**Generosity: A Fragrant Offering, Pleasing to God**

**The Word**

Read together Philippians 4:10-20 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

**The Big Idea**

The Philippians modeled a joyful and sacrificial generosity in their partnership with Paul and throughout their lives. We are called into a life of generosity that flows from God’s own generosity to us and that keeps our hearts fixed on God’s kingdom.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. As you consider the example of the Philippians and/or the present experience of the church in America regarding giving, what stands out most to you and why?

2. Consider the three principles of generosity shown in the passage: 1) Generous giving to others is an investment in our own eternal joy (v. 17). 2) Generous giving to others is an offering of worship to God (v. 18). 3) Our generous giving to others is rooted in God’s generous giving to us (v. 19). Which of those principles connected most with you on Sunday?

3. How have you approached giving in the past? What principles and/or experiences have shaped your giving habits?

4. What have you experienced as the main barrier to giving more generously (it could be an internal or external issue, or an emotional or practical issue)?

5. When you consider giving, what gets you most excited to give?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. The Example of Philippians

A. Their gift to Paul through Epaphroditus (v. 10, 14, 18)

B. Their partnership with Paul in the cause of the gospel (v. 15-16)

Paul had a conviction to offer the gospel to most people free of charge so he had a tent making business and he relied on the Philippians for financial support

 C. Their generous contribution to the collection for the churches in Judea (2 Cor 8:1-5)

1. Even though they had little, they gave sacrificially

2. They considered it a privilege to give

3. Their giving was evidence of God’s grace at work in their hearts

II. The example of the American church

A. Though living in abundance, American Christians give an average of 1% or less of their financial earnings to charitable causes

 B. American Christians live with a “comfortable guilt” regarding their giving habits

III. Three biblical principles of living generously

 A. When we give generously, we are investing in our own eternal joy

 1. “I am looking for what may be credited to your account” (v. 17)

Here’s the metaphor: You have an account in the kingdom of God, and your generosity is accruing interest; by giving generously you are investing in the kingdom of God that has eternal consequences and are therefore shaping your heart to value the right things.

2. “Command those who are rich . . . to be generous. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” (1 Tim 6:19)

a. There’s a life that looks like life: = pursuing wealth, acquiring, and holding onto material possessions

b. But true life is found in God’s kingdom, trusting his provision, and giving generously to make an eternal impact for him.

B. Our generosity to others is ultimately offered as an act of worship to God.

1. “They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” (v. 18)

2. Using the language of OT animal sacrifices that would be burned and rise up as a pleasing aroma to God, Paul is reminding us that our financial generosity is a sacrifice of worship to God and God is pleased with the smell of our generosity

3. So we give our money to causes and people; but ultimately we are giving the money to God as an act of worship

C. Our generosity to others is grounded in God’s generosity towards us

1. “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” (v. 19)

a. God won’t meet all our greed; but he will meet all our need

b. God is so rich, he has an unlimited supply of resources, so we don’t need to worry about provision

2. Scarcity mentality vs. abundance mentality

a. Many of us live with a scarcity mentality which keeps us from giving

b. The New Testament consistently paints the picture of an abundance mentality when it comes to God’s provision (see Mt 6:31-33, Lk 12:32-33, 2 Cor 8:9)

c. The fight for generosity is a fight for faith: to trust God’s provision and to experience the wealth of all he is for us

IV. Conclusion

 A. Sit with God in prayer and ask the hard questions about our giving

B. Consider new opportunities to partner with people and organizations that serve God’s kingdom (local church, poor and needy, sharing gospel, and organizations/causes that resonate with the experiences and passions God has given you)