



Worship Service Theme: Charity
Third Sunday of Lent

Helpful Elements:

Purple table covering (Lenten Season)

Welcome: Welcome! Thank you for coming to our service today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today is the third Sunday of Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter, a time of reflecting on our humanity and God's glory. We use the color purple during Lent as the color of repentance and forgiveness. Today we'll be looking at the idea of **charity**.

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 as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith, p. 2: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting "The Lord is My Shepherd" together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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

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

⁴ Yea, 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 shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

We Gather Together, p. 3

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 4

Joyful, Joyful, p. 5

First Reading: This is part of the famous Sermon on the Mount, in the gospel of Matthew (6: 1-4). Jesus said to his followers:

¹“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ²Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

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

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Oh, How I love Jesus, p. 7

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 8

Second reading: In his second book to the early church in Corinth [chapter 9], the apostle Paul writes:

⁶... Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 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 in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ... ¹⁰God, 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. ¹¹You 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:

His Eye is on the Sparrow, p. 9

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 10

Interactive Homily: Let's think a bit about charity.

- The word *charity* is also often translated as *love*, but today, we're thinking about charity in the sense of giving to others. I wonder why the words *charity* and *love* are the same word?
 - In the Bible, the word translated as *charity* has to do with kindness toward our fellow human beings.
 - "Charity means participating in tangible acts of loving-kindness toward all others (friend or enemy) in unconditional and self-sacrificial ways."¹
 - So to practice charity means *doing*, not just speaking, acts of love, including giving.
- What kinds of things can we give to other people in need?
 - Money; time; attention; care; food; shelter; employment
 - What about our nation? What can we as a country give to others? Shared resources, technology, expertise
- How do you feel when you give something to someone else?
- Is giving easy? hard? What sometimes makes giving hard?
 - Worried about not having enough ourselves; worried the money might not go to "good use"
- How do you make giving a habit?
 - Do it regularly, cheerfully
 - [Personal story:] My dad told me an interesting story the other day. He has always been a generous person to his family and friends, but I wouldn't say he's been a philanthropist; I don't know of any charitable organizations that he gives to. But now, at age 89, his vision has widened. "I have a \$20 in my pocket," he told me, "and

¹ <http://www.varsityfaith.com/2010/07/whats-difference-between-love-charity.html>

today I have to find someone to give it to. I especially hate seeing women on the street corners asking for money. We have so much, it's easy for me to simply go up to someone and say, 'Today's your lucky day.'"

- As author Jeffrey Moses puts it, "Without the practice of charity, [a person's] life grows stale and unfeeling, and a nation's existence becomes self-centered and insecure."²
- What about God? What has God given us?
 - We are children of the King – God has given us life, *everything*
 - Do you think we have enough to give to others?
 - As the apostle Paul says in the scripture we read earlier, "You will be enriched in every way *to be generous in every way*, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God."
- Why does God give "enrich" us, provide abundantly?
 - *So that* we can be generous.
 - *So that* we have thankful hearts, giving glory to God.
- Who is the ultimate Giver?
 - We can never out-give God.

Especially because we are in the season of Lent, a time of reflection and repentance, let us pray together to think about the gifts we've been given, and to be reminded of the virtue and value of charity.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray 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:

He's Got the Whole World, p. 12

In the Garden, p. 13

Standing on the Promises, p. 14

² Jeffrey Moses, *Oneness*, p. 136.

Third Reading: Charity is a universal principle from the world's religions because giving is seen as a blessing. Here's what major religions have to say about charity:³

Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.
–Christianity

The Prophet said: "Give in charity and do not withhold it, otherwise Allah will withhold it back from you." –Islam

He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the Lord; and that which he has given will the Lord pay him again. –Judaism

As a full jar overflowing pours out the liquid and keeps back nothing, even so shall your charity be without reserve – as a jar overturned. –Buddhism

Charity belongs to the most honorable nobility of Heaven, and is the quiet home where man should dwell. –Confucianism

Hymns:

It is Well with My Soul, p. 15

Amazing Grace, p. 16

Fourth Reading: A Short Story called "Charity Wars"

There was a chassid [a devout Jewish person] who, whenever he was approached with the request for a donation for charity, would stick his hand into his pocket and take out a few coins. Then, with a hastily mumbled "just a minute...", the man would again dig into his pocket and come up with another few coins.

Someone who noticed this man's custom once asked him: "Why do you always give in two installments? Could you not take out the full sum you want to give at once?"

"Every act of charity is a victory over our selfish nature," replied the man. "I just can't resist the opportunity to score two victories for the price of one."⁴

³ from *Oneness*, by Jeffrey Moses, p. 136-8

⁴ http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/304955/jewish/Charity-Wars.htm

Hymns:

When the Saints Go Marching In, p. 17

How Great Thou Art, p. 18

[sing more or fewer songs to fill out the time]

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

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise, p. 30