

THE BIG IDEA: Generosity begins when neediness ends.

The Take-Off

Currently we are in our December series “Big Things Come in Small Packages” and today is week 3, and, in all honesty, it’s the week I’ve been looking forward to the most, because today is THE BIG GIVE!

I don’t want to take too long to jump right into this topic, but let’s recap quickly where we are so that we can all see how this fits with the previous 2 weeks.

Of course, we started this series by ending BIG. We saw that God’s kingdom is always growing and that, ultimately, we can’t fail.

That sets us up to dream BIG, and Phil did a fantastic job last week with that. Remember Joseph? He had a dream that at first was about him, right? “You’re all gonna bow to me!”

But God used circumstances to shape Joseph so that the dream Joseph had became God’s dream to put Joseph in a position to serve and help others instead of being bowed to.

And that brings us to today, which sounds like it’s going to be all about money, but really isn’t.

But before we get to that, let’s prime the pump a bit with a video that has now been seen by almost 26 million people. That video makes me want to do stuff like that! It also means we really need to understand generosity, and so get our your note sheets, and let’s start with the obvious one first:

1. Generosity is never about AMOUNTS

- a. Generosity in giving has absolutely ZERO to do with how much is given.
- b. Let’s let Jesus handle this one, and I love that he set this one straight right from the beginning
- c. There are only 2 times that Jesus made public mention of someone’s giving:
 - i. Mark 14:1-10
 - (a) While at Simon’s house, Jesus is approached by a woman who pours perfume over his head
 - (b) Kind of a weird moment for everyone there, I’m sure
 - (c) The perfume was valued at a year’s worth of wages, so according to the national average wage index, just under 45 grand
 - (d) That will raise some eyebrows, but what Jesus said about it raise them even higher
 - (e) v. 9 - wherever the gospel is preached, what she did will be told
 - (f) Obviously, if you give a lot of money, you’ll get on Jesus’ good side
 - (g) Yes, people still think that today
 - ii. Luke 21:1-4
 - (a) Jesus was hanging out watching people give
 - (b) That alone could be enough to make us re-think our giving, right?
 - (c) We don’t want anyone to know what we’re giving, but the most important Eye sees it all
 - (d) He saw rich people give a lot, and a poor widow give next to nothing
 - (e) When he spoke, he said something that sounded crazy: “This woman gave more because she gave out of her poverty and they gave out of their wealth.”
 - (f) The best offering was a little one.
- d. 2 offerings, 2 commentaries by Jesus about 2 very different amounts.
- e. One would have taken a long time to count, and the other hardly any.
- f. But both were generous.
- g. Let’s lay it to rest once and for all, generosity has nothing to do with amounts

2. Generosity is never about ABILITY

- a. So many times we wait to be generous because we think we can’t be generous.
- b. “If I could, I would.”
- c. But we only say that because we’re still hung up on the amount
- d. What we really mean is, “I can’t give what I consider to be a generous gift, but when I have it, I’ll give it.”
- e. Again, the Bible shoots down the ability excuse, and this time in just 1 verse!

- f. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul tells the believers in Corinth about the giving of the Macedonian churches, and in verse 3 we learn that they gave:
 - i. AS they were able, and
 - ii. MORE than they were able
- g. The reality is that most of us have the ability to be generous
- h. In fact, if you earn \$45,000/year, you're in the richest 1.5% of the world's population
- i. Problem is, that while we have the ability, we don't feel like we do
- j. More on that next, but for now, let's at least admit that having - or even not having - the ability to give isn't what generosity is about, either.

3. Generosity is never about AFFLUENCE

- a. When I told you that stat about how 45 grand a year makes you richer than 98.5% of the rest of the world, you didn't jump up and start screaming like you'd won the lottery, did you?
- b. That's because we don't feel rich, even if statistically we are rich
- c. And so we leave generosity to the truly rich people
- d. But statistically, the richer we are, the less we give
- e. Let me give you some examples:
 - i. WestJet - the airline that gave a way the presents in the video
 - they had sales of 3.5 billion dollars in 2012 (and netted 243 million)
 - if the cost of the giveaway was \$100,000, then the cost to the airline was less than half of a half of a percent of their profit.
 - ii. Oprah Winfrey:
 - if you recognize the name "Big Give" it's because Oprah produced a reality show by the same name
 - it didn't last, but what has lasted is the warm feelings that many get when they think of Oprah because of how generous she's been
 - she's well-known for surprising studio audiences with new cars, iPads, etc
 - but in 2009, she pulled something off that was staggering: she gave \$40 million dollars to various charities
 - At 13% of her annual income of 300 million, it was a large amount, but only a fraction of her 2.9 billion dollar net worth (a little over 1%)
 - iii. Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of NYC, gave away 311 million dollars in 2011.
 - He gave away Oprah's salary!
 - He was the 5th most generous person in America that year
 - That is staggering! And yet it was only 1.5% of his 19.5 billion dollar net worth.
- f. Are these people bad? No. And what they did was awesome and did a lot of good.
- g. But it doesn't give God glory because people expect rich people to be generous, and so what they do seems big even when it really isn't.
- h. They give from they excess periodically, when followers of Jesus should give excessively, period.
- i. In fact, while God gets glory from Big Things that come from small packages, what WestJet, Oprah, and Bloomberg all did were really Small Things that look like Big Things that came from big packages.
- j. Generosity is never about affluence, so stop waiting to win the lottery to start being generous.

4. Generosity is always about ATTITUDE

- a. If generosity isn't about amounts, ability, or affluence, then what is it about?
- b. Generosity is always about attitude; it isn't an act as much as a quality, right?
- c. We don't want to ACT generous; we want to BE generous!
- d. And so it all starts with the right attitude, and here are 2 statements that - when they are true of our lives - will allow us to live generous lives:
 - i. "I have enough."
 - (a) Until we see that we have enough, we'll always want more.
 - (b) This is the result of fear. Fear of the unknown, of the future, of losing what we have.

- (c) If I asked you how much money you'd need in order to safeguard you and your family from any unforeseen possibility - to make you untouchable to financial disaster - all of us would have the same answer: "More than I currently have."
- (d) Proverbs 30:8-9
- (e) When I have enough, I'm ok sharing.
- (f) If I'm full, I'll willingly and happily give you the really good food that I have no room for, right?
- ii. "I have a Father."
 - (a) Here's why this statement is so important for the believer: we don't just have any Father.
 - (b) We have a God of whom these statements are true:
 - (1) Philippians 4:19
 - (2) Matthew 6:25-34
 - (3) Matthew 7:9-12
 - (c) Knowing we have a Father changes everything, doesn't it?
 - (d) It means that while we may have needs, we aren't needy, because our Dad's got this!
 - (e) Not only that, but Philippians 4:18 says that our Father gives us more than we need.
- e. Do you see it? When these 2 statements are true of us, then we're free to give generously to help others who aren't defined by either one of them.
- f. This is the attitude that fuels the generous person.
- g. It's summed up perfectly in today's Big Idea: **Generosity BEGINS when NEEDINESS ends.**
- h. It isn't that we don't have needs. But knowing we have a Father who makes sure we have enough removes the neediness that so often keeps us from being generous.

The Landing

We're going to wrap this morning up with The BIG Give, and just before we give each of us an opportunity to give, let me share with you something that Tertullian - a 2nd century historian - observed about Christians:

"...unlike members of other clubs and societies that collected dues and fees to pay for feasts, members of the Christian 'family' contributed money voluntarily to a common fund to support orphans abandoned in the streets and garbage dumps. Christian groups brought food, medicine, and companionship to prisoners forced to work in mines, banished to prison islands, or held in jail. Christians even bought coffins and dug graves to bury the poor and criminals, whose corpses would otherwise lie unburied beyond the city gates. . . such generosity, which ordinarily could be expected only from one's own family, attracted crowds of newcomers to Christian groups, despite the risks."

It is not an overstatement to say that it was generosity - not beliefs or creeds - that influenced the culture to Christ.

We want to get back to that, and so 100% of what comes in this morning during The BIG Give is going to go back out to the non-profits locally and around the world who are doing for others what we just read.

We've prepped you for this for a couple of weeks, and so today you should be ready. \$25/person or per family if you'd like. Remember that generosity is never about the amount, or your ability, or being affluent.

This morning we're choosing to start living - and giving - with the right attitude.

While you're preparing, please watch the video screen, and then we'll give when it's over.