

2023-09-24 Consecration Sunday SERMON

By The Reverend Cheryl Kester-Schmidt

We will do something a bit different during the sermon today, you will respond at various times with the response in the bulletin, when I say, "And all God's children respond." Then we will sing a verse from Take My Life and Let it Be.

These last five weeks we have learned the Why, the Who, the Where, the How, and the Here and Now of the ELCA's Generosity Project. This is not a one-time study to be tucked away and forgotten the moment we walk out the door, generosity is meant to be practiced on a daily basis.

God created each of us. We are created in His image – the image of the Trinity. Once we are created, He tells us, "*Be fruitful, and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over all the creatures here.*" (Genesis 1:28)

In this one sentence, God turns the care of all creation over to us. He wants us to lovingly care for, tend and steward creation,

to cause it to flourish and bring glory to God. This is “the why?” of being generous.

Generosity is a matter of the heart – our hearts. We are saved by grace through faith because of what Christ has done for us. Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again - is at the heart of generosity. Christ creates our hearts for generosity, and we respond to God’s abundant generosity by reflecting His heart in our lives.

God channels His generosity through us for the purpose of blessing others. God has given us all we have, our lives, our work, and the reward for that work. Think about it, in our love and compassion for others, we give to God through Christ the Victor as we give to God’s mission in the church, the community and the world. This is the “why?” of generosity.

And the Generations of faith respond: We trust God’s promise – there is more than enough.

- 1 Take my life, o Lord renew,
Consecrate my heart to you:
Take my moments and my days.

Let them sing your ceaseless praise.

(Lutheran Worship #404 verse 1)

Who is generous? God uses the gifts and generosity of people of every age to accomplish the impossible in the miracle feeding. Jesus feeds the 5,000 plus crowd of diverse people gathered to hear Him preach and heal the sick among them. He uses a child's simple gift of bread and fish to feed them.

This miracle feeding is one of incredible generosity, unlimited compassion and extraordinary hospitality for God's people. No one is considered too old or too young for God to use. No one's gift is too small. People were hungry and Jesus fed them – simple as that.

God has been doing this from the beginning. Taking the nothing and making it everything. Taking the emptiness and filling it up. Taking the darkness and making it light.

Centuries ago a little boy offered his gift of five loaves and two fish to Jesus. In the same way, we are to lift all we have to God, who will accomplish miracles through each of us, regardless

of our age. God makes big things happen when He combines our gifts with others to make the Holy Surprise. The good news is each day we have an opportunity to make a miracle with God.

And the Generations of faith respond: We trust God's promise – there is more than enough.

2 Take my hands and let them do
 Works that show my love for you;
 Take my feet and lead their way,
 Never let them go astray.
(Lutheran Worship #404 verse 2)

Where are we to be generous? Generosity begins – in our homes while we are supported by all generations in our community of faith – Christ the Victor. A reading from

Acts 2:41-47

So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds^[a] to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the

temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous^[c] hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Did you notice the reading says, "They gathered in the temple AND at home? They were like family to each other and practiced what it meant to follow Jesus. They heard and studied God's word, ate together with friends and family, prayed for one another, and they joyfully shared what they had with others. Household by household they grew as followers of Jesus Christ.

Christ the Victor is a place to practice our faith. Here we are equipped as learn and retell God's story - at home. We gather as family at Christ's Table which makes us ready to gather at various community tables.

God gives us the gift of Jesus and as Jesus takes root in our hearts, we learn to live generously and graciously. We are generous because of our identity in and through Jesus.

And all Generations of faith respond: We trust God's promise – there is more than enough.

3 Take my love and help it grow;
 Let my loving overflow.
 Take me now, and help me
 Be part of Christ's community.
 (The New Century Hymnal #448, verse 4)

Paul's letter to the Corinthians begins, "*We want you to know...*" He wanted them "to know" the witness and faith practice of their sister Church in Macedonia and their extreme generosity.

First-century Christians in the Macedonia region were common, ordinary people. They focused on how best to serve Christ. They were very poor, but shared what they had, gave beyond expectations which resulted in great personal joy. Their extreme poverty and challenges did not keep them from recognizing God's abundant grace in their lives and singular desire to serve Christ.

In contrast, Corinth church members had become quarrelsome and jealous as they focused on themselves. Paul reminded them it is not the amount of money but their response

to what God has done in their lives and their desire to serve Jesus.

Today, Paul challenges the Corinthians and us “to know” God’s story and to live it daily. He wants us to share our stories of generosity to encourage each other to be generous in our homes and Christ the Victor. We are to replicate God’s generosity as we excel in it. “We want you to know...” because of God’s grace granted to us.

And all Generations of faith respond: We trust God’s promise – there is more than enough.

4 Take my silver and my gold,
 Not a dollar I withhold.
 Take my lips and keep them true,
 Filled with messages from you.
 (Lutheran Worship #404 verse 4)

How do we live generous lives, Here and Now? The original was “When Pigs Fly” – a humorous image to convey “nothing is impossible with God.” We can be confident that trusting God and

living God's Story of generosity will bring joy to us, our homes and congregation.

Taking God's stories to heart and living to serve others with generosity in the here and now can be challenging, but nothing is impossible with God.

The rich man in our story recognizes there must be more to life than all his accumulations and asks how to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus does not ask us or the rich man to get rid of our possessions and live a life of poverty. Christ calls each of us into a life of discipleship and relationship with Him. In return, He gives us the kingdom of heaven and an abundant life, here and now.

And all Generations of Faith respond: We trust God's promise – there is more than enough.

5 Take my life; your will be done!
 Make your will and mine be one.
 Take my heart, and by your grace
 Make of it your dwelling place.
 (The New Century Hymnal #448, verse 3)

This is most certainly the Good News of Jesus Christ!

