



‘Worship at home’ Sunday July 28th 2024



As we come to worship today
we celebrate God’s generous and
gracious love, beyond our knowledge and
understanding, which dwells within each of us.

Opening (based on Ephesians 3:14-21)

We come today to worship God,
as God’s family, one in Christ even when apart.
As Christ dwells in our hearts,
we become rooted and grounded in love,
We comprehend more and more fully
the breadth and length, the height and depth
of God’s generous love for us; a love beyond all measure.
This is Christ’s love for us, shown on the cross.
And in this love, God’s spirit works within and among us
to do far more than we can ask or imagine
and so, we will give glory to God, forever and ever,
with all that has been, all that is now,
and all that will come to be. Amen.

The word ‘generosity’ means ‘a willingness to give more than is
usual or expected.’ *Cambridge English Dictionary*

**When have you experienced the
generosity of another?**

**When have you been able to show
generosity towards another?**

God’s love, and God’s gifts for us are
generous beyond all measure, and
God calls us to love and to give in the
same manner.



John 6:1-15

After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee (some call it Tiberias). A huge crowd followed him, attracted by the miracles they had seen him do among the sick. When he got to the other side, he climbed a hill and sat down, surrounded by his disciples. It was nearly time for the Feast of Passover, kept annually by the Jews. When Jesus looked out and saw that a large crowd had arrived, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy bread to feed these people?" He said this to stretch Philip's faith. He already knew what he was going to do. Philip answered, "Two hundred silver pieces wouldn't be enough to buy bread for each person to get a piece." One of the disciples - it was Andrew, brother to Simon Peter - said, "There's a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that's a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this."

Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was a nice carpet of green grass in this place. They sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took the bread and, having given thanks, gave it to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish. All ate as much as they wanted. When the people had eaten their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted." They went to work and filled twelve large baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves. The people realized that God was at work among them in what Jesus had just done. They said, "This is the Prophet for sure, God's Prophet right here in Galilee!" Jesus saw that in their enthusiasm, they were about to grab him and make him king, so he slipped off and went back up the mountain to be by himself.

The Message Bible



This story of abundance and generosity reminds us that God's love and grace go far beyond that which we can ever measure or imagine.

*There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea,
and forgiveness in his justice sealed for us on Calvary.*

*For the love of God is broader than the measures of our mind;
and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.*



*But we make his love too narrow by false limits of our own,
and we magnify his strictness with a zeal he will not own.*

Frederick William Faber 1814-63 alt

Sometimes we find it hard to imagine God, and God's love. We place God in a box in order to try to understand. In doing so, we risk confining God; we risk substituting the great and gracious God revealed in the history of Israel and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus for a limited, safe and predictable God who does nothing surprising or amazing, boxed in by our preconceptions; we risk seeing God as narrow and punitive.



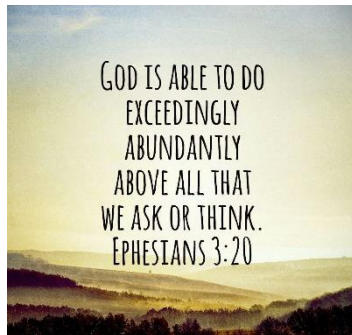
However, in this story of God's abundant generosity, we see a God of surprises who takes our small offerings and multiplies them, who uses what we have to make amazing things happen, whose desire is for food, justice, mercy and love for all; shared so that all may come to have, and know, and see God's glory. We find a generous God who not only

provides what we need, but more so, with abundance, so that there are twelve baskets leftover. We might say this is impossible, but we know that all things are possible with God, and the power at work in Jesus Christ. God's power, like God's love, is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for or even think of: generous beyond measure.

Just as the little boy may have felt he had little to give, and the disciples may have thought they did could not make it stretch far enough, in the same way we often feel we don't have enough... people, money, resources to go around. We feel we are too old, too young, too busy, too inadequate. We have limited resources, and we feel we need to use them sparingly and wisely.

God takes what we have to give and uses us just as we are, working the power of the Holy Spirit within and amongst us to do amazing things. We find that we can always do more, give more, and love more, in the power and grace of God, when we trust in the magnificent, mysterious and mighty God whose love is broader than the

measures of our mind, whose heart is most wonderfully kind, and whose generosity goes beyond all measure.



During times of crisis and uncertainty, we can be tempted to hold tightly to what we have, unsure of our resources and unable to see what lies ahead. **As you remind yourself that God will generously and abundantly provide you with what you need, you might seek out another person who is feeling uncertain or in need, and share something of yourself with them. Make a phone call, offer a prayer, write a letter, or offer to go shopping for essentials.** Trust in God who provides with abundance, more than we can ever imagine, and whose love is broader and deeper than we can ever know.



Prayer: For those feeling uncertain, fearful, isolated and alone; for those caught up in the horrors of violence or conflict; for wise and thoughtful leadership of organisations and countries; especially for Charissa Suli as she begins her term as UCA President, and for Paul Goh who was appointed as President-elect at the recent Assembly meeting

Closing

I ask...that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in ... the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God. God can do anything - far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us. Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus! Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!

4

Ephesians 3:selected verses