

Sermon Series: “Hilarious Generosity”—Lord of Life Lutheran—9/10/2000

Title: “A Case for Joyful Generosity”

Text: 2 Kings 4: 8-37

Introduction: *Illus.: Hitting Close to Home*

Theme: Experience the hilarious joy of generosity comes when we do not focus on what we have received and what we are giving but rather on the Heavenly Father’s commitment to sustain and support both our receiving and giving.

C To be joyful in generosity we must be rich in more than just things

1. [Print out and read verse 8-17](#)
2. **Often the world around us judges our prominence by the size of our pocketbook, portfolio, or house**
 - text refers to Shunemite women as “well-to-do”—“prominent”—yet some of most generous givers are not wealthiest
 - being careful not to defer my generosity until the time that my “ship comes in” because it never will
 - Shunemite woman not making a splashy play for attention but was creating an “*Elisha room*” to meet real need
3. We are called to be “**rich toward God**”
 - “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. . .rather be rich toward God.” Luke 12: 15-21
 - Shunemite woman was honoring God by honoring Elisha—
 - “They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.” 2 Corinthians 8:5
4. We are called to be “**rich in wisdom**”
 - Shunemite woman was “perceptive” of the opportunities God placing in front of her and took advantage of it
 - Wisdom comes not in what we do/not do but in how Christ-like we become in being “other-centered” (Phil2:5)
 - “Other-centeredness” automatically leads to generosity which leads to joy as we reflect back on how much we have received in Christ
 - “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” 2 Cor. 8: 9
5. We are called to be “**rich in humbleness**”
 - Woman not looking for “hand-out”—saw self as well-supplied—God blessed her unassuming humbleness
 - **ILLUS.: THE WISDOM OF THE SIMPLE**
 - It is not about what I or anyone else deserves or what is rightfully mine, but a response to what I have been given

C To be joyful in generosity we must look beyond the moment

1. [Print out and read verses 18-28](#)
2. **A joy robber is a focus on “prosperity giving”**
 - Could you give something to another if you were at the most destitute time in your life, or if you had to sacrifice
 - **ILLUS.: OLYMPIAN SACRIFICE**
 - God is still in love with me in Christ (Rom. 8: 38,39) even when trials separate me from my treasures
 - “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth, for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Col. 3:3,4
3. **A joy enhancer is a focus on your life with God’s committed care**
 - Woman was still able to give as before her son’s death because it truly was “well with her” in God’s care
 - **ILLUS.: SHOCKING GENEROSITY**
 - “I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, bot of having abundance and suffering nee. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” Phil. 4: 12-13

C To be joyful in generosity we must return to a life of thanks-giving

1. [Print out and read verses 29-37](#)
2. **Learning to patiently wait on the Lord’s timing**
 - When the son was not raised at first, the woman did not give up, but sought the Lord to support her faith
 - “Do not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”Gal6:9
3. **Remembering to give thanks to whom thanks is due**
 - woman gave thanks to God because she understood that child not her possession but God’s treasure in her charge
 - **ILLUS.: AN EXAMPLE OF GENEROUS SHARING**

Hitting Close to Home

A preacher paid a visit to a farmer and asked, "If you had 200 dollars, would you give 100 dollars to the Lord?" "Sure would," said the farmer. "If you had two cows, would you give one cow to the Lord?" "Yeah, I would." "If you had two pigs, would you give one of them to the Lord?" The farmer replied, "That's not fair. You know I have two pigs." There is no other time for giving but now. It will never be easy.

The Wisdom of the Simple

Neal, a kind and loveable character about town, was considered by many to be quite simple minded. Time after time people in our small village would come up to him and offer him his choice of a dime or a nickel. Always, he would take the larger coin. Finally, a bystander could bear this mockery no longer. He went up to Neal and said, "Don't let these people fool you any longer. The nickel may be larger, but the dime is worth twice as much money." "I know that," Neal whispered to him, "but if I start taking the dimes, they'll stop offering me money!"

Olympian Sacrifice

For tae kwon do star Esther Kim, age 20, going to the Olympics has been a long-time dream. She came very close to embracing that dream at the Olympic trials, where she was scheduled to fight her best friend, Kay Poe, who was ranked number one in the world. But Poe had injured her knee in the semi-finals match and could barely stand up. Obviously Kim could have easily defeated Poe. But she believed such a match-up would hardly be fair. In an instant, she decided to forfeit, automatically sending Poe to the Olympics. The moment she made her decision, Kim knew it was right. "I thought, *It's not like I'm going to be throwing my dream away. I'm just going to be handing it over to Kay.*" Kim's magnanimity was affirmed when she was given the Citizenship Through Sports Award, which recognizes exemplary citizenship, sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and community service. In addition, the International Olympic Committee agreed to pay for her and her father (coach of Kim and Poe) to go to the Sydney Olympics. Though some people were critical of her decision, Kim knows she made the right decision. She says, "Even though I didn't have the gold medal around me, for the first time in my life, I felt like a real champion."

Shocking Generosity

"The story goes that while Robert Smith was taking his afternoon walk as part of his therapy in recovering from a massive heart attack, the phone rang and his wife Delores answered. The call was from the Reader's Digest Association Sweepstakes in New York. They were calling to inform the Smith family that Robert had just won \$1,500,000 and that in a few days the certified check would be arriving. Well, as you can imagine, Delores was absolutely ecstatic. Now all those dreams would come true!

"But then she remembered, her husband was just getting over his heart attack, and the doctor had said no excitement over anything. Dolores was afraid that if she told him they had just won such a large sum, he would have another heart attack and die. What should she do? After some thought, she decided to call their pastor and ask his advice because he had had some experience in breaking difficult news to families.

"Delores called him and said, 'Pastor, I just got a call from The Reader's Digest Sweepstakes informing me that Bob has just won \$1,500,000.'

"'That's great,' said the pastor, 'but what's the problem?'

"'Well, I'm afraid if I tell Bob, he'll get so excited that he will have another heart attack and drop dead. Can you help me?'

"'Well, Delores, I think I can. I'll be right over.'

"So in about an hour, Bob is back from his walk and he and Delores and Pastor Baldwin are in the den having a nice chat. The pastor leans toward Bob and says, 'Bob, I've got a problem and need your advice.'

"'Sure, Pastor, if I can help, I'll be glad to,' said Bob.

"The pastor takes a deep breath and goes on, 'It's a hypothetical situation regarding Christian stewardship. What would a person--take you, for instance--do if all of a sudden you found out you had won \$1,500,000? What would you do with all that money?'

"'That's easy,' Bob replied. 'I'd start by giving \$750,000 to the church.' Whereupon Pastor Baldwin had a massive heart attack and dropped dead!" [Moments for Pastors by Robert Strand. New Leaf Press, 1994. Day 3

An Example of Generous Sharing

The *Los Angeles Times* (12/15/96) reported that David Suna and John Tu sold 80 percent of their company, Kingston Technology Corp., the world's largest manufacturer of computer memory products, for \$1.5 billion dollars. The two men decided to share their windfall with their employees. The average bonus payment their workers received was just over \$75,000. Sun summarized their decision: "To share our success with everybody is the most joy we can have."

2 Kings 4:8-37

⁸Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a **prominent woman**, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food. ⁹And she said to her husband, "Behold now, **I perceive** that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually. ¹⁰"Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, *that* he can turn in there." ¹¹One day he came there and turned in to the upper chamber and rested. ¹²Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite." And when he had called her, she stood before him. ¹³And he said to her, "Say now to her, 'Behold, you have been careful for us with all this care; what can I do for you? Would you be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the army?' " And she answered, "**I live among my own people.**" ¹⁴So he said, "What then is to be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "Truly she has no son and her husband is old." ¹⁵And he said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. ¹⁶Then he said, "At this season next year you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant." ¹⁷And the woman conceived and bore a son at that season the next year, as Elisha had said to her.

¹⁸When the child was grown, the day came that he went out to his father to the reapers. ¹⁹And he said to his father, "Head, my head." And he said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother." ²⁰When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her lap until noon, and *then* died. ²¹And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* behind him, and went out. ²²Then she called to her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and return." ²³And he said, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath." And she said, "**It will be well.**" ²⁴Then she saddled a donkey and said to her servant, "Drive and go forward; do not slow down the pace for me unless I tell you." ²⁵So she went and came to the man of God on Mount Carmel. And it came about when the man of God saw her at a distance, that he said to Gehazi his servant, "Behold, yonder is the Shunammite. ²⁶"Please run now to meet her and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?' " And she answered, "**It is well.**" ²⁷When she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came near to push her away; but the man of God said, "Let her alone, for her soul is troubled within her; and the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me." ²⁸Then she said, "**Did I ask for a son from my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?**"

²⁹Then he said to Gehazi, "Gird up your loins and take my staff in your hand, and go your way; if you meet any man, do not salute him, and if anyone salutes you, do not answer him; and lay my staff on the lad's face." ³⁰And the mother of the lad said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." And he arose and followed her. ³¹Then Gehazi passed on before them and laid the staff on the lad's face, but there was neither sound nor response. So he returned to meet him and told him, "The lad has not awakened." ³²When Elisha came into the house, behold the lad was dead and lying on his bed. ³³So he entered and shut the door behind them both, and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands, and he stretched himself on him; and the flesh of the child became warm. ³⁵Then he returned and walked in the house once back and forth, and went up and stretched himself on him; and the lad sneezed seven times and the lad opened his eyes. ³⁶And he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Take up your son." ³⁷**Then she went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground, and she took up her son and went out.**

[NASB]