



Generosity

WEEK 2026

Sermon Starter Pack

Sunday 27th September

‘Imitating Christ’s Humility’
Philippians 2:1-13

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Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to death—

even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.



Imitating Christ's Humility

We all become like the people we admire. Children pick up their parents' phrases and habits. Apprentices learn by watching experienced craftspeople. We imitate sporting heroes, musicians, teachers and friends. The people we look up to slowly shape the kind of people we become.

Paul says exactly the same thing about the Christian life. "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." At its heart, Christianity is not simply believing certain truths or following a moral code. It is becoming more and more like Jesus. Paul then reminds us what Jesus is like.

Though he was equal with God, Jesus did not cling to his status or privilege. Instead, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross. The cross is the greatest act of self-giving love the world has ever seen.

Jesus' whole life was marked by generosity. He gave his time to those everyone else ignored. He gave his compassion to the broken. He gave forgiveness to sinners. He gave dignity to the forgotten. Ultimately, he gave his own life for the salvation of the world. Generosity isn't simply something Jesus did. Generosity is who Jesus is.

Paul's point is not merely that we should admire Jesus, but that we should imitate him. That changes the way we think about generosity. The goal of the Christian life isn't generosity. The goal of the Christian life is Christlikeness. But wherever Christlikeness grows, generosity is never far behind. A life shaped by Jesus becomes generous because Jesus himself is generous.

That generosity is far bigger than money. It is generosity with our encouragement, forgiveness, hospitality, patience, time, gifts, attention and possessions. It is a willingness to place the needs of others before ourselves because that is exactly what Christ has done for us.

As we mark Newcastle Diocese's Generosity Week, this is an important reminder. This isn't simply about meeting a budget or increasing parish income. It is about discipleship. The question isn't first, "How much should I give?" The better question is: "Where is God inviting me to become more like Jesus?"

For many of us, one answer to that question will include our finances. Money is one of the areas of life that Jesus wants to shape, just as much as our relationships, our speech, and our priorities. Reviewing our giving is therefore not an exercise in guilt or obligation, but one practical way of asking whether every part of our lives is becoming more like Christ.

That will look different for different people. God has not given everyone the same resources or circumstances. Some will be able to give more financially. Others will express Christ-like generosity through serving, welcoming, encouraging, visiting, praying, or caring for others. The point is not that every Christian gives the same amount, but that every Christian is being shaped by the same Saviour.

Nor should this passage leave anyone struggling financially feeling burdened or guilty. A church formed by Philippians is one where those with greater resources gladly shoulder more for the sake of the whole body. The church should reflect the generosity of Christ by caring for one another, not placing additional weight on those already carrying heavy burdens.

Paul finishes with a wonderful promise: "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." This is good news because becoming like Jesus is not something we accomplish through determination alone. God himself is at work within us. By his Spirit he is slowly reshaping our hearts, loosening our grip on ourselves and teaching us to love as Christ loves.

Finish with a gentle invitation.

As you reflect on the extraordinary self-giving love of Jesus, ask yourself not simply, "Am I generous enough?" but, "Am I becoming more like Jesus?" If Christ is shaping us into his likeness, generosity—in our love, our service, our welcome and our giving—will increasingly become part of who we are. Because the goal of the Christian life isn't generosity.

The goal of the Christian life is Christlikeness. And wherever Christlikeness grows, generosity is never far behind.





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Bonus Sermon Starters

‘The Collection for the Lord’s People’

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

‘The Parable of the Rich Fool’

Luke 12:13-21

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵ And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶ So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. ⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰ And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. ¹¹ Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. ¹² For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. ¹³ Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴ At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵ as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little."



The Collection for the Lord's People

'Excel in the Grace of Giving' is an interesting phrase. Paul makes it clear he wants the Corinthians to be good at giving, but also it is a grace. He can not compel or tell them what to do. Neither can we!

Paul points out the Corinthians are good at so many other things, and additionally, they started well, but have not maintained that generosity. There are similarities to the [Anglican Giving Survey](#) which found that on the whole we are generous people, giving to lots of worthy charities – just not always so generously to our local church. Some of us also started well, but have neglected to increase our gift in line with inflation over the years.

Is it inappropriate to discuss giving during the cost of living crisis? Paul has covered this by citing the example of the Macedonians who gave despite their own extreme poverty (refer back to vv 2-5).

The Macedonians pleaded for the privilege of being included in the collection Paul was organising. If our senior Diocesan leadership sent an appeal letter but decided to leave our parish out, because of our own financial problems, would we insist we are given the opportunity to contribute too?

The Macedonians had a combination of joy, poverty and generosity. It's tempting to think that poverty and generosity cannot be found together. They can. Each of us should consider prayerfully and honestly how much we should give – then give that amount, not begrudgingly, but cheerfully.

Paul finishes by quoting Exodus 16, where the Israelites were provided with manna and quail in the desert, reminding his readers that In God's economy, no-one gets left with too much or too little.

It also reminds them of how God has blessed them in the past. Understanding God has already blessed us is our important starting foundation as we consider how much to give. We give because He is a generous God, and in acknowledgement that everything we have comes from Him.

Luke 12:13-21

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” ¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”



The Parable of the Rich Fool

Jesus talked about money more than sex, hell, salvation, or almost any other subject. Maybe because He knew we'd find the subject difficult. One key thing Jesus said is we can't love both God or money. We must choose one or the other. When Jesus talks about money, it's because he cares for us and is interested in us. He knows happiness comes from being content with what we have, not from wanting more than we have.

The story of "The Rich Fool" is in response to someone who asked Jesus to help him get more money and possessions. People often ask vicars and Church leaders for help in all sorts of areas, such as with relationships or prayer, but very rarely for help with overcoming greed and materialism. Likewise people often declare enthusiastically they wish to follow Jesus, and make Him Lord of their life, but seldom say as enthusiastically they want Him to be Lord of their finances.

So how can we avoid being self-centred, like the man in the story? The answer is to be more like Jesus. And Jesus is generous. In fact so generous, he gave his life for us. So we need to learn to give. Specifically, we should give generously, sacrificially and joyfully.

- **Generously** because God is generous to us. The OT talks about tithing. Some ask what that means in practice, and what types of income should be included. But it's not about the least we can get away with. Nor for that matter a set amount. Instead we respond to realising God's been generous to us.
- **Sacrificially** because if we're not missing it, we're probably not giving enough. Most likely we're just giving from what we have left over, whereas the OT talks about 'first fruits' – giving from the best of what we have.
- **Joyfully** because we're invited to partner with Jesus and fellow Christians to transform the world. To do that, we need to learn the spiritual discipline of giving. When we give cheerfully it changes our perspective.

Maybe we're scared to give, but following Jesus is an act of faith, for which some have lost their lives. We need to take risks, and believe God keeps his promises, such as if we are fully generous, we won't be able to store up the blessing God will give us (Malachi 3: 10)

