

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Apr 1st 2017

Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart
and yield a harvest through perseverance.

What does it mean to keep the word of God with a generous heart? If we break it down, the dictionary tells us that to be generous means giving or sharing from our abundance. God wants us to share the abundance which He has entrusted in our care with those who are less fortunate. And, if we keep His word and do so with a loving and grateful heart, we will yield a harvest due to our perseverance of keeping God's word.

Upon writing this reflection, I promised to be honest to the point of where hopefully the readers would receive some knowledge that might make them pause and reflect on the difference each can make in their own lives and the lives of others with the abundance God has placed in our lives. We are empowered as the people of God to make the difference. We are God's chosen people. Colossians 3:12 tells us "Therefore, as God's chosen people, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." As God's people, we are empowered to share passion, be gentle, show patience, forgive and be thankful. These are gifts we have been given as God's people, and we are called to share these gifts abundantly with those who do not have these gifts.

Even though I attempt to share the abundance God has provided, I struggle with the generosity needed to share the good news with all. Sometimes anger will blind my ability to see those around me as children of God, or perhaps my pride causes me to stumble and blurt out hurtful words that do anything but build up another individual. And then I'm caught in the situation where an apology is needed because I have fumbled and not shared kindness and gentleness. The worst part of all of this is I know when it's going to happen, and the message I give to others is raw emotion that often times stings and then I realize I have fallen short of God's hopes for me as a child of God. There's no place you can be where God's love isn't present. Everybody matters to God. Jesus was our living example in that He loved and spent time with even the most unlovable.

After reading today's Bible passage, I realized I have shut the door to many opportunities of being generous toward others. I have put up a wall and said not now, I simply don't have the energy to deal with all the complications the other person brings into my life. My perseverance has waned, and my harvest has become meager. The width of God's love extends across the entire world and includes everyone He has created. Who am I to be selective with whom I will share the abundance? That's not my decision. When God puts people and situations in front of me, and I have been equipped with His word and His love, I am to share it even with the most unlovable people. This is when perseverance is most important, to trust that God certainly has placed these people in my life, and they have a need to experience their own self-worth. They have a need to know that God doesn't make junk...God loves them and me unconditionally.

In our lives, there are many opportunities to reap the harvest of love that God places before us, we just need to accept the call. While I may struggle, or not bring my best self to the game, I do know that God is right there beside me. I may disappoint him, but He loves me. In Colossians 3:13, we read "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the

Lord forgave you.” It’s important to understand that forgiveness is an important component of a generous heart. It is through this process that we learn “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

During this Lent season, I challenge us to offer up our time, that which is the nearest and dearest to our hearts. Luke 8:15 contains a strong message, “...yield a harvest through perseverance.” Perseverance requires an intentional commitment of time. Perseverance by itself is empty, but if we look at the first part of the reading in Luke, “Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart...” we have meaning to why we persevere. As we live out Lent, we need to remember that we ARE the people of God. There is no doubt that we are because the Lord has already died and risen for us. When you have an abundance, don’t be shy, don’t hide it under a rock or dig a hole and bury it. You must understand how much you matter to God. Everyone matters to God. When you have an abundance, it is God’s abundance, not yours to keep but yours to share.

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