

Worship Service: GENEROSITY

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Our theme for today is **generosity**.

What does generosity mean to you and feel like to you? To me, it has a sense of abundance, like "generous portions," or over-the-top giving, when you're overwhelmed by a generous gift. We'll be looking today at what it means to be generous people, and especially God's generosity to us.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and especially forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 2
Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us, p. 3
Amazing Grace, p. 4

First reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

St. Paul writes to the church at Corinth:

⁶The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully [trans: with blessings] will also reap bountifully [trans: with blessings]. ⁷Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make *all* grace abound to you, so that having *all* sufficiency [trans: contentment] in *all* things at *all* times, you may abound in every good work. [optional: ⁹As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”]

¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹*You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way*, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 5
Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Second reading: Mark 14:3-9

³And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii¹ and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

¹ A denarius was one day’s wage, so this bottle is worth nearly a year’s wages.

Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly, p. 7

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 8

Interactive Homily:

Let's think a little more about generosity.

- Who was someone who was or is generous to you at some point in your life? What did that person do?
- How did you feel to receive that generosity?
- When did you make an act of generosity towards someone in your own life? What motivated you to do it? What benefit did *you* receive?

I love the two scriptures we read earlier; the first, when Paul tells the Corinthians, "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way..."

- When we want to be generous, who will give us what we need?

And the second story, of Jesus being anointed at Bethany: The woman pours a jar of very expensive perfume over Jesus' feet.

- Why are some people upset about this?
 - Money "could have been given to the poor"
 - Seems like a waste
- But what does Jesus call her act? Why?
 - "A beautiful thing"
 - It's what she has, and it's in the present. Jesus contrasts giving to the poor – which is good, and which they can always do – with doing something NOW out of love, not waiting until some "better time."
- Who enables us to be generous? GOD
 - What can we be generous with? Time, money, listening, smiles, sharing helping
 - Can you ever run out of something to give? No 😊
- Who is even more generous than we could ever be? GOD
- In what ways has God been generous to you in your life?

Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on the blessing and privilege of generosity.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, thank you Now let us say the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

This is My Father's World, p. 9

It is Well with My Soul, p. 10

Standing on the Promises, p. 11

Third Reading: Quotes on Generosity

Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared. –the Buddha

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. –Winston Churchill

The wise man does not hoard. The more he gives, the more he has; the more he waters, the more is he watered himself. –The Tao

The question of bread for myself is a material question, but the question of bread for my neighbor is a spiritual question. –Nikolai Berdyaev

A spontaneous act of generosity, performed with unselfish grace, is an example of moral beauty. –Yi-Fu Tuan

Hymns:

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, p. 12

Shall We Gather at the River, p. 13

Fourth Reading: A Story About Generosity²

This is a true story from April 2017, reported on CBS News:

² <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/generous-man-treats-people-to-1300-worth-of-ice-cream-and-thats-not-all/>

A random stranger who walked into a Texas ice cream shop is being called a legend after walking out of the store Saturday night with a 7-foot-long receipt, a bottle of water and a big smile on his face.

The man, identified as “Mr. Gary,” simply came into Sweet Sammies in Fort Worth, Texas, to buy a bottle of water.

But he decided to stick around, and one by one, as each customer entered, the man did something unexpected -- he offered to pick up their tab.

“He stood here all night and bought everyone’s ice cream until we closed,” [said the] shop owner.

By the end of the night, his bill was \$1,300.

“He said, ‘You know what, I’m going to pay for everybody’s food that’s in here,’” [the shop owner] said.

He did just that. For nearly three hours, Mr. Gary stood by the counter, greeting customers and offering to pay their bill. He had originally planned on giving away \$100, but for some reason he just couldn’t put his wallet away. ...

And [his] act of kindness didn’t stop there. Before leaving, Mr. Gary handed each worker a \$100 bill, a welcome surprise.

People had no idea what inspired Mr. Gary’s good deed, but [the shop owner] says he may have a clue. The man had parked on a nearby street, which costs a flat rate of \$20 if a ticket isn’t validated. He happened to stop by the ice cream shop, asking if someone could do him a favor and validate the ticket.

“He came in here, he seemed like he was in a rush, so I just went ahead and validated it for him,” Cook said. “[That] opened him up to doing what he ended up doing.”

Mr. Gary’s sweet gesture proves “a little more gratitude for each other goes a long way.”

Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds, p. 14

I Need Thee Every Hour, p. 15

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, p. 23