

Rhythms of Grace. Giving, The Outward Generosity

“We should give as we would receive, cheerfully, quickly, and without hesitation; for there is no grace in a benefit that sticks to the fingers.” So said the Roman philosopher Seneca the Younger, who perhaps might have gained his wisdom from reading Deuteronomy 15:10-11; although, as adviser to Emperor Nero, he was probably no friend of Jew or Christian.

Reflect

Luke 18:18-30 – The Rich Ruler The rich ruler has been prepared to follow the ‘morality’ laws but draws the limit at allowing God to influence his wealth or possessions. His identity, it would seem, is fundamentally wrapped up in his wealth, which is where his heart lies and, sadly, not with God. Jesus declares to the crowd, including disciple Peter, that they (we) need to trust God completely, which means to trust him with everything, including those areas of our lives and possessions especially precious to us. Then we will witness the joy resulting from generosity in this life, and eternally.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 – Sowing Generously Paul invites his readers to refresh or reconsider two things. (1) How generous God is in his love for us, and (2) how wise God is, beyond our understanding, and is intent on demonstrating that love to us. Our generosity in all things is our act of worship to Him, whose generosity we cannot even begin to match. He invites us to understand his joy. It is found in the giving, and not in the receiving. Those who give from the heart and not under duress will always find they have more to give.

Respond

It is clear that the quality of our generosity is important to God not the quantity. The reason we should give is because we really want to help meet the need, from the heart, not out of any sense of duty or in response to pressure; and give what we can, in response to and worship of the God who gives continually.

Thoughts to dwell on this week – choose to focus on one or two

Is my view of God too small? Just how big is God?

What exactly is my heart telling me about my generosity?

No one has ever become poor by giving. (Anne Frank)

Have you ever seen a hearse with a luggage rack? (Don Henley)

Love is more than an emotion, it is a decision. (C S Lewis)

Prayer

Lord, is there something you are asking me to let go of or to give away for a purpose bigger than myself? (Lectio 365)