

Week 1 – Generosity

Service Content Pack

This pack contains material and links to help you develop your own service introducing the theme of ‘Generosity’. The content has been designed with the breadth of the Church of England in mind so choose the materials that are appropriate for your context.

There is more content than you could fit into the average Sunday Morning service, so do not try to make use of every part of this pack. This is a ‘pick and mix’ resource enabling you to form a service that encourages the church community to grow in their giving and generosity.

The content in this pack is to be used in conjunction with the ‘Service of the Word’ and ‘Eucharistic’ service sheets. These are the standard service plans which you can use to form the basis of your service. Editable versions of these documents can be found on the website so that you can edit elements of the service to fit your context. PowerPoint files of these standard services can also be found on the website to be used either in church buildings or online.

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Bible Readings

Matthew 6:19-33

[Jesus said,] ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

1 Timothy 6:11-19

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share,



thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

Sermon Starter

The relationship between faith and wealth is commonplace in the teachings of Jesus. Our earthly possessions are not disconnected from our beliefs and much like our character or our speech, the way we handle our assets are a signifier of what lies beneath the surface.

In both these passages we find teaching that encourages us to hold money, assets, and wealth lightly. Not because such things are inherently unhealthy, but because they get in the way of our relationship with God. When worry or anxiety over food, clothes, and shelter become the priority, then we become distracted from the relationship that truly brings life. Such is the impact of these possessions on daily life, not only can they come between us and God but they can also distort our perspectives on the community around us and the Truth of life in its fullness. When money is our priority, God becomes small. Whilst we know God has provided all that we might need, we also know that there are many in this world for whom worry and anxiety for food, clothes, and shelter are justified concerns. Walk through any town or city centre and the extent of this is clear, and that's not to mention the millions in our country who go hungry, let alone the hundreds of millions across the world who live in poverty.

But if the lilies in the field are so finely clothed, why has God let so many die for want of a decent jacket to keep them warm?

To draw on another parable might help us see the context a little clearer. The parable of the sower may highlight how we have not played our part. The seeds have the potential to deliver all that they have been promised and yet the land may not offer them the conditions to flourish. How can we ensure every land is cultivated to make the most of the resources so generously given to us by God?

The passage in first Timothy makes it clear; those who are rich should share and be generous. This is not only for the good of the community but also for personal wellbeing. Generosity enables money to no longer be a distraction but to be a signifier of God's love in the world. If there are people who are hungry, cold, and in need of a roof over their heads, then it's our calling to provide that. There's enough of everything in this world to go around. If someone is lacking, it's because someone else has already got enough and has spare to share with others.

It's often said that we should give sacrificially. That our generosity should be so great that we notice it.

This is true, but also the more often you give generously it stops being so 'sacrificial' because it starts becoming who we are, what our culture is. Something is sacrificial when it hurts or impacts us. But by the tenth time of giving, the impact is dissipated. It may still be as generous as the first time, it may still in "real-terms" affect our life or bank balance the same, however now



it is commonplace and is the signifier of our faith in the love and provision of God. It is evidence of our holding it lightly.

We are called to be generous. So how do we become more generous? By being more generous. You can't shortcut your way to generosity, but the more you do it, the easier it becomes.

Sharing Stories of Generosity

Stories from your church

Inspire your congregation to live out the life of generous discipleship by asking individuals to share their own personal story of gratitude or generosity.

Pete's Generosity Story

This is a two-minute video that explores extraordinary generosity.

<https://youtu.be/A40VfwZEBYg>

Seize Your Opportunity

A one-minute clip about making the most of the opportunities to be generous in the everyday.

<https://youtu.be/eKCb0vrCSoY>

Chuma's Story

A two-minute clip exploring surprising generosity.

<https://youtu.be/LiBFufjbVFQ>

Hymns and Songs

Here are a selection of hymns and songs that are focused on gratitude. Where we possible, there are links to filmed versions of the hymns and songs that could be used in either sung or reflective worship.

Praise to the Lord the Almighty

Joachim Neander, 1680 (Translated by Catherine Winkworth, 1863)



Contemporary, full band version by Emu Music

https://youtu.be/bE_Vn032LFY

Traditional version from St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFV7y3jH8dY>

How Great Thou Art

Carl Gustav Boberg, 1885 (Translated by Stuart K Hine, 1949)

Contemporary, full band version by Celtic Worship

<https://youtu.be/uKGf06YM7rQ>

Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart

Henry Smith (1978)

All Through History

Nick and Becky Drake (2018)

<https://youtu.be/hQS2HHayr38>

Forever

Chris Tomlin (2001)

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)

Matt Redman (2013)

<https://youtu.be/WLkcXsK2IZg>

O Worship the King all Glorious Above

Robert Grant (1833)

Generous Giver

Brenton Brown (2019)

<https://youtu.be/yS5nR9b9ReU>



Now thank we all our god

Martin Rinkart (1636) <https://www.songandpraise.org/now-thank-we-all-our-god-hymn.htm>

Sing to the Lord of the Harvest

John S.B. Monsell (1866)

<https://www.songandpraise.org/sing-to-the-lord-of-harvest-hymn.htm>

We plough the fields and scatter

Matthias Claudius (1782) <https://www.songandpraise.org/we-plough-the-fields-and-scatter-hymn.htm>

Fair waved the golden corn

John Hampden Gurney (1851)

<https://www.allsaintskingston.co.uk/anthems/7397>

Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven

Henry Lyte (1834)

https://www.jubilate.co.uk/songs/praise_my_soul_the_king_of_heaven_peacock_arrangement

Lord of heaven and earth and sea

Christopher Wordsworth (1863)

https://www.jubilate.co.uk/songs/o_lord_of_heaven_and_earth_and_sea_jubilate_version

Praise, O Praise our God and King

H.W. Baker (1861)

https://hymnary.org/text/praise_o_praise_our_god_and_king

Prayers

O gracious and holy Father,
Give us wisdom to perceive you,
Intelligence to understand you,

Diligence to seek you,
Patience to wait for you,
Eyes to behold you,



A heart to meditate upon you,
And a life to proclaim you,
Through the power of the Spirit,
Of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Attributed to St Benedict of Nursia

God, of your goodness,
Give me yourself,
For you are sufficient for me.
To be worthy of you
I cannot ask of anything less.
If I were to ask less,
I should always be in want,
For in you alone do I have all.

Julian of Norwich

The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
All your works praise you, Lord;
your faithful people extol you.
They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
so that all people may know of your mighty
acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all
generations.
The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does
The Lord upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.

Psalm 145: 8-14

Lord, take as your right,
And receive as my gift,
All my freedom, my memory,
My understanding and my will.
Whatever I am and whatever I possess,
You have given it to me;
I restore it all to you again,
To be at your disposal,

According to your will.
Give me only a love for you,
And the gift of your grace;
Then I am rich enough,
And ask for nothing more.

St Ignatius Loyola

Move our hearts
With the calm, smooth flow of your grace.
Let the river of your love run through our
souls.
May our souls be carried by the current of
your love,
Towards the wide, infinite ocean of heaven.

Gilbert of Hoyland

