

SERMON: “Live Generously: Faith and Reason.”

Rev. Geoff Ross. Sunday, Oct 29, 2017 . St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Brampton.

Before we begin I want to take a moment to speak to last weekend’s events. On Saturday, at the Anniversary Dinner, we celebrated 170 years of God’s blessings at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Brampton. We gave thanks for those who ventured out in faith as they placed their trust in God/God’s plan and purpose for them – a promise given through the prophet Jeremiah; “*Plans for our welfare – and not harm, to give us a future with hope.*” (Jeremiah 29:11) We heard how their faith/trust in God/God’s plans were matched by God’s blessings as the congregation grew, merged, bought the land, and built the Church that we have inherited. Yes, God/God’s plans formed our identity but the faith/trust of our forbearers in God/God’s plans defined our character.

This is what our guest preacher J.P. Smit spoke to on Sunday: the God of yesterday is the God of today/here/now, and how our living up to our commission (to reveal our love for God in/through our love for our neighbours by proclaiming the “year of the Lord’s favour.”) is keeping faith with those who witnessed to the Gospel of God’s love/grace here in this place for 170 years. But that’s not all he said. Yes, we must be true to the past but God is also a God of tomorrow: God/God’s plans/promises, the Gospel are what we as Christians place our faith/trust in; all that we say/do shouldn’t be so much about us/now but about others/the future. This requires that, as we move forward, we stay faithful to the same plan/promises that the founders of St. Andrew's placed their trust in – which is why we’re beginning a new series on living generously. [Fall/Remembrance]

And what better pace to start than with what generations of faithful have known: we worship and serve a generous God – who has created/called us to be a generous people! To do/be this we must accept/embrace that we were created in the image of a loving/giving, generous God; and that generosity begins with God. This is why the most important verse that defines/reveals God loving/giving character reminds us that; “*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*” (John 3:16 NRSV) The foundation of living generously is to believe/have faith/trust in that God loves, that God gives – unreservedly/generously! And, when we – created in God’s image/to love and to give – live up to/fulfill God’s plan/purpose God’s generosity flows through us.

This is the reason why we were created/called to be generous people: it was God’s plan for the Church. You/me/together, as people of God’s generous love/grace, we are the hope of the world; gifted to give God’s generous love/grace to a broken world. The problem is that when we define faithful generosity – or stewardship for that matter – we often think of giving our time, talent and treasure. But to live generously requires trust. Sadly, trust is hard for many: without it, we live in fear. It’s ironic – since we have so much – but not surprising since everywhere our culture tells us to put our trust in the things, systems, and reserves that we've created, calling us to ignore that they can/will

fail us. But God – and Jesus – calls us to place our trust in heavenly/eternal things.
[Reason]

There are many examples in the Bible of people choosing to trust God completely, giving of themselves wholly/fully/unreservedly: all result in their faithfulness/trust blessed by God gracious generosity. In our first reading, with God guiding him, Joseph thinks of others; using his gifts he fulfills God's plan by producing a plan to care for a whole nation – and God blesses him by restoring him to his family. As Christians, there can be no greater example of trusting/having complete faith in God than that of Jesus himself who placed His total trust in God/God's plan. Just as it was God's plan to have Joseph use his gifts to save a nation from starving, it was God's plan to reveal the depth/breadth of His love by His giving His Son to save us.

This is the source of our hope/faith/confidence that frees us from fear/worry, frees us to trust God wholly/completely not to live for ourselves, but to live generously for a generous God by loving and giving ourselves for others. And, by doing this, we let God be God – the God of unlimited power/capacity/love/grace – to bless us. And this is Good News – it was the experience of St. Andrew's founders, it is the promise that we place our trust – God's extravagant generosity is able to do abundantly more than anything we can do on our own. In closing – as we begin this series – may Paul's prayer celebrating God's generosity become ours: *“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”* (Eph 3:20-21)