

God Is Generous Sermon

May 6, 2018

A.W. Tozer once said: *"What comes into our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, 'What comes into your mind when you think about God?' we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man."* I think he's right. Some of you grew up with a concept of God that He's mostly mad at you because you keep messing up. And so, you're always trying to prove your worth to God and trying to make Him like you more than be mad at you.

The sermon today, goes right after that faulty view of God. Please grab a Bible and turn to **Matthew 20** where we're going to discover a very important aspect about the nature of God from one of the 46 parables that Jesus told during his ministry.

Read **Matthew 20:1-16**

Let's quickly recap what we just read.

1. Jesus is describing how things operate within the Kingdom of Heaven, which reflects the character and nature of God.
2. This wealthy landowner goes out and hires workers for his field throughout the day, beginning very **early in the morning** and then again at **9am, noon, 3, and 5pm** (shortly before quitting time).
3. The rub comes when those who were hired last are paid the exact same amount as those who've worked all day. Those that have worked all day feel ripped off. **Was the landowner being unfair?** No. He paid those workers hired on early exactly what he'd promised them. This parable ends at the end of the day – but if this practice went on for several days what do you think would happen? I think it's pretty safe to say, knowing the nature of the human heart, workers wouldn't show up to work in this man's field until later in the day. Because we want to get the most bang for our time. We are calculators and if we can get more money for less work – then we're going for it.
4. Let me ask you, how do you feel when you hear an account about a convicted felon accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior at the last minute before they are put to death? Do you rejoice that this individual at the very last minute came into a saving knowledge of Jesus or do you question the validity of this conversion and perhaps feel a little sad that you've served God all of your life faithfully and here they've turned their back on God all of their life and now at the last minute they get in? Doesn't seem fair, does it? If that's your attitude then it's a reflection of where your heart is at. Because God absolutely rejoices when anyone comes into a saving knowledge of Him, even if it's at the last minute.

That was the point He made with the Prodigal Son. When this rebellious son, after foolishly spending His portion of the Father's hard earned money on wild living, returned home, the Father wasn't angry or vindictive but He was rejoicing and generously threw his son this lavish party – because His love for His son far out weighted feelings of resentment or hurt. That's your Heavenly Father. He longs to be generous to you.

5. I find it fascinating, that the Jewish rabbis in their writings have a very similar parable. But the explanation at the end of their parable is that the reason these laborers hired late were given just as much as those hired earlier in the day is because they worked so much harder than the others did. So, every workers pay was given in accordance to how hard they worked. But Jesus' parable is exactly the opposite. These workers were given the same amount, not because of what they'd done, but because of the sheer generosity of the boss. In fact one of the last things the landowner asked the workers hired early in the day was: *"Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money" Or are you envious because I am generous?"*

That's the point about God from this parable that I want you to see about the nature and character of God. And that's that the God we've worshiped this morning is a very generous God. And that's talked about repeatedly in Scripture.

Consider briefly some of the statements of Scripture regarding God's generosity.

God's Generosity:

- God richly blesses all who call on Him (**Romans 10:12-13**)
- God's love and compassion are new every morning. They never get stale or run out (**Lam. 3:22-23**)
- God loves to give good gifts to His children when they ask (**Mat. 7:11**)
- God gives us His Holy Spirit without limit (**John 3:34 & Titus 3:5-7**)
- God richly provides us everything for our enjoyment (**1 Timothy 6:17-19**)
- God gives us wisdom generously if we ask for it (**James 1:5**)
- God lavishes His love on us thus making us and confirming us as His children (**1 John 3:1**)
- God will meet all our needs according to the riches of His glory in Jesus Christ (**Eph. 4:19**)
- God lavishes His grace on us (**Ephesians 1:7-8**) And in doing so brings us into a right relationship
- God equips us to be generous on every occasion (**2 Corinthians 9:6-11**) Notice this passage. God blesses us in order that we might be able to be a blessing to others around us. It says (**vs. 10**) that *"God will increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness."* God is filling you up with Himself and His power and grace so that others might come to see the difference God is making in your life and then come into a right relationship with Him as well. God's blessings upon your life are so that you might be used by Him to bless others. So, look for ways that God is blessing you in order that you might be a blessing to others. And God's way more creative and powerful than you or I am. If He can trust you to be a blessing to others, then He will bless you. Listen to the amazing promise found in **Ephesians 3:20-21**

Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV) *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

That verse alone ought to blow open our prayers and the way we approach every single day. Fully expecting that God wants to bless me abundantly so that I can be a blessing to others. You ought to live every single day with your radar up to discover **who** and **when** and **how** God wants to use you to bless someone else. Now, I know when I talk like this most of our thoughts go immediately to the blessing of money. But that might not necessarily be the case. God has blessed you by welcoming you into His family by making you His son or daughter. To know that you're a child of the creator of the universe who is sitting on His throne, ought to free you up from the game of trying to earn other people's approval and allow you to freely go out and bless others through encouragement or by praying for someone else, or sending them a note or a text of encouragement.

And if you feel called to bless someone by buying their dinner, and the result of that is that it puts you at risk financially, save the receipt and turn it into me and I'll make sure that you get reimbursed for that act of generosity in Jesus' name. However, I'm pretty convinced that if you choose to be a blessing, God will provide for your acts of generosity in amazing ways.

James Bryan Smith in his book, **The Good and Beautiful God**, writes this about generosity: *"When someone is generous they give more of something than is necessary or expected. Sometimes we're generous because we've been blessed with abundance. We can also be generous with scarce resources, as we're motivated by love or compassion."*

- **Sometimes we're generous because we've been blessed with abundance:** yesterday, after winning the Kentucky Derby race while riding **Justify**, 52 year old jockey, **Mike Smith**, affectionately nicknamed, **"Big Money Mike"** was interviewed on the track. And the first thing out of his mouth was: *"I just want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for making this all*

possible." That's a man that in the heat of the victory that most jockeys merely dream about, he realized he'd been blessed and wanted to point to the one who's blessed him the most. You can do that as well in interacting with others.

- **Sometimes we're motivated to be generous by love or compassion:** the sinful woman who generously anointed Jesus' head and feet with expensive perfume and her tears and proceeded to wipe them with her own hair is an excellent example of that. You don't have to be rich to be generous. Generosity can pour out of you when you're filled with God's love and compassion.

James Bryan Smith then points out that God is motivated by both of these factors. He's got an unending supply of abundance and He's full of love and compassion.

I hope that flipped your concept of God on it's head. God doesn't operated by the world's principles but by His heart and mind. And because of that, He's eager to bless your life – regardless of your background any thing else in your past. He's interested in sharing His wealth with His children.

Some of you don't feel very blessed right now. Reflect back on His blessings in the past, on His ultimate blessings in the future (when we join Him in heaven forever. And then ask for spiritual insight to see His hand of goodness and blessings on your life right now.

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Our generosity generally flows from:

1. Blessed with _____
2. Love and _____

What comes to mind when you think of God's blessings on your life?

How have you blessed others lives?

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