



October

Seeing God in Generosity

October Memory Verse

Luke 21:1-4

“As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. “I tell you the truth,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

October 1

John 3:16 (NIV)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him, shall not perish but have eternal life."

A lot of gift giving folks, like to save the best gift for last. God gave us the best gift of all time, his son, Jesus. Starting this month of generosity, why not start with the best example of generosity ever shown.

What is the most generous gift ever given you? What is the most generous gift you ever gave? Which made you happier?

October 2

John 4:10 (NIV)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

Because of a cultural difference, the Samaritan woman was surprised that a Jewish man would ask her for help, for a drink of water at the well. He would go on to tell her about her past, her current life condition, and actually tell her He is the Messiah (vs 26). Christ's presence in other's lives, and our ability to observe it is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

Do you look for God's gift of Christ in others? Is your "sight" blocked by cultural differences? Pray that the Holy Spirit open your eyes for the enlightenment of God's presence in those around us.

October 3

Deuteronomy 15: 6-7, 10 "If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs....Give generously to him and do so without grudging heart; then because of this The Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to."

The Book of Deuteronomy is where the Ten Commandments are recorded. As you know, most say "Thou shall not...." and then list the sin we should not do. However, if you read on in the Book, God through Moses tells us to love the Lord your God, and to love your neighbor. Oh how I have failed to do both at times in my life. My condemnation of the street corner beggar. My ignoring of the homeless. It's not so much about the dollars, but about receiving those less fortunate as my brothers and sisters and treating them accordingly.

What gift can I give that will truly help my neighbor, the beggar, the homeless?

October 4

Proverbs 11:25 "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

The Book of Proverbs was written by very wise men, Solomon being thought as one of the contributors. I like the use of the word refresh. Most think of generosity involving money. But money is not mentioned here. I like to think the wise men were thinking about generosity being provided from the gift of presence with a person struggling; of listening to someone just needing attention, of encouraging a friend to persevere through trials. When we treat others with true Christian concern and love, we are fulfilling this scripture.

When were you in need of generosity? Was it shown to you? When have you shown generosity to a friend or stranger?

October 5

Philippians 4:14-16, 19 "Yet it was good for you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need....And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. "

As I read these verses of thanks from Paul to the church in Philippi, I can't help but think of the many "missions" our church supports. Through prayer, as noted every Sunday during the Prayers of the People, and through our finances. We give to these "missions", knowing we may never meet these persons, but we give knowing they are sharing the love of Jesus Christ with others. We give knowing that God will meet their needs, "according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

List a mission you are now or would be willing to support thru time, talent, and treasure.

October 6

Romans 12:13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

As I read thru the commentary about Paul's letter to the Romans, two points jumped out to me. The first was many believe Paul wrote this letter while on his third missionary journey, returning to Jerusalem, with an offering from the mission churches for poverty-stricken **believers** in Jerusalem. The second point was the footnote in my bible about this passage. It says that Christians have a social responsibility to all people, but especially to other **believers**. The early church took care of each other. They were taught to do so. As I write this, our church has started "The Mission", designed to offer food gift cards to our neighbors in need. Let us strive to help those in need from our church, our community, our nation, and throughout the world.

Write down a time a fellow Christian offered you help thru a struggle. Thank God for that generosity.

October 7

1 Timothy 6:17-19 "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. "

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, Paul is giving instructions to Timothy in his work with the Church in Ephesus. Timothy had to refute false teachings, to find and appoint leaders of the Ephesian church, and to supervise this growing Christian group. When I read this passage, I'm reminded of the phrase about our treasure at the time of our death, "You can't take it with you." I want to have that heart of generosity that makes me want to share my treasure, no matter how big or small.

People can be rich monetarily. People can be rich with great family and friends. People can be rich with a great faith in God. But riches cannot outweigh God's grace. How do you define rich? Compare it with God's grace in your life.

October 8

Psalms 112:5 "Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice."

My initial thought when I read this was, this isn't always true. Many people follow this guideline in their daily lives, but don't necessarily receive "good" in return. However on further study and contemplation on this verse, I realized the "good" promised is not necessarily an earthly reward, but a reward of getting closer to God's spirit, his spirit of caring and generosity.

Have you ever felt taken advantage of while being generous? Did it impact your future willingness to be generous? How do you read this verse?

October 9

James 2:8 "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing right.'"

Who is your neighbor? Many in today's society don't know the people who live around them, much less assuming your neighbor could be anyone you meet. Loving someone as you love yourself is practicing the generosity of caring. Caring for others gets us closer to God. God enjoys watching us care for each other. Don't let life's struggles and daily hurdles keep you from loving "your neighbor." Strive to reach out, open up, care and share your life with others, so that one day when in eternity, you will know your neighbors and they will know you.

October 10

Proverbs 22:9 "A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor."

I am always uncomfortable arriving at an intersection where people are begging. Many times they have a sign asking for a monetary donation. I must admit my skepticism makes me question what they would use my dollars for. My dollars? These were earned by the talent God gave, not by me alone. My daughter suggested a way to get past that skepticism. She suggested leaving lunch bags filled with crackers, a granola bar, a bottled water, and a 3x5 card with a scripture reading in my truck to pass out when I encounter such a needy person. We are called to feed the poor. May my heart be more open and less judgmental.

Think about ways you can be more involved in feeding the poor.

October 11

Acts 20:32-25 "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: It is more blessed to give than receive."

We all have heard this saying, it is better to give than receive. As a child, I would probably have disagreed with this, but as I have aged, I so enjoy giving to my children and grandchildren. The joy I receive from watching their excitement and their appreciation is better than receiving any gift myself.

Have you ever given something to a stranger in need? What was their response and how did it make you feel? Have others given to you in your time of need?

October 12

1 Chronicles 29:14 &16 (NIV)

"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand....O Lord our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you."

Isn't it interesting how we sometimes forget where our gifts, success, and blessings come from? When I do remember that all comes from God, I find it much easier to give back what is His anyway.

Think of all the blessings in your life. Do you share those with others often? How do you remind yourself that all comes from the Lord?

October 13

Luke 21:1-4 (NIV)

"As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.""

We all probably know this story well. The poor widow gave all she had and Jesus said it was more than what the rich had given. Not monetarily of course, but in relation to what she had, it was everything. Who gives all they have? She couldn't have been looking for rewards on earth, as she gave all she had. What great faith that took to give everything. How many times do we give and expect something in return? Pray that we give at our capability and enjoy the rewards in heaven.

October 14

2 Corinthians 9: 6-8 (NIV)

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church in Corinth encouraging generosity. Being raised a Jew, I'm surprised Paul doesn't mention tithing. But instead he says to give what one decides they can, but not because of the feeling of responsibility or because of guilt, but give what one decides with a cheerful heart. And whatever one gives, God will multiply for His use.

Have you ever seen God's use of your gifts? What feelings did you experience if so?

October 15

Psalm 41:1-2 (NIV)

"Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble. The Lord will protect him and preserve his life, he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes."

Who are the weak? Of course, we think of the sick, the homeless, the orphaned, the widowed, etc. I would propose those that don't know the good news of Jesus Christ should also be counted in that group. Their soul is weak because of their lack of nourishment that only God can provide through his Son, Jesus. How can we help? By generously sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to those we know who are lacking in the knowledge of our Lord.

Who do you know that needs the gift of Jesus shared with them? Pray that the Lord will guide you and give you the words to share the good news of Christ.

October 16

Galatians 6:7-10 (NIV)

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

"A man reaps what he sows", is usually used in a negative light. I like that this scripture shows the positive side of that saying. Notice again that it isn't a worldly reward, but "eternal life." Paul calls on the Galatians to do good to all people, but especially to fellow Christian believers. Let us take this message and care for each other "to please the Spirit."

October 17

Leviticus 25:35 (NIV)

"If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you."

Leviticus was written to establish the laws and regulations for worship, but also to establish moral laws, holy days, the Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee. This was done basically during the year that Israel camped at Mount Sinai, where God directed Moses in organizing rules and governance for the nation of Israel. So as part of the moral law, we have the verse above. Like us though, over time, the Israelites forgot this law, just as we sometimes forget to take care of each other. Not just monetarily, but physically and spiritually. Let us look for ways to care for others, being generous with our love of Christ.

How can you show your love of Christ better to those around you?

October 18

Proverbs 3: 27-28 (NIV)

"Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Come back later: I'll give it tomorrow'—when you now have it with you."

Why the rush to give reward to "those who deserve it"? I believe the writer of this Proverb is warning us against procrastination when being moved by the Spirit to give to a righteous cause. Human condition causes us to be cautious with our gifts, but God wants us to be generous with them, and to act when the Spirit leads you, immediately. This limits the obstacles of this world to change our mind. God provides all we need, now and in the future.

Pray that the Holy Spirit guide you with your gifts of generosity.

October 19

2 Corinthians 8: 7, 10-12 (NIV)

"But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving...And here is my advice 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. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have."

Paul mentions to the members of the church in Corinth, that giving is an act of grace. How often do we think of our giving of time, talent & treasure that way? Don't we feel a sense of accomplishment when helping with our gifts of time, talent, & treasure. Also, Paul notes it's about our willingness to share our blessings with others that God honors, not the size of the gift.

Let us be graceful givers of our time, talent, & treasure and let God bless others through our generosity.

October 20

John 6: 5-13 (NIV)

"When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Eight months wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten."

Notice the size of the crowd. My bible notes that the five thousand did not include the women and children that were there also. So the crowd was so large that for each MAN to get a bite, it would have cost approximately 8 months of wages! This is a great story showing how God can take the smallest of gifts and multiply them to the point that the gift doesn't go away.

What do you think the boy was thinking when Andrew offered the boy's food to Jesus? Was this the boy's only food for his family? Did he give with faith knowing he would still be fed? Or was he looking for never ending food offered thru Jesus?

October 21

1 Peter 4: 8-11 (NIV)

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

The apostle Peter points out that God's generosity towards us should be used to serve others, but without grumbling. You mean I have to serve others, whether I want to or not? Sure sounds like Peter is saying yes we do. In fact he says we should serve "with the strength God provides". God provides us with all we need to serve others, to the glory of His name.

How can we be more hospitable to one another?

October 22

Matthew 6:2-4 (NIV)

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Again a reward from God is offered for taking care of the needy and being discreet and humble about it. Does God reward us each time we take care of others? Of course not, because He tells us to love others as we love ourselves. So the generosity we give others, is an outward sign that we recognize this commandment.

It's not always easy to love others as we love ourselves. Describe a time you struggled with this but did it anyway.

October 23

1 Kings 3: 9 (NIV)

"So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern the great people of yours?"

Solomon prayed this verse to God. Verses 10-12 tell us that God was pleased that Solomon asked for something that would help others, and not for wealth or the destruction of his enemies. So God gave him great wisdom and discernment. But God didn't stop there! Verse 13 tells us that God also gave Solomon what he didn't ask for, "both riches and honor". God's generosity to Solomon started with Solomon's wish to be generous (in this case with the proper way to govern) with his handling of others.

Simple and humble requests to God can turn into more than one has ever asked for. Think about a time God has given you more than you asked for.

October 24

Proverbs 3: 9-10 (NIV)

"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

When this was written, Israelites were required to give the priests the first part of the olive oil, wine and grain produced each year. This "rule" had been established in God's word to Moses to share with God's people (see Leviticus 23: 9-10). The priest represented the body of believers back then. Today are priests point us to Christ and all of us are the body (the Church). So what are we called to do today? Like the Israelites supporting the body of believers then, we are called today to support the Church as best we can through our gifts.

Pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit on how you can support the Church.

October 25

Nehemiah 9: 16-18 (NIV)

"But they, our forefathers, became arrogant, and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands. They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them, even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, 'This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt', or when they committed awful blasphemies."

When this passage was read at Mass the first weekend in August, I was stuck by the God's generous gift of forgiveness to His people. If you read the rest of this chapter, you will find the Israelites turned away from God again and again. But, as they asked for forgiveness, God continued to forgive and bless them. How can we measure God's generosity of forgiveness? How many times can you ask for forgiveness and turn away from your sin & towards our Father? As long as we ask and seek His mercy, He offers us generously His love and forgiveness.

Who do you need to show a generosity of forgiveness too?

October 26

2 Corinthians 9: 9-11 (NIV)

"As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."

In this scripture, Paul is reminding the members of the Church in Corinth that God is the provider of all (ie: seeds & bread). He provides what we need to care for ourselves and others. In fact, Paul says that as we are generous towards others, God replenishes and increases what we need to continue to do so. And through these actions of generosity, we show our thanksgiving to God.

Have you ever experienced God's blessings, been generous with that blessing, and the witnessed God continue to multiple it? Share your story with others.

October 27

Proverbs 25: 21-22 (NIV)

"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head and the Lord will reward you."

Being kind and generous to my enemies is not in my daily thoughts or actions. Why would I do that? Verse 22 tells us why. The note in my bible says that kindness towards ones enemy perhaps will when them over. But whether they are won over or not, God will reward you. God wants us to show love to all, as He does to all of us. As God is generous with His love to us, we are called to do the same.

Have you ever changed an enemy to a friend by showing God's love to that individual?

October 28

1 Corinthians 13:3 (NIV)

"If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."

This passage from Paul struck me, because it revealed if my motivation for giving was not based in love (love for God, love for those I know, love for those I don't know) then my gift is worthless. Wow! This is something I will be thinking about when I'm giving my time, talent, and treasure to the Church and others.

October 29

James 2:15-17 (NIV)

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

What does this verse have to do with generosity? Simple; generosity is an action word. To be generous requires active thought, active planning sometimes, and active performance. Many people plan to do good for others, but the hard part is actually taking your time, talent, and treasure to activate your plan. I pray that our church family is known by our words, but more importantly by our actions!

List down your plan of generosity and how you will put it in action.

October 30

Luke 16:13 (NIV)

"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

In my bible, the word Money is capitalized. I spent time thinking why it was this way. As I read the scripture and looked at the text, I realized Luke was making a point that many consider money to be their god. So when this was written, he emphasized this by capitalizing of course God, and the idol Money. We all need money to buy groceries, pay for our house & cars, etc. Do we use it as an instrument to help us survive and help others? Let us strive to thank God for our blessings, and then use those blessings to help others.

October 31

Luke 21:1-4 (NIV)

"As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.""

Many will recognize this verse as one written on earlier this month (October 13). As I was looking for the last verse of this month of generosity writings, I was called to this scripture again. In particular the words, "Jesus saw." I immediately thought, what would Jesus see with me when it was time to be generous? Would I give my time, talent, and treasure from my abundance, or would I have the faith like the poor widow. Would he smile at me, or be disappointed?

Ask God for His guidance as we prepare for our Church stewardship season. May God bless your generosity now and always!
