**Homily.** “**Generous God - Generous living”#2**

I spoke last week about our Generous God, this morning let’s look together at Generous Living and see how it might grow or become part of our Christian Discipleship

**So is this what it means to live a generous life?**

**When I encountered Christ as an adult**, I was visiting a Christian community where tithing was the norm. I came away from that teaching with the understanding that I was to give a tenth of my income and I have done this ever since.

It was a number of years before I began to understand that yes, God calls us to return one tenth of our income to him, *but that is only one part of living a generous life* in response to being loved by God who pours out his blessings on us. We are also called to give our time, our attention, our care, sharing all that God has given us.

A generous lifestyle begins when I realize just how well God has provided for me, and that leads me in return to a desire to be a generous giver to others.

Living generously is living gratefully and offering to others without worrying about getting something in return. It is gratitude in action. **A generous life is a life lived with our hands open.** A generous lifestyle is an intentional way of living that reflects a life touched by God. And a generous lifestyle is not just a personal choice we make but also one we make as a church.

I often say that we are a generous church. Yes, we are a church that tithes, that gives away to charitable organisations ten percent of our income, in good times and in not so good times. In those not so good times, we don’t have enough cash to be able to honour our pledge in full, but we still give because it is a joy and delight to share with others.

Generosity is at the heart of our faith, and as we grow a generous culture, we grow our ministry and mission. Generosity inevitably spills out from our church, reaching into our communities and enabling people to see and hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Generosity is not a side-line to our ministry, it is integrated and embedded within it. Sharing God’s generosity with others is both an obligation and a privilege, and helps us become more like the generous God we believe in.

And where everything must start is in prayer. Prayer that God will give us all we need to be the generous people he is calling us to be.

**So how do we move to intentional generous living?**

*We start with prayer*, always. An important part of our walk of discipleship with Jesus is spending time with him, reading God’s Word, the Bible, every day. If we don’t start there, then our day just isn’t going to go the way God intends.

We pray as individuals and as a community here at church. We gather together to praise and worship God, to grow together, to care for each other, to learn together. This is a place of welcome and hospitality to all in the love and name of Christ.

*We move from prayer into action*. Today you will have been given a sheet of paper that I want you to take home and pray over. What could you share with your church? From all the gifts and talents you have been given, what could you share with us?

**Time:** Could you give some time? Time to make this church even more welcoming?

* Alex is going to project manage the renovation of the area from the entrance to the hall across to the toilets, and down to the door to the hall.
* Our ministry to children needs people to give time to work with Daniel.
* Our ministry to working professionals needs to grow under the leadership of David.

Could you pledge some time for these?

**Music:** Could you pledge some time and your musicality to help develop our music team with Noel?

**Finance**: Could you pledge to give one tenth of your income to God’s work here? Or if not one tenth, what could you pledge to give?

* + Could you support our church in its ministry and mission by joining the Planned Giving scheme? This involves speaking to Ann, our Treasurer or Frances and finding out how that works.
  + We would like to replace the noticeboards at the back of church with something more modern and inviting. The ones we were given a while ago have been good, but you can’t see through them, they act as a barrier rather than an invitation to come in. Could you help with the financing of new ones?
  + The renovations of the entrance need not only time but money for materials, filler and paint. Could you help finance the works needed?

**As well as the way of Generous Living you have pledged to, there is Prayer:** Could you pledge to spend time in prayer and studying God’s word, so that our church grows?

Just a few final thoughts this morning.

Some of us struggle with money, some might be in debt, and the cost of living has made us think very carefully about the way we spend our money.

If you don’t already do this, I invite you to **Look carefully at what you have and create a budget** so that you know where you are financially.

*Find your most recent: bank statements, payslips, debit and credit card statements or bills, receipts for things you usually pay for in cash. Make sure you include all your expenses, for example money you spend on your partner or family. Try using the  50-20-30 budget rule which is an intuitive and simple plan to help people budget.  The rule states that you should spend up to 50% of your after-tax income on needs and obligations that you must-have or must-do. The remaining half should be split up between 20% savings and debt repayment and 30% to everything else that you might want. If you want to tithe, then adjust the rule to 10-50-20-20.*

Much to think and pray about, let’s spend a few minutes in silence as we listen to what God is saying to our hearts.

All that we have and all that we are originates in God’s generosity.