

Living the Jesus Way: Generosity Option I



AIM

To discuss Jesus' teachings on generosity and cultivate an attitude of generosity.

MEDIA

The Joy of Giving: <http://youtu.be/4kPkhJYXhZ8>

Finger lickin' Generosity: <http://youtu.be/dxEjmY1gZ3c>

The Gift of Generosity: <http://youtu.be/yhmmeFuzGRk>

ILLUSTRATION

The Rabbi's Gift - on next page

INTRODUCTION

Watch a YouTube clip about generosity to get the conversation started.

- What did this video say about being generous?
- What behaviours did the video suggest were generous?
- What attitudes lie behind those behaviours?
- How can these attitudes and behaviours inspire us to be more generous in our lives?

BODY/ DISCUSSION

Early in the book of Matthew, Jesus is travelling around the district teaching people about living a fulfilling life. He has many stories and bits of advice to give. In the NRSV Bible, these five little paragraphs have been split up with subheadings. Looking at each section individually (or choose a section),

- What behaviours is Jesus warning against?
- What attitudes are behind those behaviours?
- Are there things in the text that don't make sense or keep you from understanding Jesus' meaning?
- Does anyone have any thoughts about those stumbling blocks?

- If all of these sections were together without subheadings, what would their overall message be?
- What behaviours and attitudes is Jesus asking people to adopt?
- Does this ancient text have a message for your life in South Australia today?

Quote for the day: *"I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."* -Martin Luther (1483-1546) mover and shaker of the Reformation

PRAYER

'Jesus, you gave your life for ours. Send your Spirit to live in our hearts and teach us. Teach us to respond to your love by loving others. Teach us to release our need for receiving. Teach us to cultivate generous attitudes which share our blessings with our neighbours around us as you have done for us. Amen.'

ACTION

Take time to think about your attitude this week. Find ways to be generous with your time and your love, as well as your resources. While you're already thinking about the things you'd like to receive for Christmas, think about what you can offer Operation Santa to make Christmas something special for a neighbour.

CLOSING

The Gift of Generosity YouTube clip



Matthew 6: 16-34 NRSV

(Matthew 6) 16 "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. / 19 **"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. / 22**"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; 23 but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! / 24 "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. / 25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you--you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

The Rabbi's Gift

Once a great order, a decaying monastery had only five monks left. The order was dying. In the surrounding deep woods, there was a little hut that a Rabbi from a nearby town used from time to time. The monks always knew the Rabbi was home when they saw the smoke from his fire rise above the treetops. As the Abbot agonized over the imminent death of his order, it occurred to him to ask the Rabbi if he could offer any advice that might save the monastery. The Rabbi welcomed the Abbot at his hut. When the Abbot explained the reason for his visit, the Rabbi could only commiserate with him. "I know how it is," he exclaimed. "The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore." So the Abbot and the Rabbi sat together discussing the Bible and their faiths. The time came when the Abbot had to leave. "It has been a wonderful visit," said the Abbot, "but I have failed in my purpose. Is there nothing you can tell me to help save my dying order?" "The only thing I can tell you," said the Rabbi, "is that the Messiah is among you." When the Abbot returned to the monastery, his fellow monks gathered around him and asked, "What did the Rabbi say?" "He couldn't help," the Abbot answered. "The only thing he did say, as I was leaving was that the Messiah is among us. Though I do not know what these words mean." In the months that followed, the monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the Rabbi's words: The Messiah is among us? Could he possibly have meant that the Messiah is one of us monks here at the monastery? If that's the case, which one of us is the Messiah? Do you suppose he meant the Abbot? Yes, if he meant anyone, he probably meant Father Abbot. Certainly he could not have meant Brother Elred! Elred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even so, Elred is virtually always right. Maybe the rabbi did mean Brother Elred. Of course the Rabbi didn't mean me. He couldn't possibly have meant me. I'm just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah? As they contemplated in this manner, the monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah and in turn, each monk began to treat himself with extraordinary respect. It so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the beautiful forest and monastery. Without even being conscious of it, visitors began to sense a powerful spiritual aura. They were sensing the extraordinary respect that now filled the monastery. Hardly knowing why, people began to come to the monastery frequently to picnic, to play, and to pray. They began to bring their friends, and their friends brought their friends. Then it happened that some of the younger men who came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the older monks. After a while, one asked if he could join them. Then, another and another asked if they too could join the abbot and older monks. Within a few years, the monastery once again became a thriving order, a vibrant center of light and spirituality in the realm.

- Author unknown