives, our whole hearts.

This whole-hearted generosity is tied undeniably to the concept of grace; undeserved, unmerited grace. It would seem that the more we understand the depth of grace that has been offered to us, the more we see our whole lives as generous responses to that grace.

When we encounter radical grace, the response is the grace of giving, yet it works both ways; There is an indescribable grace on us when we live generously.

We so often wait for conditions to be right before we step out in generosity, but Paul speaks of a superfluous, overflowing joy in the midst of pressing and scarce times. The conditions for the Macedonian church to express overflowing joy and rich generosity was not abundance, but struggle and poverty.

Overflowing joy is found in the absence of time and capacity as we step into grace by being generous. We draw not from our oversupply, but in our lack, we tap into an endless source of God's resource. Overflowing joy comes from this well.

It comes down to this; that we are just stewards of the time we have.



We realise our life, breath, energy, and strength is not ours. We merely steward it for the Lord. And so, we pour it out, empty as it may be, and in doing so, we find an endless supply.

Like the miracle of the oil in jars, we allow the little we have to be poured out in a sacrifice of generosity and we find the secret of abundant grace and joy that keeps pouring and pouring and overflowing into lives around us.

Discussion Points

1. What are the hallmarks of a truly generous person? Can you think of someone in your life who exemplifies this?
2. What would it practically look like for you to step out in generosity in the very areas of your life where you feel there is lack?

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank you for your abundant grace which was poured out freely for me. May Your Spirit raise and highlight areas of my life that, in turn, need to be poured out. Lead me in the journey of generosity, to respond to others even when I feel empty, to draw from Your deep wells of joy even in lack. May I steward my days well, and may my life always point to You.

Amen.

Becoming Christlike

BEING, THINKING, AND DOING

Characteristic of a Disciple: Resilient

Living with generosity in and through every season

Thought

As disciples (apprentices) of Jesus, generosity isn't simply a box we tick after tapping our phones or setting up direct debits for tithes and offerings. Rather, it is about the type of person we are becoming as we enact the incredible grace/gift that we have received in Christ. Through God's radical generosity, our tremendous debt is paid and our only reasonable response is to let that same generosity overflow into every aspect of our lives. This act of pouring out even in seasons of trial, paradoxically fills us back up with overflowing JOY! It's amazing, we simply can not ever outgive our wonderful Father.

If you're still struggling to experience overflowing joy, consider this a gentle reminder that as we move out beyond ourselves, the Holy Spirit is faithful to meet us and fill our lives with His presence and joy.

Practice

Step 1 - **Reflect:** What are the areas of your life where generosity feels easy and in what areas do you find it more difficult to be generous? ie. money, time, attention, affirmation, certain members of your family, work, church, etc.

Step 2: **Assess:** Being honest with yourself, if withholding is a 0 and overflowing generosity is a 10, where would you place yourself in this season?

Step 3: **Act:** What is a very practical way that you can move that needle a bit closer to becoming more Christlike in the area of generosity?