

Christ Church West Wimbledon - Sermon 14 September '25

John 3: 13-17

Philippians 2: 6-11

Let us pray

Father, creator, redeemer and sustainer. Thank you for your community at Christ Church. We thank you for your blessings to us and pray that you will bless my words and help us to understand what you would have us learn today. Amen

Good Morning and thank you for inviting me back to share with you. My name is Gabby Parikh and I have the privilege of working with parishes and their congregations helping us resource mission across our diocesan family. And thank you as a congregation for your commitment to the Parish Support Fund and continued generosity.

Today's gospel passage is from John 3. It contains a very famous passage and one I learnt many years ago as a young pathfinder. **"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** Not only is this a precious verse about our salvation, but some also suggest that you can summarize the whole biblical narrative with nine words: **"For God so loved the world that he gave."**

Generosity is depicted in three ways in this passage. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. **First you see the generosity of God's love.** This is a world where over time people have turned their backs on God – from creation the fall, to delivering his people from slavery in Egypt and patiently sending prophet after prophet after prophet to call them back to him, when the world is worshipping idols whether cast in gold or modern day pursuit of fame, power and wealth, and yet God looked at his world, not with hatred, but with love. Here we read how He was generous in sending the Saviour So often our love is reduced down to loving people who we find comfortable and who will love us in return. But that's not God's love, he showers his love on the undeserving and Jesus encourages us to do the same as he encourages us to "love our neighbours, care for those in need and love our enemies.." **God so loved the world—generosity of love.**

Second, there's the **generosity of God's provision.** How much did he love the world? Well, he loved the world enough that he gave his one and only Son. Sometimes familiarity can dim this amazing gift. His love is so grand that he would send his Son to suffer and die so that we would have life—life eternal. It's almost impossible to comprehend - the immensity, the infinite nature of God's love.

And then there's the generosity of what we need to do or of his requirement for us. He doesn't require ten years of perfect obedience, to run a marathon or a high level of biblical literacy before he'll have anything to do with us. He asks us to "Believe in him." But to believe in Him is more than an intellectual agreement that Jesus is God. It is to put our trust and confidence in him, that he alone can save us. To change our lives by putting Christ in charge of our present plans and eternal destiny. But how?

Giving is such a fundamental part of Christian discipleship because it is a key way we remember the God who gives us all we have. Everything belongs to God and is entrusted to our care. Stewardship.

Being grateful can help us remember that.

The gospel passage refers to the time when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness and God sent a plague of snakes to punish the people for being ungrateful, grumbling for being rescued from Egypt and thinking that they could have a better life if only... Those people bitten by a snake could be healed by looking at the elevated bronze snake and by believing that God would heal them. The Exodus reading reminds us that we're forgetful and times when our faith fails. Even with miraculous manna and quail in their bellies the Israelites became fearful. There are hard wilderness days for us too, when feeling thankful or faith-filled is very hard. But in such times we're invited to give thanks.

Equally everyday blessings sometimes get hidden by familiarity. **Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said that "if the stars came out only once a year, everybody would stay up all night to behold them!** Practices of gratitude, such as a family's practice saying grace over a meal, a prayer journal, our communal expression of faith, worshipping together with our Eucharistic prayer of thanks, encouraging others by thanking them for their kindness or service - open our eyes again. These habits remind us of God's good gifts and his faithfulness

A lovely French proverb says **gratitude is the heart's memory.**

I wonder what step you could take to grow a habit of thankfulness. Each time we give generously and gratefully we remember all we have, our time, our skills and our money is a gift from God.

Generosity doesn't come as naturally to us as people as selfishness. But we are created in the image of an extremely loving and generous God. Therefore, we are called and created TO BE GENEROUS in response to his generosity and to share his generosity with others...

As the Methodist Covenant Prayer puts it: **"Let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing: I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal."**

Mission has been described as the overflowing life and love of God. It's a wonderful description, conjuring up an image of love as living waters, cascading down, swirling around and through us into our communities, and God gives us his gifts to enable this to happen.

I wonder what aspect of Christ Church's mission you feel called to support in prayer and action? The work with children and young people? I know that a group enjoyed a visit The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, and Messy Church takes place soon, or your beautiful worship and music, outreach to your neighbourhoods and more. God has given us each other in the family of Christ so that together sharing our skills, our time and our money we can achieve more, and in particular the kind of generosity to which we are called?

Living a generous life, can be helped by intentionally and purposefully focusing on God and our community, and praying for God's spirit of generosity. This attentiveness enables us to see how we can love and care for others, it is in the noticing that we can become generous. As a church you have made many acts of generosity - **May we pray to notice more!**

Apostle Paul knew the material need in Jerusalem when he challenged Corinth to be generous and thanked the Phillipians. But beyond a heartfelt response to material need, Paul understood obedient generosity as a sacrament of God's grace and a sign of mutuality in the church. To practise financial generosity is to release our grip on wealth and so make wealth release its grip on us. **'How much should I give?' is a question people and PCCs often ask me. I think it opens up the question: 'how much of me, my life in Christ and all that God has entrusted to me is reflected in my giving?'**

So being practical please consider prayerfully reviewing your giving to Christ Church – your time, skills and your money. Christ Church needs to pay for heating, insurance, and the upkeep of this beautiful building as well as the ongoing mission and ministry. How could you use your time and skills to help your church? If you do not give regularly please help the church to cover its regular bills by doing so; and if possible use the Parish Giving Scheme as this claims the gift aid and reduces the administration. Forms are at the back of church and ask me about it later.

One of my favourite stories is a tale of American soldier/ GI going into a bakery and he noticed a small boy outside, looking hungry. The soldier stepped inside, bought a dozen doughnuts and gave them to the child when he came out. As he turned to walk away he felt a tug on his coat. He stopped and smiled back at the boy only to hear him quietly ask, "Mister, are you God?"

I believe that living generously stems from our relationship with Christ. That soldier noticed the boy and acted. Our relationship with Jesus inspires and shapes our generosity. Our lives have been transformed by the love that first loved us - A God who's **generous in love, generous in provision, and generous in his requirements of us**—and he blesses us with eternal life! May God bless us all with his spirit of generosity that we be thankful for all He has given us and bless others, the community of West Wimbledon and our world!