

Generous Like God:
August 10, 2025

One of the most irritating things...
That Linda Sievers...
Our Director of Worship and Music... does... is... **[1 Christmas]**
She starts talking about Christmas...
At least six months...
BEFORE we actually celebrate Christmas.

She is just like Walmart...

And I know... she's got a lot to plan...
A ton of responsibilities... I get it.

But most of the time...
I'm just trying to make it...
To the next weekend...

And she's over there...
On the other side of the table... singing...
Away in a manger... no crib for his bed...

The other day... Wednesday...
I heard Linda picking hymns...
For the Saturday night...
5:30 pm... traditional service.

She picked this one...
Go on... play it... and sing...
REJOICE REJOICE BELIEVERS.

I said... Linda...
Are we really going to sing...
An Advent song...
In the middle of August...
It's 100 stinking degrees...

And she said... yes we are...
Based on the gospel lesson today.
Because it's an Advent verse...

Be dressed for action...
Have your lamps lit...
Be like those waiting for their master...
To return... so you can open the door... for him.

And you know... Advent is all about...
Waiting and watching...
Being prepared... just like a Scout...
Jesus is coming...
So be ready.

But... because she chose an Advent song...
I chose a story... that kind of fits...
In the same time of year.

There was a couple living in not so great circumstances
Who suddenly were given the opportunity
To make four wishes...
I don't know... magic genie...
Wishing on a star... doesn't matter... how it all works...
All we need to know... is their four wishes...
Were guaranteed to come true.

They could ask for whatever they wanted...
And they would get it!
It seemed too good to be true.
So they were rather modest at first
And asked for some good clothes
And when they looked in their closets...
Their wish had been granted.

The closet was full of beautiful things...
Shoes, suits and dresses!
All the name brands.
The latest and the greatest.

This encouraged them to wish for something bigger...
And better... than their broken down old cottage
And when they returned home
They found it had transformed into a 10,000 square foot mansion!

This was incredible...
So they dared to be a bit bolder...
They asked to be really wealthy...
And just like that...
Miraculously they had overwhelming wealth...
Jewels, cash in the bank, and investments.

They wondered how they could top this and thought,
"Well, let's ask to be like God!"

Their wish was immediately granted!

All their possessions disappeared...
Clothes, mansion and wealth...
Nothing was left...
Except a cattle trough with some straw in it!

Just like God.
They were born in a barn...
Laid in a rough hewn manger...
Crying, breathing, living...
In human flesh.

Not what they expected.

See... I like that story because...
They were so focused on themselves...
And what they could get out of the situation...
That they thought...
The ultimate power...
The ultimate ability...
The ultimate strength...
Was to be like GOD.

But God's not like that.
And that's not my opinion.
It's what's written...
In God's Word.

God had at God's disposal...
All the power...
All the strength...
To manipulate humanity...
To bend our behavior to God's will...
To make us mindless puppets...
Who obeyed God...
All the time.

But God chose a different route. **[2 John 3-16]**

John 3:16
"For God so loved the world that he **GAVE** his only Son,
So that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

And that's the revealed nature of God. This is what God is like...
God is generous.
God is humble.
God is love.

And I'm not talking about love...
Like it's some kind of toothless tiger...
Or sappy sentimentality...
People who think love is weak... don't understand... **[3 Gritty Love]**
Who God is... and what God has done...

I'm talking about humble love...
That's based in service...
That cares about the people...
That is willing to be gritty... and get dirty...
And do whatever it takes...
To make sure...
The other person is loved.

Let us love one another...
Not just in words...
But in truth...
And in action.

God is love... in truth and action.

And so that's how we end up...
With what Jesus is teaching...
In today's gospel lesson.

Jesus teaches... **[4 Little Flock]**
It's the Father's good pleasure...
To **GIVE** you the kingdom.

But you have to know...
Being given... and included in the Kingdom of God...
Has nothing to do with us.
It is completely... a gift of love.
It is because of God's nature.
It is grace.

Nothing we can do to earn it.
Nothing we have done makes us worthy.

God didn't look at us...
And say... what a bunch of great people.
You know... I think I'll give them salvation.

Just the opposite.
God looked at us...
And had compassion on us.
God saw... our human frailty... and knew...
That we could not...
Make ourselves right.

We can not... keep the commandments...
We will not... live up to what we ought to be.

Left to our own devices...
We really aren't that great.

But my point is...
Jesus saying...
It's God's good pleasure...
To GIVE you the kingdom...
This gift was unexpected.
And unnecessary.

What I mean is...
God did not **HAVE** to give us...
What God has given us.

There was no requirement... no burden... no expectation...
Of God... to be generous.

God created everything.

Everything belongs to God.
It was... and is... and always will be...
An UNEQUAL RELATIONSHIP.
God gives... we receive...

So it was out of love. **[5 God Gave]**
That God took action.
This is HOW God revealed... to us...
That God loves us.

God created this world... for us.
God sustains us... with daily bread...
God sent God's son... into the world... to give us hope.
God went to the cross... to give us new life.
God has created the kingdom... to give us eternity.

God GAVE.
And gave.
And gave.

Because...
God is generous.
And it is God's nature...
To be generous to us.

BUT... there's more.
Jesus calls us... **[6 Sharing]**
To be Generous like God.

Have no fear little flock.
It's the Father's good pleasure...
To GIVE you the kingdom.

And then... in the very next line...
Jesus tells his followers...
That massive crowd...
I talked about last week...
He tells them...

Sell your possessions...
And GIVE alms.

It's the same word.
Jesus uses the same word...
To say... God gives.
Now... you give.

And I know... it sounds extreme...
Sell your possessions...
Listen. I don't think Jesus wants us...
To be without any resources...
To become people in need...
That just adds to the problem.

But instead...

He calls us... to be more generous...
And conscientious...
And loving...
With our resources.
Be generous like God.

But BEFORE we can be generous...
With our time... talents... and treasures...

AND with our lives...

We have to come to the conclusion...
That this life is a gift from God too.

If you stop for minute...
And think about... what you have done...
To contribute... to your own existence... **[7 Body]**

I know... we all work to earn money...
To feed our bodies...
But before that...

I mean... this fabulous body...
We might think our bodies are not that great...
We don't look like celebrities...
And fitness models...

Or that our bodies are all weak and broken...
In various ways.

And maybe our body...
Doesn't work the way...
We want it to work...
Or the way it worked...
When we were 18...

But you know what...
Your body is a miracle.
Beyond your understanding.

I saw Mary Coleman in the rehab hospital...
The other day... and guess what... she's healing!

Sure the doctors gave her medicine...
And the surgeons put the bones...
Back where they ought to be...
And things are in a cast.

But the healing...
Comes from the inside out.

And Janet's sister... Laura...
Has a new heart.
It is a miracle of life.

And I know the doctor's did the surgeries...
And I know a countless number of people...
Cared for her...

I'm realistic about how it all happened...
But again the healing... comes from the inside...
The healing... is DNA programming...
That is hard-wired into our bodies...

Our bodies do things...
That we don't understand.
We didn't make it that way...
God did.

And we could play this game...
All day long.

This planet.
Our food.
Our children.
Our family.
Our friends.
Our ability to think.
Our ability to decide.

Every little thing.
We have...
Is a gift...
That comes from God.

And ultimately goes back to God.

When we understand that all this... **[8 Give Back]**
Does not belong to me.
But in fact is a gift from God.

Then all the sudden...
I go from being a consumer...
To being a steward.

Right? Consume means to use up.
Steward means to take care of...
To be responsible for...
To allow the gifts of God...
To flow into our lives...
And out to others...
In the name of the Good God...
Who has given us all these gifts.

Generosity is always... other focused.

It's not about how much we have...
Or how much we can accumulate...
Or how great we think we are...

It's about what we do...
With what God has given us...
For the sake of others.

And isn't that what Jesus...
Is constantly asking us to do.
To be humble servants.
To be people who love boldly.
To give our lives away...
To empty ourselves...
To take up our cross...
To be generous... to other people...

As a response... to what God has GIVEN us.

One more story. **[9 Candy]**

A woman walked up to the counter...
Of her local grocery store...
And laid down a bag of flour and a gallon of milk.
There beside the register were the rest of her groceries.

"That everything?"
Asked the man working the register.
He owned the general store,
Waited on this same woman every Thursday...
When she came to town to do her shopping.

He was a tall man, with big arms and a big belly.

"Yes," she said, "I think that's it."

As the man rang up the order,
A little face peeked out...
From behind his mama's skirt.

The man caught the young boy's eyes and smiled.
"Why don't you get yourself a handful of candy?"
He said, pointing to the big jar that sat in front of the register.

The little boy's face retreated an inch behind his mom.
"Go on," the man said, "it's ok, get yourself a handful of candy."
The little boy's pulled away another inch.

The man laughed. "Well, here," he said,
Putting his hand deep down into the jar,
Pulling out a big handful of candy.

At this the boy came out from behind his mom...
And extended both his hands upward,
Receiving an overwhelming amount of candy...
From the store's owner.

After the groceries were paid for
And loaded up in the trunk,
The woman turned to her son.

"Why were you so shy in there?
Why didn't you reach your hand in
And get the candy when he offered?"

Her son pulled a cherry sucker out of his mouth
And looked up at his mother.
"Because his hands are bigger than mine."

We are just like that little boy.
God's hands are so big.
God's gifts are so much more...
Than what we can hold or control or even need.
We are given an abundance.

When we are humble.
We understand... that this life...
Is not just about me.

God's gifts... given to me...
Are not just...
About me.

God's kingdom... is not...
Just for me.

So... the question we constantly...
Need to ask ourselves is...

What am I going to do...
How am I going to serve...
What am I going to give...

Who is God calling me to be...
With all this good...
That I have been given?

And if we're not sure... you know...
We can always begin...
With a simple humble prayer.

Lord... help me to be generous like you.

Thanks be to God.
Amen!