

## Victory of the Lamb – October 28, 2018 – Imitating God: Living Generously

### Romans 8:28 – Absurd Generosity – Pastor Bill Limmer

What do the following have in common: Money, preservation, food, provision, clothing, technology, Home, hope, peace, cars, joy. These are all blessings from God. I'm not sure that all of you saw it, but this past week I had Sammi post on FB a picture (picture on screen) of my cupboard at home filled with glasses and cups. With the request that people would count how many glasses, cups, that they had. For those of you who didn't see the post, I had 56 in my cupboard, with an additional 40 Christmas glasses and cups in a China cabinet. I'm sure some people were horrified at how many I have and I am sure that some people were horrified at how many they have as well. Do you know? The point is God is absurdly generous. This morning we are beginning a new series called: Imitating God: Living Generously.

In the beginning God. In the beginning God started giving generously from light to the breath of life. From the beginning God. From the beginning God is love. From the beginning God is generous. God is the first and most generous giver. God has been giving in eternity and will be giving through eternity. Every good and perfect gift is from God. He is the source of every blessing. Everything thing in your and my life is an opportunity to experience God because God is generous. What are two ways that God has been extravagantly generous to you? Share with the person sitting next to you.

**God so the loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** This is mind boggling. This is deep. This is a profound truth. This is God's heart on display. God's love is drawn to the broken and fragmented. God's love values those that have lost value. God's love is drawn to opportunities to change lives and circumstances for those unable to change their own situation. When God set the gospel in motion by giving us Jesus, he did more than give us an impersonal gift. He did more than make a pronouncement of our new legal standing in his eyes. Instead of using a drone to drop a gift out of the sky and keeping his distance, God wrapped himself in flesh and became an infant. God gave his very best. God made generosity personal.

Jesus as God was rich in position. He was in heaven with all its glory and treasure. Jesus was rich in inheritance, it was all his. Prior to his incarnation, there was nothing he didn't know, nothing he couldn't do, no one had it going on more than him. In fact, he was the one he kept everyone and everything going on. However, he generously exchanged his power, his treasure, his existence, his position from glory to humility. Jesus on his knees, washing the dust and dirt and grime of Jerusalem's highway system off dust-encrusted feet of ordinary people. Generosity and humility go from heart to hand. But there is more.

He literally emptied himself of life so that all of us who have a spiritual credit score of 0 are welcomed into new possibilities and eternal life by grace through faith. **Philippians 2:5-8 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!** Jesus didn't hold on to who he was, what was his, he relinquished his identity, to identify with good for nothings and those have nothing, with those desperately in need, with those who

were going to die if there were no intervention. He intervened, and he died. And he died willfully and joyfully and generously with you in mind and with me in mind. He was just generous.

God generosity cost him. 2 Corinthians 8:9 **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.**

Jesus didn't give 2.5%, nor 5%, 10%, 25%, 37% 50%, 75%, not 90%, or even 99%. He gave 100%. And that was the price of redemption and Jesus paid for it in full. It would be like me getting together everything I have, I mean everything, the 96 glasses, the clothes, the car, the blankets, the tv's, the books, the phone, pictures, the awards, the food, the abilities, five senses, touch, taste, hear, see, smell, the computer, the Alexa, time, life, became your servant, and give it to you out of pure joy and love and only God gave more because he is extravagant in his giving. All of this to say that we have an absurdly generous God. For Jesus, generosity was and is the gospel.

Everything is God's. God has this huge bucket of blessing that he is pouring out on us. God is generous. Malachi 3:6-12 destroyed. <sup>7</sup> **Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' <sup>8</sup> "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup> You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. <sup>10</sup> Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. <sup>11</sup> I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the LORD Almighty. <sup>12</sup> "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.** We often miss the obvious, and think my possessions are actually my possessions. That I earned them or deserved them. I am entitled to them. But all that we have from time, to abilities, to money is a generous gift from God. I want to share a video with you to help illustrate how important it is to pay attention. [The video will give you the instructions](#). Sometimes we get so intent on what we want, have, deserve, entitled to that we miss it is all about God's generosity. Here is a way this happens: we read our Bible but we don't see God. We see a person in need but we don't see God. It is important that we drill down into God's generosity because there we find the treasure of his love that makes us generous as well and leads us to freely give to.

And that's when we imitate God. Romans 5:5 **God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.** The guy he wrote these words was one that grew up and was trained in a very law-oriented culture. He knew in very intimate what is was to cover up, to try really hard, fail, and no they he could truly never add up or measure up. Paul was loved by God even though he didn't deserve this love or his affection. In fact, Paul, like many of us, have often rebelled against that love. And then he was touched with the gift of God's grace. He was made full by God's generous love. And that love he and we received is compelling, so motivating that when we consider it truly transforms us. We have been touched by the love of God deeply and it moves us to give because we too love. We give because God gave. We give as God gave as he reclaims us through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Generosity will lead us to do absurd things. Isn't it fun to give a 50% or more tip? If you don't know, try it. You will see. Isn't fun to make someone's day by simply buying their cup of coffee at the coffee shop, or raking their lawn while they are gone, give something away, send a note of encouragement. Can you think of a time when you emptied yourself for the sake of another? Here is an only God story. Simple but it shows the ridiculousness of God and his absurd generosity. No lie, I'm writing this out, the door

bell at church rings. I go answer the door and Susan and Karen have brought me a gift. It's like what am I supposed to do with that – the surprise of generosity comes from a heart full of love. Here is how you know it is absurd- when you don't come up with excuses or what if's. I mean if I see a homeless person on the street and drive back home and get a coat of my closet that I'm not really wearing anyway and give it to him that's such a blessing, super generous, but if I take that homeless person to the coat store and by him/her a brand-new coat that's absurd. We are most like God when we give from a loving heart. When we give, the world takes notice. As we continue this series imitating God: living Generously we will see absurd generosity working in and through our hearts and lives.

Accumulating wealth is often stressful, generosity is always joyful.