



Generosity in a time of crisis

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Reflection

It's not obvious what generosity looks like in a time of Covid-19, when our usual patterns of life have been disrupted. The dictionary defines generosity as the quality or virtue of being liberal in giving, to the extent that one gives more than would be expected.

Biblically, however, generosity is a way of being that is rooted in 'agape' love. This biblical love is described in the passage above. 'Agape' love is orientated towards others and is central to God's character.

There are several practical steps we can take in order to become more generous. Firstly, we are to be rooted in our relationship with God - 'God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them' (1 John 4:16). We become more like our loving God as we



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spend more time drawing near to Him. Secondly, we can spend time praying for ideas and inspiration if we need them - God is a creative God! Thirdly, we need to have the courage to take action.

This type of generosity is desperately needed in a time of crisis, especially in our present situation, when many people around the world are isolated and are feeling vulnerable or anxious. We might be feeling fearful ourselves, but it's important that we reject the harmful actions that fear might lead us to take, and instead see the opportunities we have for taking positive action in response to the fear around us.

In a recent public talk, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby reflected on the temptation to withdraw inward at the time of crisis. He said that if we look inwards we 'will only reveal the limits of our own resources and lead to deeper fear and selfishness', but that 'to console others, we must find our own consolation in God'.

This outward-looking generosity could take a variety of forms in a time of lockdown - sharing our resources with others, showing concern or praying for them and giving them encouragement. There are many other examples highlighted in the media each day as well, including public encouragement for health workers and others in critical roles at this time. Whatever action we choose to take, our generosity must be rooted in the love that we have received from God.

Reflection questions

1. How does the passage's description of 'agape' love challenge you?
2. In what ways can you nurture the spirit of generosity within you?
3. What do you think about the above quotation from Justin Welby?
4. What does generosity look like in your current situation?

Prayer

'Lord God, in this time of crisis, help us to be generous people. Instead of giving in to fear, give us the strength to bring your light where there is darkness. May we love our sisters and brothers with the love that we have received from you.'