

10 November, 2024
25th Sunday after Pentecost

A Generous Spirit

Exodus 35.20-29
Psalm 50.1-15
2 Corinthians 8.1-9
Mark 12.38-44

Key Verse: “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.” – Mark 12:43

As we gather on this 25th Sunday after Pentecost, our focus turns to a theme that lies close to the heart of Christian faith - a generous spirit. The call to give of ourselves, our resources, and our time for God's work is foundational to our walk with Christ. Today, we explore what it means to cultivate a generous spirit, a life that reflects God's own generosity toward us. We are reminded through Scripture that God values the heart behind the gift rather than the size of the offering. Giving is more than a financial act; it is a spiritual practice that deepens our trust in God and blesses others. Generosity is about more than obligation or charity; it is an act of love, reflecting our gratitude to God and our commitment to His work. Let us dive into this theme through four key points, inspired by our readings from Exodus, Psalms, Corinthians, and Mark.

1. Giving Freely to God's Work – Exodus 35:20-29

In Exodus 35, we see a beautiful example of the Israelites' generous spirit as they bring offerings for the construction of the tabernacle. Moses doesn't pressure the people; instead, he invites “everyone whose heart was stirred” to contribute (Exodus 35:21). The people respond with eagerness, bringing gold, silver, fabrics, and even their talents as craftsmen and artisans. Their contributions come not out of duty, but from willing hearts. “All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done - brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord” (Exodus 35:29). In this passage, we see that giving is an act of worship. It's a way to honour God by participating in His work. When we give freely, we join hands with God, allowing Him to use our resources for His purposes. A generous spirit, then, is one that eagerly participates in God's mission, understanding that all we have ultimately belongs to Him. Imagine a family who, despite their limited means, regularly supports their church's ministry by donating supplies, food, and even their time. Their actions show that true generosity comes from the heart and reflects a willingness to give to God's work without expecting anything in return.

2. God's Call to Sacrificial Giving – Psalm 50:1-15

Psalm 50 reminds us that God doesn't need our offerings. “For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills” (Psalm 50:10). God owns all things; yet, He desires our offerings as an expression of our devotion and gratitude. He asks us to bring a “sacrifice of thanksgiving” (Psalm 50:14), acknowledging His goodness and provision. Sacrificial giving requires us to place our trust in God. It asks us to offer not just what is convenient, but what may cost us something. This is the type of giving that moves the heart, because it represents our willingness to put God first. When we give sacrificially, we declare that our reliance is on

God, not on our possessions. Through sacrifice, we honour Him, and in turn, He promises to answer us in times of trouble and provide for our needs. Consider the story of a young woman who chooses to give her first pay check to a church project, even though she could use the money for other needs. Her choice reflects sacrificial giving, putting God's work above her own needs, trusting that He will provide for her.

3. The Grace of Generosity – 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul highlights the example of the Macedonian churches, who, despite their own poverty, "overflowed in a wealth of generosity" (2 Corinthians 8:2). Paul marvels at their generosity, which came not from an abundance of resources but from a heart touched by grace. They gave "according to their means, and beyond their means, of their own accord" (2 Corinthians 8:3). Their generosity was an outpouring of God's grace at work in their lives, as they saw giving not as an obligation but as a privilege. Paul reminds us that true generosity flows from a recognition of Christ's ultimate gift to us. Jesus, who was rich, became poor so that we might be made rich in God's grace (2 Corinthians 8:9). When we give, we participate in that grace, letting it flow through us to bless others. A generous spirit does not ask, "What can I afford to give?" but rather, "How can I honour God through my giving?" Think of someone who gives generously to support a missionary or a ministry, despite facing financial struggles. They find joy in their giving, knowing that they are participating in God's work and reflecting the grace they've received through Christ.

4. A Heart Devoted to God – Mark 12:38-44

Our Gospel reading presents a powerful contrast between the religious leaders and the poor widow. Jesus warns against the religious leaders who give to be seen, who "devour widows' houses" and make a show of their piety (Mark 12:40). In contrast, He lifts up the example of a widow who quietly puts two small copper coins into the offering. Though her gift was small by worldly standards, Jesus declares, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others" (Mark 12:43). The widow's offering was an act of total trust. She gave all she had, holding nothing back, because her devotion to God was complete. In God's eyes, her gift was of immense value. A generous spirit is one that is fully devoted to God, willing to give not only from abundance but from sacrifice. It is a giving that stems from love, not from the need for recognition or reward. Think of a person who quietly donates their last bit of savings to a worthy cause, not for acknowledgment but out of love for God. Their act of giving shows that true generosity is measured not by the amount but by the heart with which it is given.

Conclusion

The call to generosity invites us to reflect God's own character. God, in His love and grace, gives abundantly to us, not holding back even His own Son. In response, we are called to give freely, sacrificially, and joyfully, trusting that our gifts, however small or large, can be used by God to bring hope, healing, and life. Let us be people with generous spirits, who see giving as an opportunity to honour God and participate in His work. May we give with the eagerness of the Israelites, the sacrifice of the psalmist, the grace of the Macedonians, and the devotion of the widow. May our giving reflect our love for God and our desire to see His kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the many ways You bless us and provide for our needs. Today, we ask that You would fill us with a generous spirit, one that reflects Your own boundless love. Help us to give freely, to give joyfully, and to give with hearts devoted to You. Teach us to trust in You fully, knowing that all we have comes from You and belongs to You. Use our gifts, Lord, to further Your work, to bring hope to the hurting, and to build Your kingdom here on earth. Guide us, strengthen us, and make us a blessing to others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

