

Lent week 3 'Being generous will cost us.' John 6:5-14

When John D Rockefeller, a very rich and successful Christian businessman was asked, "How much would be enough?" he famously replied "just a little bit more". The quote actually speaks of our desire for always wanting more, it can also be applied to the fact that generosity should cost us. **How much is enough?..... Just a little bit more.**

In the Lent groups this week we have discussing what the word **generosity** means. It isn't just giving money. It can be time, energy, a listening ear, a helping hand, forgiveness, and sharing what you have. It will cost us.

And **generosity isn't just actions**. You can give out of duty, because you feel you ought to, or others around you are, you can give without your heart. **Generosity is a quality and an attitude which is expressed in actions.**

You don't have to be rich to be generous, you have to be generous to be generous. In order to be truly generous, and I don't mean 'hugely' when I say 'truly' because we can be generous with small things and in small ways. It isn't the amount that counts, it's the attitude. In order to be generous you need the right attitude, a generous spirit, otherwise you are just giving without feeling or wanting to be generous, and it will cost us.

From the Lent courses I've seen starting off this week there was a wide variety in the response to **what is generosity**. Some of the answers were these: it is putting others before yourself, it is being unselfish, selflessness, something deeper than kindness, an act of love, responding to a need, thoughtfulness, planned and spontaneous giving, sacrificial giving.

Wikipedia defined generosity as **'the habit of giving without expecting anything in return'**.

Someone said generosity is **'giving more than you can'**. Do you see it will cost us?

And on the 40acts website it said, **'being generous isn't about what you have, it's about what you do with what you have,'** which also brings us nicely to the story in John of the little boy who gives away his packed lunch of 5 loaves and 2 fish. He gave it all. It cost him. He then had no lunch, but he got much more than he could ever expected. I don't think he expected anything in return...apart from an empty stomach.

He isn't named, but he empties what he has into Jesus' hands and lets Jesus use it. He holds nothing back and sets us a wonderful example to follow. We don't hear about him again, but somehow I don't think after this experience he would be a hoarder or would withhold something he could give away to someone in need. After seeing such a miracle, and actually knowing he had been a significant part of it, don't you think he would give again and again?

Do you want to be that generous? God loves the opportunity to prove who he is and show how much he cares. Yes it is risky. It is going out on a limb for the fruit. It looks unsafe but the fruit tastes wonderful if you dare to move out of your comfort zone and trust God.

Watching God provide for your own needs is a real blessing and helps you grow in trust and faith. To be a channel for God to use to provide for someone else is a privilege and joy, it is humbling, and especially if it is done secretly.

The disciples had the wrong perspective. They were being very practical, looking at the situation logistically and economically. They forgot about the power of Jesus they had seen when he turned water into wine. They underestimated human generosity and the power of the Holy Spirit to touch hearts.

Are we like this? Do we see the problem, the crisis? Are we overwhelmed by the scale of the problem and our lack of resources, so we don't see the opportunity and the grace and power of God at work? The little boy must have thought 'my packed lunch can't feed all these people. I'm going to be ever so hungry by the time I get home.' But he took the risk hoping Jesus might be able to do something.

Can we take the risk? Have you ever felt like you were giving more than you could? Have you ever trusted God like that? And did he let you down?

What are you holding onto? How tightly? Is there anything in your life you need to hold a little less tightly? That little bit more? What is God saying to you?

Are you frightened to love? Have you been badly hurt?

Are you frightened to offer to help with some aspect of church life because it may take up too much of your time and energy? We need more helpers in Junior Church, more cleaners, a new team of people who will regularly help to keep the grass cut and the churchyard tidy.

We need another church warden as Dick is standing down. Could you dare to be so generous and give yourself to this role, to this church?

Are you frightened to give your life to God, to give yourself whole heartedly to him, to trust him to look after your life here and now in the present and in the life to come after death?

Are you frightened to give God your plans for your career, your hopes and dreams of being comfortable and secure?

Are you frightened to sign a standing order form to give to church? There are still a number of you who don't. Can you take the risk to start giving to church on a regular, planned basis? Will you increase your giving to church? We have an expected £12,000 shortfall this year. Can you give that little bit more and trust God to provide for you still?

Remember generosity isn't how much you have, it is what you do with it. **What are you doing with your 5 loves and 2 fish?**

Often it is the **giving of ourselves** which God asks of us that seems hardest, to trust in him, to believe he will provide, to become his disciple and give him our all. It will cost us.

Can you give yourself whole heartedly this morning to God, for the first time, or yet again, keeping nothing back, and trusting him, allowing him to be God. This is the God who is so generous, who didn't withhold his own son, his most precious son, but gave totally of himself, for us.

Paradoxically generosity is about giving away, emptying ourselves out for others, so then we can be filled up again, so we can be more generous. The more empty we are, the more God can give us to be generous with.

Remember the question at the start, How much is enough? Just a little bit more. Can we give God that little bit more this morning? Can we hold back from him? I can't afford not to.