Series: Kingdom Come

Sermon: The Generosity of God

Scripture: Matthew 27:45-56 The Crucifixion of Jesus

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Production Notes:

* Green on the screen.
* There will be a picture from my journal.
* There will be a video clip from YouTube.

Opening Illustration:

I want to introduce you to a Greek word today.

“Kenosis,” derived from the Greek word κένωσις. The idea is that Jesus generously relinquished his divine privileges for humanity’s salvation. It refers to Philippians 2:7 where Jesus “emptied himself” to come rescue us.

To be clear.

Jesus is not ceasing to be God when He decides to come to earth. He is generously living in self-imposed limitation to save humanity.

Jesus was living in abundance beyond our wildest dreams in heaven and chose to set this right of His aside to come and suffer and die for humanity. Even if you were the wealthiest person on the planet and gave everything you owned to help a homeless person who doesn’t even know or respect you, your generosity would pale in comparison to what Jesus did. Kenosis.

Lectio:

Usually, this text focuses on the atrocities of the Roman crucifixion process. Today when we read this, I want you to notice the glorious generosity of God.

Matthew 27:45–56 (ESV):

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

55 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Meditatio:

* God generously gave what was most valuable to Him, His Son.
* Jesus gave of Himself. He went from glorious heaven to tortured innocent victim to rescue us from sin.
* Jesus generously gave His body over to be mocked, stripped and mistreated to offer salvation to the very spiritual rebels who would do these terrible acts.
* In John’s account (John 19:28-30), he records that God fulfilled all of the prophecies that we might trust and accept His salvific work.
* From top to bottom God tears the temple curtain in two, literally ripping apart the symbol of separation between humanity and God.
* God generously displays natural wonders to help doubtful people believe.
* God generously gives back inter-testament leaders from the dead to help people believe and accept the gift of salvation.
* In Luke 23:42 it records that Jesus gave us presence with Himself right at death.

Contemplatio:

What does this immeasurable act of generosity mean for us?

I want to show you a picture from my personal journal. A few weeks back I had a powerful moment with God. For the first time I realized how the very nature of the family of God is generosity. It is in everything that He does. It’s also what He calls us to participate in.

First:

The cosmic breach we call prideful sin is healed by the generosity of God (Kenosis) and when we walk in self-limiting open generosity, we participate in God’s core family value. This is *agape* (Greek), it is *aheb* (Hebrew), it is *perichoresis*, perfect harmony… this is the charitable love of God.

Second:

We must realize the enemy is vehemently working to make our hearts cold towards giving generously to Kingdom of God work.

Actio:

I want to show you a video. This is powerful.

(Show the video Alan Barnhart video on generosity.)

I have heard hundreds of stories of families who do amazing things for the kingdom of God. There is a common thread. They all embrace a level of Kenosis. They all limit themselves for the sake of generosity. They break the bond between income and consumption. They self-limit that they might participate in giving. This is the nature of God. God is charity. 1 John 4:8.

I personally have faced two self-denial moments. I am sure many more will come.

I was considering a career in medicine. I’m not going to lie, the money was a part of it. Ministry was going to cost me for the rest of my life.

A number of years ago I was offered a job to join a Christian business and lead the staff for the CEO. I was going to double my income and be given partial ownership of the company.

I had someone ask me if I was financially independent what would I do differently. After deeply thinking about it… nothing. I want to give my life to proclaiming the Gospel, spiritually strengthening people and preparing them for Jesus’ return.

Would you consider a Kenosis? Deliberately self-limit in order to live charitably.

This is why pastors say giving isn’t only for the church, it's for your heart. It’s a discipline to cut the powerful bond between income and consumption. It’s a way to see the needs of others over your own conveniences.

God offers the idea of a “tithe” as a discipline to begin a life a generosity.

Would you consider the ministries of your home church as a part of that?