

Devotions with Matt

May 23, 2020

BEING GENEROUS

The story is told that one day a beggar by the roadside asked for alms from Alexander the Great as he passed by. The man was poor and wretched and had no claim upon the ruler, no right even to lift a solicitous hand. Yet the Emperor threw him several gold coins. A courtier was astonished at his generosity and commented, "Sir, copper coins would adequately meet a beggar's need. Why give him gold?" Alexander responded in royal fashion, "Copper coins would suit the beggar's need, but gold coins suit Alexander's giving."

That's the kind of giving Jesus warned us not to do.

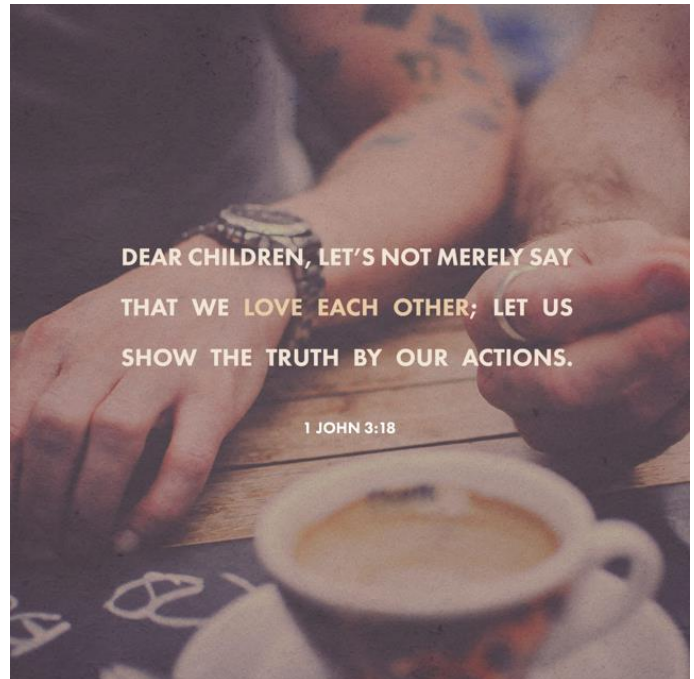
I guess the only thing worse than giving to please our own ego would be to not give at all. When we see a need, and we can meet it, we should. To withhold a lifeline to a drowning man is far worse than throwing him one so that everyone can see us do it. Still, Jesus tells us both being generous for public acclaim and ugly stinginess are both wrong.

It is interesting in Matthew 6 where Jesus says, "So when you give to the needy . . ." He is not saying "if" you give to the needy. He's saying giving is part of the social connection we have. We are supposed to help others in their time of need. Not if, but when. Giving doesn't always have to be about money, though. It is about being generous with our time, talent and treasures. It is also about giving someone a hand-up, not a hand-out. It is also about doing it in such a way that the receiver finds value from the gift and can move forward in their life and not be stuck in a place of need forever. It is also about giving without a bunch a fanfare and attention seeking motives. We are to be generous to the point where even the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. Giving should be done to the glory of God. Not ours.

Fredrick Faber once said, "Kindness has converted more sinners than zeal, eloquence or learning." I believe that is probably true. One of the Scriptures that I return to time and time again is Romans 2:4 where the Apostle Paul says that it is God's kindness that leads us toward repentance. That verse has shaped my life and ministry in many ways. I understand that when I am kind, generous or loving toward another it is a reflection on God's kindness, generosity and love for me. When it is seen it is hard to ignore or resist. God's kindness to us leads us to be kind to others. God's grace in our lives leads us to be people of grace. We learn to be generous through the generosity of God to us.

I do not mean to say "look how generous and kind I am!" That's the kind of fanfare Jesus warns us against. Even though that verse in Romans means so much to me and has shaped my life and my ministry, I have failed miserably in being kind and generous on many, many occasions. The good news is that when we fail to be generous and kind, we are forgiven. The good news is that there will be many more opportunities to show the kindness and generosity of God to others. It's never too late to be generous and kind. What we failed to do yesterday, we have opportunity to do today.

Being generous with our time, talents and treasures are a reflection of the goodness of God toward us. Being generous is close to the center of a life in lived in Christ. The reasons we don't open our wallets, our



checkbooks or our homes as often as we should is rooted in the bondage of fear and greed. The remedy to both of those is Jesus.

In His generosity and kindness to us we find the freedom to be kind and generous to others. When we give, we are not to let the left hand know what the right hand is doing. Because when we are generous for the right reasons we don't care who sees or knows. We only care that God gets the glory and that through the gift, maybe, just maybe, another sinner comes to repentance and turns to our generous God.

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. -1 John 3:17-18

In Christ,

Matt