

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Who is God/Who God Is Lesson 12

Scripture: Matthew 11:1-19

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A Generous God

PP 1,2

Matthew 11:1–19 (ESV)

¹When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. ²Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” ⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is he of whom it is written, “ ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’ ¹¹Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵He who has ears to hear, let him hear. ¹⁶“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, ¹⁷“ ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ ¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”

PP 3,4

Introduction As we come upon another attribute of the God Who just IS, I felt that a happy one would be appropriate for this day—and I thought of the generosity of our God. As I have said a couple of times thus far I am not sure if the gods that other people imagine to exist *are* gracious and generous or not. But I know our God is. Generosity goes beyond just being good to someone else. Generosity gives *more*, sometimes *far more*, than just what is deserved or earned.

1. If you receive a Christmas bonus at your work, you will “feel” whether the “powers that be” who make such decisions are generous or not. My first

official job was working in a movie theatre. I was there two Christmas seasons. Us ushers were paid in cash for the week, and in a little brown envelope. As we opened our pay envelopes we each found an extra dollar in our pay for that week. We were like, “Huh.”

2. My mother used to tell me that when she, one of nine children, was growing up in Tennessee the only recognition that your birthday had arrived was a dime under your dinner plate at the family evening meal. No one sang, “happy birthday” she said, and no other gifts were given. It was the Depression and while my grandfather always had work, it was tough times and there were nine children. The birthdays were acknowledged but there was a leanness to the giving. It ISN’T a picture of generosity.
3. I had a generous father. It is true that I was his only kid, but it was a regular experience that I would receive good gifts from him and often in abundance. He was the youngest of 8 and had no idea how to raise a kid so he did a great job. Until I reached say, 17, he delighted in me and sought to pour out a goodness to me that was the best he had to offer. This is ironic because he also had a capacity for viciousness and prejudice that astounded and confused me. He was a man torn between a joy in being generous and also an inability to make peace with me if I crossed him, in even the most benign ways. It was confusing to me for the longest time.
4. But I have also seen a rich generosity in a few other people over the years. Renée’s parents lived their lives being generous in giving to missions. They took on a few missionaries and supported them faithfully for life.
5. A former elder of our church, Dr. Dean Schmidlin, had a generous heart and he would look for ways to give and be generous in his giving.
6. My late Aunt Mary was the eldest of those nine siblings and she looked out for each one, and her aged parents. She had a deeply generous heart.
7. And lastly the whole Giving Thanks feeding ministry is a giant exercise in generosity! May it never cease!

It is with all these people (and many others) in my background that I approach an attribute of God that I love to think about, actually—the idea that God is a profoundly, consistently and lavishly GENEROUS GOD. That does not mean He is wimpy about His holiness nor about matters of right and wrong. He is not only generous. He is many things, not the least of which is that He is holy and wrathful and unyielding about right and wrong (why should He be otherwise?). The Bible is not short on examples of His direct words of condemnation towards anyone who says, “God, you don’t know what you’re talking about. We beg to differ...” But generosity screams out of the pages of the Bible, I would suggest to you this morning (regardless of your own experience or lack of experience with it from humans!)

I picked the passage for our reading today not because the generosity of God is obvious within it--there is no verse which *says* (as we sometimes have

with other attributes of God that we have examined thus far) GOD IS GENEROUS. This is one of the longer records of Jesus talking. He is confronted by a question into which we read discouragement and doubt that John the Baptist had come to feel, lying in a dungeon of Herod. *Are You, Jesus, really who you say you are? Or did we misidentify You somehow and we should keep watched for the “real” Messiah?* Jesus’ answer, illustrates generosity in a big way. Matthew 11:4,5:
4 And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. There are six things that are happening, John. Each one is a generous “visitation” of God. Together, they are wonderfully lavish!

1. ***The blind receive sight*** – if you cannot see you are severely handicapped in that culture and today too. Jesus took care of that in many!
2. ***The lame walk*** – I cannot begin to describe the joy I felt to see a video last week of Christine walking up in Spaulding rehab with two new prosthetic legs! She was suspended by a bunji kind of contraption but she was lame and now is walking!
3. ***Lepers are cleansed*** – this was probably the most destructive and vicious diseases of the ancient world. Jesus cured people of it, just by verbally commanding it.
4. ***The deaf hear*** – this one is personal for me. I had a hearing test this week and I am now 55% deaf in my right ear and 51% deaf in my left. That is correctable with hearing aids but they’re \$900 each. I would rather just meet Jesus!
5. ***The dead are raised up*** - If you’re dead well, you’re pretty much done. Lazarus; Jairus’s daughter, and others... “not coming down to breakfast.” But if Jesus says to you, “Come forth” do you know what happens? You’re not dead any more. This is a tremendously generous thing to have happen!
6. ***The poor have good news preached to them*** – This one isn’t a tangible or physical blessing. It is more emotionally healing and therapeutic. You need hope. Jesus told the messengers to tell John that people, who are in an occupied, dark time and place, were having good news and HOPE proclaimed to them. It must have felt like Christmas and Birthday in one!

Any ONE of these things, to have Jesus do it for you, would change your life, change the entire direction of your life. This is why I picked this passage to read! It shows Jesus, presenting the evidence that He is the Messiah. Look at the generosity of how Jesus summarizes His own work, for John to think about.

Right now I’m struggling with a little bit of back pain, and occasional discomfort in each knee. I would love to be able to go to a Pentecostal healing service and have some minister pray over my pain and “poof”, it goes away. But such a healing would just take me from uncomfortable back to normal. I would like to be young and normal and pain-free; but I’m not sure it would blow me away in the manner of one of these six! My point is: when Jesus works, it is dramatically *generous*. This is how He was. And how God is. It changes people’s lives. It does

the total job. Such an evidence was probably enough to comfort John the Baptist I think.

PP 7,8

Even though I can identify plenty of people over the years whose real generosity I have seen, it doesn't begin to approximate the generosity of the Lord Himself!

Matthew (7:7-11) quotes Jesus saying to His disciples and whoever else was listening at the "sermon on the mount" **Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!** Luke has the end of that last verse a little differently (11:13): **how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"**

When Jesus fed the five thousand, do you think He just had the guys hand out a little fragment of bread and a small fragment of fish to each person? Such a small gift would have sustained them for another 24 hours just fine. Do you know how I read generosity into that story? How many leftovers were there after the meal? Luke records it this way (9:17) **And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.** With Jesus in charge of your life, there is a window to a generous God.

I should think people would like that! I should think people would assess Jesus as **the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature** (Hebrews 1:3a) who wouldn't want that? Even if you were raised in a completely non-Jesus upbringing, with a God like this and with a Jesus like this, at least insofar as the Bible describes Him—who wouldn't want a God like that?

- He is good and so there's no *ying and yang* stuff that's going to bushwhack you.
- He is holy, and so He has no evil, underlying motives.
- He is eternal and so His kindness and goodness are not going to wear out and not going to go away.
- He is sovereign and so there's no slip ups where the devil or karma or anything else will ultimately disappoint you because you weren't sovereign.
- He is generous. There is no end to the love and overwhelming kindness He wants to lavish on you. If you are one of His children. If you have trusted in the Great Generosity of Him sending His only Son. He sent no angel to die for us. He sent His Son.

Now if HE is generous and we are becoming like Him doesn't that suggest that we should be or ARE becoming increasingly generous?

- Do you calculate the tip in a restaurant down to the penny or withhold it altogether if the server did something you didn't like?
- Is your relationship with contractors that you hire governed by **law or grace**?
- Do you give *just up to* what's expected and no more?
- Do you help people just when they deserve it?
- Do you withhold approval, affection or affirmation because that person in front of you didn't meet up to your expectations?
- Do you score-card your spouse?
- Do you score-care your child?

PP 9,10

Or maybe because we're walking around with Jesus, we're *looking* for ways to really surprise people and for Jesus to get the credit.

Maybe if we're hanging out with Jesus, seeing how HE treated people, starting to have His nature capture and even take over our own, we are giving out stuff with our left hand not knowing what our right hand is even doing? Maybe we start to love generosity as a thing that is so like Jesus Christ that we just want to be that!

Maybe, without TRYING to impress people, we're *impressing* people with a goodness that we are quick to acknowledge doesn't come from ourselves. Maybe we are quick to realize that any generosity is really alien to us and must have come from someone else?

PP 11,12

Our God is full of unending generosity, once you're in the body of Christ. As He said to Moses (which we read last week): ***You shall not bow down to them or serve them [idols], for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments*** (Exodus 20:5,6).

He is not to be trifled with, to be taken lightly or slighted in any way. At the same time He is steadfastly *in love* with His own and there is no limit to the number of names that can be in that camp!

Give thanks to the Lord our God and King
His love endures forever
For He is good, He is above all things
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise

Forever God is faithful
Forever God is strong
Forever God is with us
Forever

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

COMMUNICABLE

- BEING
- PURPOSE
- MENTAL
- MORAL
- SUMMARY

INCOMMUNICABLE

To study God's attributes is to study His character, to answer questions like, Who is God? and What is God like? A typical classification of God's attributes divides them into those that are *communicable* (those that He does not share or "communicate" to anyone or anything else) and *incommunicable* (those that He shares with other beings). Like most theological classifications, this one is imperfect but still helpful as we seek to understand what is so far beyond ourselves.

God's communicable attributes can be further categorized into: attributes of God's being, mental attributes, moral attributes, attributes of purpose and "summary" attributes (attributes that, in a more particular way, modify each of the others).

It is important to consider that God is not simply the sum of His attributes. His attributes are not separate from one another, but each one modifies or qualifies each of the others.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:
 Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem
 The Attributes of God by A.W. Pink

- TRANSCENDENCE** — GOD TRANSCENDS ALL CREATION AND IS UNKNOWABLE APART FROM HIS SELF-INITIATED REVELATION.
- IMMANENCE** — GOD IS ACTIVE IN THIS WORLD AND IN OUR DAILY LIVES. GOD CARES ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF OUR EXISTENCE AND INVITES US TO WELCOME HIS SACRIFICE, SERVICE, AND LOVE.
- ASEITY** — GOD IS SELF-SUFFICIENT AND SELF-SUPPORTING AND HAS NO NEED OF HUMAN BEINGS OR THE REST OF CREATION.
- OMNIPRESENCE** — GOD HAS NO SIZE OR SHAPE AND IS PRESENT IN ALL PLACES WITH HIS ENTIRE BEING.
- UNITY** — GOD'S WHOLE BEING ENCLOSES ALL OF HIS ATTRIBUTES AT ALL TIMES. THESE ATTRIBUTES ARE NEVER IN CONFLICT.
- ETERNALITY** — GOD HAS ALWAYS EXISTED, NEVER HAD BEGINNING AND ENDING, AND EXPERIENCING NO SUCCESSION OF MOMENTS.
- IMMUTABILITY** — GOD CANNOT CHANGE IN HIS BEING, PERFECTING PURPOSES, AND PROGRESS.
- GLORY** — THE CREATED BRIGHTNESS THAT EMBODIES GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF.
- BEAUTY** — GOD IS THE POSSESSOR AND THE SUM OF ALL DESIRABLE QUALITIES.
- BLESSEDNESS** — GOD DELIGHTS FULLY IN HIMSELF AND IN ALL THAT REFLECTS HIS CHARACTER.
- PERFECTION** — GOD FULLY POSSESSES ALL EXCELLENT QUALITIES AND LACKS NO QUALITIES THAT WOULD BE DEFERRED FOR HIM.
- JEALOUSY** — GOD ALWAYS WANTS TO PROTECT HIS OWN HONOR.
- GOODNESS** — GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF ALL GOOD, AND ALL HE IS AND DOES IS WORTHY OF APPROVAL.
- PEACE** — GOD IN HIS BEING AND ACTING IS SEPARATE FROM ALL CONFLICT AND DISCORD.
- HOLINESS** — GOD IS SEPARATED FROM SIN AND HE IS COMMITTED TO DENYING HIS OWN HONOR.
- LOVE** — GOD ETERNALLY GIVES OF HIMSELF TO OTHERS.
- MERCY** — GOD IS GOOD TO THOSE IN PERIL AND DEFENSE AND HE IS GOOD TO THOSE WHO RECEIVE PUNISHMENT.
- RIGHTEOUSNESS** — GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF WHAT IS RIGHT, AND HE ALWAYS ACTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT IS RIGHT. (THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S JUSTICE)
- WRATH** — GOD INTENSELY HATES ALL SIN.
- TRUTHFULNESS** — GOD IS THE TRUTH GOD WHERE KNOWLEDGE AND WORDS ARE BOTH TRUE AND THE FINAL STANDARD OF TRUTH.
- KNOWLEDGE** — GOD FULLY KNOWS HIMSELF AND ALL ACTING AND POSSIBLE THINGS. (THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S OMNISCIENCE)
- WISDOM** — GOD ALWAYS CHOOSES THE BEST GOALS AND THE BEST MEANS TO THOSE GOALS.
- WILL** — GOD APPROVES AND DETERMINES TO BRING ABOUT EVERY ACTION NECESSARY FOR HIS EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITY IN ALL THAT EXISTS.
- FREEDOM** — GOD DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES.
- OMNIPOTENCE** — GOD IS ABLE TO DO ALL THINGS FULLY WELL. GOD EXERCISES COMPLETE POWER OVER HIS CREATION AND CREATES AS HE WILLS.
- INVISIBILITY** — GOD'S ETHERAL ESSENCE, ALL OF HIS BEING, WILL NEVER BE VISIBLE TO US.
- SPIRITUALITY** — GOD IS A BEING WHO IS NOT MADE UP OF MATTER AND WHO CANNOT BE PERCEIVED BY OUR BODILY SENSES.