

# Community of Christ

## Fairbanks Congregation Happenings

November 7, 2006

The theme for this Sunday is “Consider Generosity”

Commitment to  
Others in  
Need of  
Simple or complex things  
Inspired to  
Do the difficult and  
Even the simple without expectation of  
Reward

Remember to vote today.

Over the last couple of weeks, we’ve looked at heavy and difficult topics.

We’ve wrestled through forgiveness last week, and two weeks ago, after we talked about sexuality, nobody even wanted to talk with me after the service!

So after struggling through tough stuff for two weeks, it’s nice this week to take a little bit of a break... to just relax and talk about something simple, non-controversial, and easy.

Today we’re talking giving away your time and hard-earned money generously.

PIECE OF CAKE!

I mean, come on, who comes up with this plan for what to talk about anyway? This is ridiculous! Can’t we do something easy for once?

Cause frankly, I’m just a little tired of having to do all the hard stuff. What am I supposed to say that will somehow magically help us all give generously?

So I decided I’m boycotting. I’m serious. For the first part of this, you’re gonna have to figure this out. You’re gonna have to figure out how to say something that will make someone give generously. Here’s how it’s going to work. I want you to find someone near you, the closest person to you that you’re not related to, and try to get them to give you something. I’m serious, I want you to try it. Try and say something to get them to give you something. And here’s the only rule: nobody can give something and then have the other person give it back at the end of the exercise or the service. Any gifts that you give to somebody else are really theirs, to keep, forever. Ok? You’ve got 90 seconds to try to get somebody near you to give you something. Turn on the charm, be persuasive, do your best. [GIVE TIME]

Ok, turn off the charm!

Persuading time is over.

Ok, let me ask this: who actually succeeded? Who got somebody to give you something? Let me see a show of hands.

And who thinks they got something pretty good? What's something good you got someone else to give you? [ASK FOR THE EXAMPLES]

All right, you must be the ones who are pretty good at this. Let's learn from your ideas. What did you say to get the person to give it to you? What arguments or persuasion did you use? [ASK]

So how do those arguments hold up as a foundation for being a generous giver?

Our theme today is "Jesus People...Practice Generosity." And we need a pretty good foundation constructed for this theme, because it doesn't make much sense.

WHY should I be generous to others? WHY should I give my precious time and my hard earned cash as a free gift to somebody else?

Paul tries to give a rationale for this in his letter to the Corinthians, and before I read it, I want to set the scene a little bit.

Paul is trying to do something pretty monumental, and it's something important to him, something that he feels will really help the future of Christ's church. Paul was the person most responsible for Gentiles, those who weren't Jewish, becoming Christians. It was a source of tension in the early church, whether the Jews would be generous enough to share God's love with those who were Gentiles.

God's Holy Spirit led Paul and Peter and James and the early church in some very clear ways to show that yes, God's love was big enough to extend to anyone and everyone. So Paul had been at this for awhile, setting up churches all over the known world.

And now Paul has this big plan to mend some fences.

He wants to gather money from all the Gentile churches that follow Jesus, and bring it to Jerusalem to give it to the poor in the Christian church there. He wants to heal a rift by showing the generosity of the Gentile Christians towards the Jewish Christians.

So at the heart of this big long letter to the Christians in Gentile Corinth, Paul is asking them to make sure they take a collection before he gets there so they'll have money to give to the Jerusalem Christians. He's worried, evidently; something he's heard tells him they may not do it. So he pulls out all the stops, even bordering on guilt and shame, to get the people of Corinth to give.

But at the heart, Paul has the biggest and most important reason for us being generous Christians. Let me read part of what Paul says, from 2 Corinthians 9, beginning in verse 6. You see what you notice as some of Paul's arguments, and see how they're similar to and different from the ones the people used here in the service this morning to get others to give. [READ 9: 6-15]

What reasons did you notice that Paul gave for giving? [ASK]

How we live depends a lot upon who we think God is.

And if we really read Paul correctly, we'll see the very heart of who God is, and it forms the heart of why we are to be generous and giving.

Who is God? God is a gracious giver who absolutely loves to give us good gifts, and provide us with the things that we need.

Paul said this in verse 8: "And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." He says in verse 15 that God's gifts to us are indescribable!

Because of our experience in a world of people who are not like God, we often struggle to see God as one who loves to give.

Our experience with a world where "there is no such thing as a free lunch" makes us think we have to bargain with God to get what we want and need.

We don't think God is a giver; we think God is a negotiator that we have to convince.

Or, we swing too far the other way; we think God should and ought to give us whatever we want, with no demands, like Santa Claus.

All through the bible, we're reminded that God is a gracious giver. We see it here in Corinthians; we see it in James, where we're reminded that "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights," we see it everywhere.

The air we breathe is the gift of God. Our talents and our ability to work and our family and our friends and our very life is the creation of a giving and loving God.

But God has a purpose in God's giving. And, I hate to say it, but God's purpose in giving is not so that we will live a great life. The gifts aren't for us. God isn't Santa Claus, giving only to make us happy.

No, the truth is this: God gives good gifts to us so that we will become like God...so that we will become givers ourselves.

Getting those two things right is what forms the solid foundation for our generosity: recognizing that God gives gladly to us and provides our needs, and recognizing that God gives to us with a purpose, a purpose that we will become givers like him.

All through the Corinthians letter, Paul uses a farming and harvest metaphor. If you don't plant a lot of seeds, you don't have a big harvest.

God wants a big harvest, so it says he's scattering the seeds, he's scattering them around with reckless abandon.

But God scatters the seed to bring about a harvest. We aren't supposed to keep and possess the seed; our job is to plant, to sow ourselves so that there can be even more seeds and more harvest.

Maybe you've heard people in church say, "It's not my money anyway."

This is what we mean when we say that. God gives us great and wonderful gifts, but they aren't given to me to possess. They aren't MINE. God's gifts of money, of time, of a place to live, of friends, of meaningful work...all of those gifts are given so that we will become givers just like God.

We get to PARTICIPATE in what God is giving to the world! This is a really incredible plan, and if it weren't so incredibly opposite from the way our consumerist culture lives, we could see this for the joy that it is!

The only reason there's a lack of resources in the world is because people constantly forget or choose to ignore the fact that God gives so that we will become givers. People constantly choose to keep and hoard for ourselves.

The reality is, there is enough food in the world to feed every person on the planet. God has given the world everything it needs, and I'll be bluntly honest: the only reason there is anyone who lacks is because there are others who have chosen to keep more than was theirs to keep.

It's easy and I suppose there is a place to challenge the exceedingly wealthy people in our world who control huge percentages of the resources of the world.

But the reality is, we're all at fault to one degree or another. And rather than place blame, or lay guilt, I want to call us to remember who God is and God's purpose.

God is a generous giver! We do not need to somehow bargain with or convince God to give.

And God invites us to join in God's giving! Practicing generosity is to joyfully join with God in giving to the world. It is to become who we were created to be, partners with God, sharing what God has given to us with those around us.

This takes practice. It takes the practice of seeing in the Bible what it says about the giving nature of God; it takes recognizing and thanking God for the specific gifts we see him giving to us.

And then it takes the commitment and God's power to choose to break the hold that money and possessions have on us, the desire to hoard and keep for ourselves. It takes practice to release our time and our money and our things and recognize they are not ours but Gods, and we have been given them to share with an open hand.

So where do you want to start this week? I want to give a really, really simple place to start. There are many things we could give generously, and many ways we could give them. I want to invite us to practice with one thing, with money, and a small amount at that. I want to challenge each of us to figure out this week how to practice generosity with ten dollars. That's three or four lattes, or lunch twice at Wendy's, or one CD or DVD. Let's set a goal of taking ten dollars we would have spent on something for ourselves, and instead, ask God to give us the joy of joining him in giving that ten dollars generously to someone else.

It won't change the world or your life, but it will be a tangible way to practice; and it will give us each something specific to ask God about this week. Next week, we'll have some time to share what happened in this experiment.

Will you try it? Let's ask God to help us.

Above excerpted from Greggs Gamble - Gregg Koskela is senior pastor at [Newberg Friends Church](#) in Newberg, Oregon.

[http://greggsgambles.com/messages/06-10-22\\_blog.htm](http://greggsgambles.com/messages/06-10-22_blog.htm)

### **Announcements:**

Ragamuffin Gospel class – 10:00 Continuation of Chapter 10 - The Victorious Limp –

**November 11<sup>th</sup>**- Missionary Seminar- Presented by John Wight – President of the Seventy – North Houston

**November 12<sup>th</sup>**- Thanksgiving Pot Luck after the service

**January 2007** – Mission Center Women's Retreat at Sionito- See webpage or Ruth Chatburn. Currently seeking help with music ministry.

### **We need volunteers to teach our youngest children on Sundays.**

Recently, I have started having difficulties with Yahoo and reaching some distributions limits. Yahoo must have changed its tolerance levels recently. If you are not receiving the newsletter, it can also be found on the Mission Center webpage under our congregational information. Larry Haywood has been very good about posting all newsletters he receives in a very timely matter.

Let me know what is happening so I can include it the newsletter.

**See Mission Center web page for more information**

**See the mission center web page for camp and reunion information**

The following is a schedule of those that are currently scheduled to deliver the message for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. This is not the "official list" and is for informational purposes only. Please refer to the worship schedule in the fellowship hall for changes.

November 12<sup>th</sup> – Sue Turner

November 19<sup>th</sup> – Gary Chatburn

November 26<sup>th</sup> – Jeff Whitehall Sr.

December 3<sup>rd</sup> – Carole and Leo Caesar

December 10<sup>th</sup> – David Romig

December 17<sup>th</sup> – Sue Turner

December 24<sup>th</sup> - Ruth Chatburn

December 31<sup>st</sup> – David Watson

The nursery schedule cannot be posted in the family center for October - December 2006. Please contact Andrea if you are interested in volunteering in the nursery this quarter.  
Nursery Schedule:

**We need volunteers for the nursery. Please see Andrea Watson.**

Please review the prayer list in the Sunday bulletin. If you have added someone to the list please update Leo Caesar with any new information and current status of the prayer concern. Please contact Leo Caesar if you wish to add/remove someone from the list.

**Calendar & Mission Center News:**

**January 2007- Women's Retreat in January at Sionito – See Mission Center webpage and Ruth Chatburn for details Currently looking for music ministry**

The Coastal Bend Mission Center is proud to announce that the Coastal Bend web site is up and running! You can visit the site at [www.coastalbendmc.org](http://www.coastalbendmc.org)

I will be sending out periodic e-mails letting everyone know what is “HAPPENING” at Fairbanks. Please let me know if your e-mail or other contact information changes. Mark your calendars and **participate, enjoy, reach out!!!!!!**I pray that everyone have a safe and happy week.

*Martha Romig*