

Notes on 2 Corinthians 9 : 8 – 15 ‘Jesus – the Love of Giving’

It is always a challenge following on from when Mike Glover preaches with his seeming limitless fund of fabulous and moving stories!! I know I have such a fund of stories too, but there's a problem, you've either heard them all before or they're about you!! Mike told stories of Emil Mettler and the nail he kept in his till, of when he lived in Choco in Columbia and the poverty he experienced there and of Mrs Cann and the joy she knew in giving. Mike's three stories all spoke about the joy of giving, and we need to remind ourselves that we are to be hilarious givers as we give to Jesus: as in chapter 8 verse 7. But I see another layer there, that of love. In these stories there is also a love of giving, it is something which these people do as second nature because their lives, their hearts, minds and souls have been overwhelmed again and again by love.

This afternoon is our monthly Café Church and in September our ukelele group usually play, and the theme for today is ‘songs beginning with A’. There is no real rhyme or reason for choosing these songs apart from our love to play as this is one of the riches of playing the ukulele, it just makes you feel so happy. Paul is as motivated for in all that he is and does and give, he does so because of love. In verse 15 we read his wide-eyed wow of astonishment at the gift of Jesus and the Holy Spirit for him and he writes so that we may echo this for ourselves too. As you read this, I'd like you to say, ‘Jesus died and rose for me’. I'd like you to whisper it, to shout it, to give it some feeling to express your sheer awe and wonder and your gratitude to Jesus. This week we've read Acts chapters 13 – 16 which describe how Paul joyfully and lovingly gave of himself to Jesus as the Apostle to the Gentiles. This week was also the funeral of Charlie Kirk and if you saw it you will know that he gladly and joyfully lived for Jesus. Today is Gift Day and in all honesty we as a leadership called for it primarily for financial reasons. However, over the last few weeks we have been reminded by Zania's decision of our amnesia. What I mean by that is that for many years we have held a Gift Day in November and it is a day inspired by love and compassion. In November we are reminded of the ministry of Angel Tree and Lighthouse Homes to those in situations of great need and today our response is to be rooted in love and compassion and not just financial need.

Giving is never about bank balances, it is about our love of and for Jesus. When we love Jesus by our giving, Jesus reminds us that he is always no one's debtor. In verses 10 and 11, which speak of God's loving response to us, we see a proper perspective on what some call the ‘prosperity Gospel’. The prosperity I read of here is the richness of hearts, souls and minds filled with the abundant gift of the Holy Spirit, as well as Jesus' provision

for us too. A couple of weeks ago we thought about the widow and her gift of all she had which spoke of her utter and complete dependence on God. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, 'give us this day our daily bread' reminding us of our complete dependence on God's goodness to us and the awesome truth that Jesus provides for us. Gift Day is always a test of our love, but also of our faith and our hope. In Acts 2 verses 42 – 47 we are given a picture of the life of the church rooted in love and how they gave of themselves to Jesus and to each other. I appreciate that this text raises more questions than it answers but I know it dares us all to love Jesus in a way which is inspired by it.

Finally, we read of the ripple effect of love here in verses 12 – 14. When the discipline of giving is rooted in and motivated by love, then it overflows into the giving of ourselves to others. We give of ourselves to the life and mission of Jesus' church. In Jesus' call on my life I give of myself to our schools, The Green, the Ukelele group, the Council, Dronfield 2gether, Awesome Assemblies – I just can't help it, the love of Christ constrains me to do so. I know that love is the greatest gift that we can ever give because it is a gift which never stops, never ends and never ceases to work.

1 Corinthians 13 describes when things end, like prophecies and tongues, but it also includes the time when we may no longer be able to give of our money, our time, our energy, or even our very selves. This may be due to a change in circumstance or ability but who does Paul want us to focus on? It is Jesus, who is truly love in its fulness in human form. You all have an envelope with a piece of paper in and I would like you to write your gift to Jesus. It is an IOU of love and as today concludes this series on giving so it is about money, but it is also about your time, your prayer, your kindness or your compassion for though the options may not be limitless, they are more than perhaps we can imagine. Whatever it may be, the key question is, what is Jesus saying to you. None of you are to leave your piece of paper blank because we know what Jesus has given to us; so what will you write, what will you give to him?