

TITLE

Scripture used: 2 Kings 4:1-7 (NLT)

OVERVIEW

Big Idea:

Pastor Hurmon preached the third chapter in the “Be Rich” series of four. After hearing about loving and serving (the latter from The Honorable Shelyna Brown), the focus today was generosity. The Christian movement started right after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to His disciples and commanded them to “Go and preach the good news”. St Francis of Assisi asked us to “Preach Jesus and, if necessary, use words.” Actions are more important than words, and this sermon gives us a framework to decide, and execute on “generosity as a lifestyle” versus single and sometimes impulsive acts of generosity.

KEY POINTS

- 1) **Point #1 Generosity can be challenging.** We all want the label “generous” to be the one that will come to mind in the eulogy at our funeral. Being generous is not only admirable and praiseworthy, it’s also beneficial to one’s well-being. Individuals who are generous feel more purposeful and happier. Here in our scripture, the women’s righteous husband has died and creditors are about to take her sons as slaves. Pastor Hurmon told a very personal story when he and his wife, Dr Rhonda Hamilton, were getting started in their careers and married life. Pastor Hurmon heard a call to take money they had set aside for three years of mortgage payments and give it to their church instead. Dr Rhonda Hamilton was extremely reticent. At that time, she had a considerable amount of medical school debt outstanding; and was looking forward to having a place of their own. She felt the finish line had been pushed forward. She also humbly admitted to not being “naturally generous” and being thrifty and frugal by nature: “a cautious steward of my tiny income and savings.” But she was obedient to God, and open to seeing her pastor-husband as a proxy for the Lord. They agreed to a 3-year pledge with automatic withdrawals (to alleviate the pain) that took their giving from 12% to 25% of their pre-tax income. She was obedient but not cheerful about the effort. Their lower middle-class congregation did the same, cutting down on small comforts (mani-pedis, branded shoes, car upgrades) and pooled \$3.1 million to acquire a new church building, retrofit it for safety; and launch new ministries.
- 2) **Point #2 God has our backs.** Dr Rhonda Hamilton had \$160K of student debt with heavy interest payments. A local CEO who had heard about her community work set up a charitable fund to pay down her student debt, lifting a huge burden on her and her family. She felt the unbelievable grace of God. You cannot lose if you give. Everyone is different, but God will keep His word to all those who give.
- 3) **Point #3 Deal head-on with the barriers to giving.** For some, it’s self-focus, or cynicism. For others, it’s limited resources. “I have little, *except...*” A \$33,000 annual income puts you in the top 1% globally. In Silicon Valley, a borderline household income puts us in the top 1-per-thousand by global standards. Many low-income households in the US live with big-screen TVs, smartphones with unlimited data plans, \$200 athletic shoes. We have enough to give. We can conquer the emotional pain that prevents us from opening our hands and hearts. Giving brings forgiveness, mercy, and grace. No person who is abundantly generous is either mean or unforgiving. Giving feeds a virtuous spiral, whereby those who give also have more confidence to ask for favors and receive assistance, prayer, insight, and companionship - as others are inspired by their commitment.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - How have you made generosity a part of your lifestyle, through a deliberate and thoughtful choice? Where could you do better? Are there expensive items you could do without?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Read passages from the Old Testament, the Gospels (Jesus’ words) and Paul’s letters to the various Christian communities to understand what is expected of us in terms of giving.
- 3) **DO** - Build a concrete plan to make your giving a priority (with a specific metric), and make it progressive (by pushing yourself to give more over time). Find worthy benevolent causes and organizations to give to. Donate \$39.95 to our Be Rich campaign this week.