

The Gift, Practice, and Art of Generosity

A Stewardship Emphasis Inspiring Generosity using the texts from Cycle A, 15 Pentecost, 16 Pentecost, 17 Pentecost (September 21,28, October 5, 2014)

The Gift of Generosity

- Worship
 - Matthew 20:1-16 We have a generous God who gives with unfair generosity
 - Jonah 3:10-4:11 We prefer to be stingy with God's grace and mercy, as well as with our gifts. We are willing to be generous to those who are worthy of it, and we define who that might be.
- Bible Study
 - Use the worship passages to talk about God's generosity
 - Add Galatians 5:22-26. This tells us that our generosity is a fruit of the Holy Spirit active in our lives.
 - Talk about where we learned about generosity
 - Talk about the limits to generosity – who sets those limits and why?
- Take home??? Think of a meaningful trinket or business card that might help people remember during the week.

The Practice of Generosity

- Worship
 - Matthew 21:33-46 Generosity is a practice, not just an idea or a philosophy, the son who actually went and served is the one who obeyed his father.
 - Philippians 2:1-13 God has been generous to us in the gift of Jesus Christ, who practiced generosity in his life, death, and resurrection. We have this mind of Christ and practice it by generously looking to the interests of others and valuing others.
- Bible Study
 - Use the worship passages to talk about the practice of generosity
 - Add 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 This lifts up the Macedonians who practiced the grace that they had received in this generous undertaking.
 - Talk about our practice of generosity as a congregation
 - Talk about individual generosity – how does it feel?
 - Talk about the limits of generosity

- Take home???

The Art of Generosity

- Worship

Matthew 21:33-46 God generously provides for the thriving of the vineyard. The people grasp everything for themselves. The opposite of generosity is greed and self-serving.

Philippians 3:4b-14 Generosity is a life lived with the perspective of what matters most. Paul jettisons what is considered by the world to be very important because he has found something even more important. Money and stuff is necessary rubbish in comparison to knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord. The art is in the eye of the beholder – the attitude.

- Bible Study

Use the worship passages to talk about the art of generosity

Add 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 The art of generosity is in the giving attitude (sowing bountifully) and the confidence that God will give enough for us to share

Talk about the art of medicine, teaching, farming; the instinct and “feel” for the practice.

Talk about generosity as the way we take out the trash (Paul’s idea of rubbish) to make room for the good stuff that God gives.

Talk about the lack of art in hoarders’ homes and lives

- Take home???

Weekly blogs (or letters) may bring the themes home outside of worship and Bible study.

Introductory letters can be crafted on the themes. Each congregation will want to make them specific to their needs and culture.

Commitment Sunday can be on the last Sunday (art Sunday) or the Sunday following (adding a 4th Sunday)

A letter of thanks can go to those who make a commitment. A letter with a commitment card (if the congregation uses them) can go to those who do not submit one during worship.

The Gift, Practice, and Art of Generosity

Dear friends in Christ,

We are about to begin an emphasis on Christian financial stewardship called ***“The Gift, Practice, and Art of Generosity”***.

We recognize that generosity is grounded in our generous God, who provides for us in so many ways. It is inspired by the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ who generously gave his life for us and for the whole world.

We understand that generosity is something that we practice, not just talk about or admire. We practice it in our families, our communities, and by our giving to God through church. It is in the practice of the gift of generosity that we make it part of our Christian life and character.

We experience generosity as an art. By that, we mean that there aren't any formulas for generosity. Generosity has a feel to it. Generosity, like art, is not simply impulsive. Like art, there will be structure and order to our generosity, but there is also great freedom as well.

On Sunday, September 21 we will focus on the Gift of Generosity.

On Sunday, September 28, we will focus on the Practice of Generosity.

On Sunday, October 5, we will focus on the Art of Generosity.

Each of these Sundays will lift up the focused aspect of generosity in worship and in the adult Bible Study. There will also be weekly blogs to help us appreciate our generous God and the way generosity helps us grow closer to God. October 5 will be the day on which you have the opportunity to give us an estimate of giving to God through this congregation for 2015.

We hope you will be strengthened in your Christian faith and life through our celebration of ***the Gift, Practice, and Art of Generosity***.

Peace,

Pastor Gary Hedding

Craig Goetsch, Spiritual Renewal