

SERMON: “Live Generously: Total Commitment.”

Rev. Geoff Ross. Sunday, Nov 26, 2017. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Brampton.

[Elijah asks/Widow given chance to be generous: be bold – ask!]

Every week when bring our Offering forward we sing the hymn “*We give thee but thine own*”, we’re reminded that all we have in this life belongs to God. Sadly, we’ve sung it so much we probably don’t even hear the words anymore – listen to their meaning. “*We give thee but thine own, whate’er the gift may be. All that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee. May we thy bounties thus as stewards true receive, and gladly, as thou blessest us, to thee our first-fruits give.*” As we heard, the hymn goes on to paraphrase Jesus’ own mission statement: it speaks of our doing “*angels’ work below*,” doing whatever we do to God/for God’s glory. It’s a great hymn that speaks of God’s abundant grace and how, out of gratitude, we are to live our lives faithfully by living generously.

This is why we’ve been singing it over the course of this series – because we need to remind ourselves that living generously/giving of ourselves is both how we were created to live (made by a generous/giving God), is who we are called/commissioned to be (through God’s Laws/Jesus’ teachings), but is also a spiritual condition – is an act of our worship/devotion of/to God. Understood this way, living generously – loving God and neighbour as ourselves, giving forward the gifts we’ve been given, sharing/caring for others – is about our trust/commitment in/to the God whose “bounties” (creation/necessities of life/grace/salvation) we’ve received and enjoy because giving is about the giver; it’s about us/you/me and our hearts. While this sounds harsh it doesn’t have to be; since it’s in us give/live generously, we just have to live up/out the lives we were meant to live/lead and the God we were made to reflect/serve. To do this takes trust/faith – total commitment.

[SD-CDRom: Baby Mergansers/1 day/50’ drop – “live life born for”/“driven by instinct & inseparable bond” they leap:TC]

In a world where we live one way and believe another that’s what it takes: as I said last week; just as there are no half measures to trust/love – there are no half measures to faith either. No wonder we feel like we’ll never measure up! Even the Disciples felt overwhelmed/under-qualified. But, the Good News is our generous God is a God of tomorrows who is more interested in who we are becoming. Yes it takes total commitment to be in tune with what Jesus’ teachings – making choices/decisions, how to treat others/earth, what to buy/eat/give – but we can build up the trust needed one step/day at a time. In fact, this is the story of the Bible: countless individuals giving/placing themselves to/in God’s hands – making a total commitment to trust God’s promises; and God delivered.

[Adam/Eve, Moses/People, Abraham/Sarah, Mary/Joseph – refugees/migrants/strangers in strange lands: all/had to trust God.]

Even Jesus could be added to this list. While it doesn't say anything in the Bible, as I worked on this sermon I began to wonder: how did Jesus live? I mean, how did He survive? Then it struck me: Jesus lived entirely on the kindness of strangers; He placed His trust/life in the hospitality – and generosity – of His friends/strangers/so-called enemies; He placed His life/needs/faith/trust in God's promise to provide; He lived by His own Commandment by "*loving God with all His heart.*" But this didn't stop Him from living generously: in fact, when Jesus wanted to be generous He trusted God to provide Him the opportunity to do so. (Feeding 4/5K.) Our readings speak to this total trust.

In the first, not only Elijah, but also the widow places their lives/trust in God/God's promises to provide. Interestingly, Elijah relies also on the hospitality/generosity of the widow – who, despite not having enough for her own family, believes/trusts that her generous God will ensure she has enough: a promise God kept. Like the widow who give the first portion of her last morsel to God's work/will/kingdom, the widow at the offering box placed her life/faith/trust totally in God's promises by not only giving to God/God's Kingdom first, but by giving everything! While it might be easy for us to slough off the Elijah/Widow story as exaggeration, the second reading should give us greater cause to pause: Jesus praises the widow for her faith/trust/sacrifice because Jesus sees/knows her heart/how much she gave – and He knows what's in ours when we do.

Finally, The lesson of that exchange – and the one that followed with the Disciples – is simple/clear; if we live/give, have total faith/trust/commitment in God/Jesus then we will receive "*a hundred fold and will inherit eternal life.*" (Matt 19:29) So, as we end our series this is the Good News – and God's promise: yes, living generously requires our total commitment – our giving without fear/holding back in our response to God's generous grace, our faith in the promises of God, and our complete trust in God to provide for our every need: it requires nothing less than everything but it offers so much more in return. Live generously and live. Amen.