**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 8-23-2020 – Joyful Generosity**

Now I don’t know about you, but I am glad there is a baseball season this year. Even though this has certainly been a very strange year, there’s a sense of normalcy in watching a ballgame, in a year that things have been far from normal.

And while this season and this year will certainly be a year to remember, the truth is that no matter what season or year we find ourselves in, Jesus is still Lord and we can trust in Him. And that will never change. Amen? Amen!

As for baseball, another season and year to remember for baseball was 1961. Does anyone know what happened that season?

Roger Maris broke Babe Ruth’s single season homerun record. He hit 61 homeruns in 1961.

But while Maris broke Ruth’s record, most Americans were rooting for another Yankee to break Ruth’s record. And that man was Mickey Mantle.

Mantle was a longtime Yankee who had a hall of fame career. If anyone would break Ruth’s record, America wanted Mantle.

But despite Mantle’s fame on earth, it was his decision to receive Jesus Christ at the end of his life that brought him fame in heaven.

Mantle’s decision to receive Jesus was largely due to a Christian teammate named Bobby Richardson. Richardson was a strong Christian who always made it a point to invite Mantle to the Yankee chapel services. Mantle struggled with alcoholism for most of his life and even resisted Christ’s invitation for many years.

But Richardson and Mantle remained friends far after their playing days had ended and he continued to generously share the good news of Jesus with Mantle whenever he had an opportunity.

And shortly before he passed on, Mantle contacted Richardson to have him and his wife come to visit him in the hospital.

And Richardson said that when he walked in the room, Mantle had a big smile on his face and said, “Come over here. I can’t wait to tell you this. I want you to know I’m a Christian. I accepted Christ as my Savior.

And Mantle happily shared the good news with Richardson that he had trusted in Jesus to be his Savior.

This story of Mantle & Richardson reminds me of 2 things. First, the Lord joyfully welcomes people into His Kingdom, whether they come early or late. And second, Richardson reminds me that we are to generously share Jesus with others.

Jesus’ core message was to repent (to change the way you think), for the kingdom of God is at hand. And Jesus’ kingdom is a kingdom of generosity, for God is a generosity. God is such a generous God. He gives us physical life. He offers Jesus Christ for our sins. He lavishes spiritual blessings on us. And because God is so generous to us in so many ways, to repent means that he expects those who follow Him will be extravagantly generous as well.

One of the ways that Jesus taught about generosity was through telling stories.

Let us now hear God’s Word about our King’s generous nature found in Matthew 20:1-16

**20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2He agreed to pay them a denarius[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+20%3A1-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23795a)**] for the day and sent them into his vineyard.**

**3“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ 5So they went.**

**“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 6About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’**

**7“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.**

**“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’**

**8“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’**

**9“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’**

**13“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? 14Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’**

**16“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”**

This is a fascinating story of people because it seems so unfair. Maybe this was your reaction if you read that part of Matthew last month for our book of the month.

In Jesus’ story, the landowner hires workers at various intervals throughout the workday, from early in the morning to 9:00 AM, to Noon, to 3:00 in the afternoon, and then, finally 5:00, right as the workday would be finishing up.

And then, what does the landowner do? He gathers his workers and begins to pay them. He could have started with the workers that were there all day and given them the daily wage that they agreed to work for, but instead he begins with the last ones and all the workers could see that he gives them the daily wage. So the workers that are witnessing this are beginning to think, he is probably going to give us more, but instead they all received the same amount.

It can come across as an offensive message, can’t it?

But Jesus’ parable about God and His Kingdom is really summed up in verse 15, where the landowner says **“Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?”**

Our focus should not be on ourselves, but on others experiencing the extreme generosity of God.

Richardson saw that one of the biggest thrills in his life was seeing the peace that Mickey Mantle had during those last days.”

Richardson was not envious because the Lord was being generous towards Mantle. Instead, he celebrated the extravagant grace of our generous God.

Like Richardson and like the landowner, we are also called to be people of radical generosity as well.

This takes many forms. But the Scripture teaches us that ‘as Christ is, so are we in this world.’

In other words, radical generosity is part of our Christian DNA. Our generosity is one way that we let the light of Jesus shine in us for all the world to see.

This morning, I would just like to highlight a few ways that the Lord has called us to joyful generosity.

**First,** like Richardson, we are to be generous with **invitations**. Richardson invited Mantle to team chapel services repeatedly. He invited Mantle to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Perhaps you became connected to Chestnut Grove through an invitation. So do not be afraid to invite and invite and invite again. Richardson received many no’s before he received a yes from Mantle.

So think, who can I invite to church or to my home?

**Second**, we are called to be generous in using our **gifts and talents and skills to bless others**. We are so blessed how this is done at Chestnut Grove. People offering things like gifts of music and financial understanding and building and many others. And there are so many ways that we can offer others things to God to bless others. For all the ways that you volunteer for various things, those are ways that you can show joyful generosity. Consider how God has wired you and prayerfully consider what joyful generosity looks like for you. I enjoyed a meeting with Lucy Leer this week and she shared with me about all the facemasks and all the quilts that she has made. That’s just one of many examples I could share.

**And third and finally**, we are called to be joyfully generous when it comes to **money**. All that we own is really the Lord’s anyway, but we can demonstrate our love for God, our trust in God and our desire to bless God and others, when we are joyfully generous with the money He has entrusted to us.

One way that this is done is through tithing. Tithing is giving a tenth of what we earn or receive back to God’s church. This was the expectation in the Old Testament for God’s people. It was one way that Israel could demonstrate that the Lord was their King. And I believe that as Christians today, this is one way that we can do this as well.

And there is great joy in this. It is one way of saying “You are my King.” The main role of a king or queen is to protect and care for their people. Tithing is one way of saying “Jesus take the wheel of my life. Jesus you are my King and You are in charge and I trust in You to meet my needs.”

We can also be generous with additional giving for whatever God puts on your heart. One way that I love to be generous and I am striving to be more generous is seeking to radically bless servers at restaurants. Oftentimes, the church goers on Sunday afternoons are sadly known to be some of the stingiest givers in restaurants. But I believe that the Lord does not desire the church to be known for its stinginess, but for its joyful generosity.

What could this look like? Perhaps tipping 50% or equal to the amount of the bill. I’ve heard a testimony of a Christian that doesn’t eat out as much so that when he goes out, he tips twice the amount of his bill. Think about doing this and leaving a note that says I just wanted to tell you that Jesus is crazy about you and loves you so much. That is profound.

But friends, please remember this, there is great power in joyful generosity.

It was God’s joyful generosity towards us which was most clearly expressed in Jesus Christ, that draws us to trust in Him. And friends, as we live lives of joyful generosity, the kingdom of God will be advanced through us in powerful ways.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+20%3A1-16&version=NIV>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZMpsUTdcbg>