

## **WHY DO I GIVE?**

Celebrate Generosity. Celebrate Generosity.

This is our theme for the new year at Faith Lutheran Church. We celebrate God's generosity and we celebrate our generosity in response to God.

For the next few weeks, we are asking three basic questions: Why do I give? How do I give? How much do I give?

After we've explored these questions, we'll have a Generosity Celebration Sunday on the first Sunday of February. We will have one united worship service (similar to our Thanksgiving united worship service.) On this day, we will return our financial generosity commitments to the church and then we'll head into The Cup for a Generosity Celebration meal.

We are taking the time this month in intentional prayer, conversation and thought. We are looking forward to growing our personal generosity. We are committed to learning about and encouraging generosity. Celebrating generosity is more than a stewardship slogan or this year's

worship theme, but hopefully, the way our congregation lives into the new year. May this be a generous year, one worth celebrating.

Why do I give? How do I give? How much do I give? The first of the three questions is our topic today. Why do I give?

*Interactive sermon. Using a white board. Ask the congregation this question. Solicit answers and feedback.*

These are excellent reasons for giving. Allow me to give the Biblical reasons for giving.

1) Why do I give? The Bible teaches we are to give in gratitude for what God has given us. (John 3:16, Matthew 13:44-46) God is a giver and we, in gratitude, seek to be in God's image. Our giving acknowledges and gives thanks for the great wealth of new life and salvation that we have been given through Christ.

2) Why do I give? As an act of worship. (Hebrews 13:16, Deuteronomy 8:18, Proverbs 3:9) Our willingness to freely give shows

our trust and dependence on God, acknowledging God as the provider of all our needs. Giving shows that we prioritize God above all else. Giving is an act of praise, gratitude and worship. The true purpose behind the act of giving is an expression of faith and worship. Our willingness to give brings glory to God's name.

3) Why do I give? To bear witness to my faith (John 13:34-35, II Corinthians 8:14-15) Love is not a feeling, it is an action. We show that we are Christ's disciples with our love for one another. We can put love into action through giving. Since Lutherans do not like to talk about the faith within us, give instead! Our giving is a form of witnessing.

4) Why do I give? As a spiritual discipline. (Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:16, I John 3:17-18) Jesus commands us to love. Giving is not an option. Healthy stewardship and healthy spirituality are complimentary.

5) Why do I give? To counter my tendencies toward greed and self-centeredness (II Corinthians 9:17, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 12:34) Giving is a heavenly investment. The very act of giving something away takes the focus away from ourselves. Explore

the nature of generosity and the image of Christ as a giver. Giving is the best way to protect ourselves from greed and materialism.

6) Why do I give? To participate in God's mission. (Matthew 13:44-46, Hebrews 11:26) When we give, we are proclaiming that God is greater than whatever we are giving up. Explore the idea of giving as an investment in the Kingdom of God. Giving is an active way to co-create with God.

7. Why do I give? To provide for the needs of others. (Deuteronomy 15:7, Acts 20:35 ) It is easy to get overly focused on our schedules, needs, obsessions and possessions. Giving reminds us to consider the needs of others. As the family of God, we are called to care for each other, especially the less fortunate.

8. Why do I give? My giving keeps me focused on God. (Matthew 6:21, Proverbs 28:22) We have a true need to not focus on materialism or hoarding. Giving keeps us focused on something grander than ourselves, mainly on God. Greed blocks faith and ultimately gets us nowhere in the end anyway. We are simply stewards of God's things while we are here (and someday we will give account for how we managed it.) There is joy

in giving, especially as it keeps us bound with God.

Let us pray: O God, there are so many reasons to give and to grow in generosity. All of them are a response to your generosity. For that, we praise you. Amen.