

## KINGDOM COME: GENEROSITY

### Acts 4:32-37 NIV

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.”

### Prayer

#### - Selah... “MINE!”

- And we are no different (mine! my stuff... money... car... house... space... future...my time...).
- We don’t want to GIVE away our stuff, and our time, and our treasure because it is MINE.
- **Selfishness is part of the sinful nature that every human being, is born with.**
- **The early church, in their humanity would have been no different.**
- And yet, our passage says: “No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own...” (v. 32)
- **What would Ventura County look like if Jesus were King and what would the church look like?**
- It would not look like “MINE”.
- It would look like what we see in the book. It would look RADICAL GENEROSITY.
- But WHY would you ever live that? And HOW?

### WE:

#### 1. POSSESS A GREATER GIFT (v. 32)

- Selah giving Solo toy back.
- I would give her something that was MORE valuable, to her, than what she previously had.
- I would give her a greater gift.
- And what would she do? She would let go of that which she had been holding on to.
- What could be so great that it would cause the early church (and us) to **let go** of our most treasured earthly possessions?
- It would have to be something BETTER than our most treasured earthly possessions.

- Something more valuable and more lasting. It would have to be something BEYOND the earthly. Something ETERNAL.
- “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and **sold everything he had**, and bought it.” (Matthew 13:45-46)
- **Jesus was speaking about Himself.**
- What gift could be so great and so lasting, that it would cause us give up our most valued earthly possessions?
- **Jesus.** Jesus IS the pearl of great price. Jesus is the eternal greater treasure.
- Paul said it like this: “I consider everything a loss because of the **surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whose sake I have **lost all things**. I consider them **garbage**, that I may **gain Christ**.” (Philippians 3:8)
- First phrase of our passage:
- “All the believers were **one** in heart and mind.” (v. 32)
- **ONE HEART AND MIND?**
- 3,000 people were saved, and they all came from **different** countries, with **different** customs, **different** cultures, and **different** preferences, and **different** perspectives, and different **opinions**, AND THEY WERE OF **ONE HEART AND MIND?**
- **What does that even mean?**
- **To have the same mind and heart does not mean you have the same thoughts about every subject.**
- **It means that you have the same mental and spiritual FOCUS.**
- **The early church DIDN'T see eye to eye on everything.**
- They differed greatly in their opinions on many things — food, clothing, language, cultural issues... as we see with Paul and Barnabas, they even had differing views on the practicalities of how they should accomplish God's mission.
- However, they ALL agreed on the MOST important thing.
- They all agreed that THAT thing had to have **highest** and **preeminent** place in their hearts, minds, and lives.
- They all agreed on **who JESUS was**. And THAT is what united them. And THAT is what unites us.
- There is diversity, in the body of Christ, on purpose, by God's design. We should not strive for **uniformity**.
- But UNITY is ALWAYS possible, IF the main thing is kept as the main thing.
- **When we keep Jesus as the pinnacle, the church CAN be united.**
- “Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow.” (A.W. Tozer)
- How was it that the early church was able to be unified even though they were different from one another?

- They found a better and stronger treasure. They found something bigger than their ideas and opinions.
- How were they able to let go of what was theirs, to the point where it says that **no one even claimed their own possessions as their own?**
- The reason they could be **united** was the same reason they could **not be selfish**:
- **They found something more valuable than their possessions. They found a greater treasure. They found Jesus.**
- **The trick to get my toddler to LET GO of something she valued, wasn't to yell at her or to force her to let go. It was to give her something better than what she had.**
- We're not always going to get a better earthly treasure. But WE HAVE a better eternal treasure. And when we recognize that Christ IS the greater and more valuable gift, we too begin to hold everything else, a little more loosely.
- **But it wasn't JUST that they held their stuff loosely. They also GAVE it AWAY.**
- **Why and How could they do this? And why and how would WE do this?**
- **We do this, when we are:**

## 2. MOTIVATED BY A GREATER GRACE (vv. 33-34)

- **"And there was no needy person among them." (v. 32)**
- Can we stop and think about this for a second? Can you imagine if there were no needy people in the entire body of Christ?
- Nobody struggling to pay rent. No one wondering if they'd have money for groceries.
- People who needed jobs were given jobs.
- This is what the early church looked like.
- **One of the things that brings me the greatest joy is to see my kids being generous.**
- See, as much as I remember being sad that my kids were selfish, just all the other kids in the world, I also remember the first time I saw one of my kids **give away** something that they loved.
- To this day, I love seeing Selah generously give her heart and love to people in need.
- I love seeing our 7 year old Kingston, share his toys with other kids.
- I mentioned this the other week, but our son Solomon only wanted money for his 13th birthday. *(over \$700... bought friends: shoes, hats, skateboards)*.
- He had received. But instead of holding it tightly, he held it LOOSLY. But wasn't not just that. He gave it away.
- **It's one thing to just not be selfish.**
- **But it's quite another to be generous.**
- **"There was no needy persons among them."** That means that they weren't just **holding their stuff loosely**. They were **GIVING IT AWAY**.
- The question is **"HOW? and "WHY" would you live like this?**

- End of v.33 tells us: "...God's **grace** was so powerfully at work within them, that there was no needy persons among them." (v. 33b)
- **NASB: "abundant grace" was upon them.**
- Literal translation would be "mega grace". "The mega grace of God was at work within them."
- **If possessing a greater gift is what motivated them to LET GO of their possessions.**
- **Then it was greater GRACE, that motivated them them GIVE AWAY those possessions.**
- Grace, simply defined is **underserved favor (getting something you don't deserve).**
- **James 1:17 "Everything good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights"**
- **Everything we have received is ultimately from God, and is ultimately a gift of grace. It is undeserved favor.**
  - "God so loved the world that He.... GAVE" (John 3:16)
- **God gives to us because that's who He is.**
- **It is in God's nature to give us more than we deserve.**
- We've ACTUALLY earned is death! Our sin leads us to death!
- So ANYTHING OTHER THAN DEATH, is actually a gift of God's grace.
- For the Christian, not only do we NOT have death. We now have LIFE and life more abundantly.
- Christian, if you have received nothing else, you have received LIFE in Jesus. That means that your sins ARE forgiven. You HAVE been delivered from eternal death. You HAVE been saved!
- And you have been given the greatest gift of all: Jesus himself.
- The early church had received Christ, as a gift of God's **grace**.
- They had received salvation as a gift of God's **grace**.
- They had just received the Holy Spirit as a gift of God's **grace**.
- And they had received physical blessings, as gift of God's **grace** — as a gift of God's MEGA grace.
- And what we see here is that this grace was not only working TOWARD them, but it was working IN them. **They were MOTIVATED by grace.**
- There are MANY TIMES when I **DO NOT want to give anybody anything.**
- We had our life savings stolen from us last year, and when you have that happen to you, it makes you want to hold on to whatever you have left and whatever you may receive in the future.
- And that's is what I'm tempted to do.
- **But then I remember Jesus, and I remember the grace of God:**
- "You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When

he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross." **(Philippians 2:5-8 NLT)**

- If Jesus didn't count His equality with God as something to hold onto, then what right do I have to hold on to ANYthing that God has given me?
- **What would it look like if Jesus were King in Ventura County?** It would like radical acts of generosity in the church, **but HOW? And WHY?**
- It **WOULD NOT** be because we suddenly started TRYING HARDER to be GREATER CHRISTIANS.
- **It would be because we were MOTIVATED by GREATER GRACE.**
- **Radical generosity is A RESPONSE to the radically gracious and generous God.**
- **We are all naturally selfish like my toddlers were... which means that there needs to be something GREATER, to motivate us.**
- The mega grace of God IS what motivates us.
- **So, how do we know if God's grace is actually motivating us?**
- **How do we know if Jesus truly is our greatest treasure?**
- **WE WILL BE:**

### **3. MOVED TO GREATER GENEROSITY (vv. 33-37)**

- **The early church knew that they had received, BY GRACE a greater treasure — Jesus.**
- And it was this gift of GRACE that MOTIVATED them, and ultimately MOVED them to greater generosity.
  - **One of the great lessons of God's economy is this:**
    - Everything that is received in the Kingdom is actually meant to be given away.
    - We are blessed so that we can BE a blessing.
  - **Everything God gives us is a gift of grace TO us, YES! But it is not just FOR us.**
  - Our money is not just for US. Our Time, our Treasure, our Talent, is not JUST FOR OUR BENEFIT.
  - This is a Biblical truth that goes all the way back to Abraham. God said I will bless you and you will BE A BLESSING.
  - Everything that is received in the Kingdom is meant to be given away.
  - **And this is actually HOW God provides for His people.**
  - **God provides FOR His people, THROUGH His people.**
- God providing for us when I went off staff...
- That was the beginning of God miraculously providing for our family, in that season.
- But do you know HOW He did it?
- He did it the way that He most often does — through one of His people.
- God will ALWAYS meet the needs of His people. But He's gonna THROUGH His people.

- This was true of the early church. This is true of my family's life. This is true of your life and your sphere of influence.
- **And I see it happening all the time here at RVTA.**
- Chaddicks
- Cars
- Gift cards.
- Youth camp
- **God provides FOR His people, THROUGH His people, which means that when we see a need, it's MOST LIKELY because God wants US to participate in meeting that need.**
- Because God has been generous with us, we ought to now be generous with one another.
- "But Dom, I don't have money. How I am I supposed to do that?"
  - "In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their **extreme poverty** welled up in **rich generosity**. For I testify that they gave as much as they were **able**, and even beyond their ability... For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:2-3, 9 NIV)
- **You do not need to be greatly wealthy in order to be greatly generous.**
- **Christian, no matter what our individual bank accounts may look like, we can lead the charge in caring for those in need.**
- **Not because we HAVE a lot, but because we have been GIVEN a lot.**
- We pray "Jesus, let your Kingdom Come". We sing it. We ask for it. We NEED the Kingdom of God to manifest in our community!
- "Lord, let your Kingdom Come!!!"
- And He says, "YES! I want to!! But I want to do it THROUGH YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE BY BODY!!!"
- **Part of what it looks like for the God's Kingdom to come in Ventura County is us being generous to others, like God has been generous to us.**
- **And is all a RESPONSE to what God has done for us.**
- Communism says, "What is everyone's is yours.
- Christianity says, "What is MINE, is yours"
- Christianity puts the responsibility on the individual **believer to choose. It is us CHOOSING to respond to God's generosity, by us TOO being generous.**
- **"Do I now have to sell everything I have and give it away?"**
- **NO.**
- This passage is NOT a specific command about **exactly how** to fulfill the calling of generosity.

- The point of this passage is not that everyone gave everything they away; or that everyone sold every piece of their property.
- That's not even what it says. It says that "from time to time" some people sold their homes.
- And there were OTHER people who KEPT their homes and opened up their doors for church gatherings.
- **The point isn't that they did this or that. The point is the posture of the heart.**
- **It is a heart posture of holding onto Jesus, that allows us to hold loosely to our possessions.**
- **Is it a heart posture of being so thankful to God, for His generous grace, that we TOO begin to act in generosity.**
- **And as God's people we CAN and SHOULD do this.**
- Apart from Jesus, we are all naturally selfish like my kids were. **But that's not who we are anymore.**
- Because we have been born again, we are not CARNAL kids. We are KINGDOM kids.
- As Kingdom Kids we can to reflect the attributes of the King.
- When we do, it actually points the world to King Jesus. As Jesus himself said:
- "...As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By **this** everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you **love** one another." (John 13:34b-35 NIV)
- **Our community, families, friends, schools, co-workers DESPERATELY need to see Jesus.**
- **This kind of generosity points people to Jesus.**
- **We want the Kingdom of God in and around us. But God's brings His Kingdom, through His Kingdom Kids. And part of how that happens, practically, is by us giving away what God has given.**
- **This what Christ has done for us?**
- **He gave us His life, so that WE might live.**
- "...though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that we, through his poverty, might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- How can we be moved to generosity like the early church?
- We don't need to try harder. We don't need motivate ourselves with guilt and shame.
- We rehearse all the ways that God has been gracious and generous to us.
- And we do it over and over and over again, until our hearts begin to well up with the kind of gratitude that turns into action.
- Then we simply RESPOND.
- If you're not yet a Christian today, you can actually respond to Him right now, by receiving His forgiveness and love.