

## **“The Open Door of Generosity”**

*The Rev. S. Shane Nanney ~ October 13, 2024*

*Revelation 3:7-8, 11-13, Mark 10:17-31*

In the tapestry of our lives, there are threads woven with purpose, and one of the most vibrant is the thread of generosity. Today, I want to explore this powerful concept through the lens of our faith, especially considering Revelation 3:8, which states, "I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut." This passage not only speaks to opportunities in our lives but also challenges us to recognize and embrace the open door of generosity that God sets before us. Generosity is not merely a transaction; it is an invitation to transform our lives and the lives of others.

At the core of generosity lies the understanding that everything we have is a gift from God. Our time, talents, and treasures are not ours to hoard but to share. When we entrust God with our resources, we acknowledge that He is the ultimate source of our blessings. This is echoed in 2 Corinthians 9:8, where Paul writes, "and God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

Generosity begins with trust. When we open our hearts to the idea of sharing, we step into the rhythm of God's economy—one that promises abundance, not scarcity. Consider the widow's mite in Mark 12:41-44. Her small offering was more significant than the rich man's large sums because it was given out of a heart of trust. She understood that her resources were not for her alone but a part of God's larger plan.

Generosity extends far beyond monetary gifts. It opens doors to opportunities for others. When we invest our time and talents into the lives of those around us, we create pathways for growth and development. This can manifest in mentorship, volunteering, or simply offering a listening ear.

When I was in college, the ministry was not even on my radar. I had planned a totally different life. But my associate pastor, talked with me often about going into the ministry. I thought she was crazy. I am an introvert, and don't you need to be an extrovert to be a pastor? I was the last person that probably should enter the ministry. But her encouragement led me down a long and tough road.

Seminary was not easy. The trials by fire in my other churches gave me experience. And it all led me to you. If my pastor had not talked with me about going into the ministry, our lives would be very different than what it is today. She opened the door for me and all I had to do was go through it. Now I open the door for others and pray that they follow the path that God has laid out for them and follow my example by walking through that door.

In Acts 20:35, Paul reminds us of the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is not just about material giving; it's about recognizing the profound impact we can have on others by sharing our gifts and our time. Each act of kindness creates ripples of hope and possibility, opening doors for those who feel trapped or unseen.

Think back over your lives. How many times have you received? At just the right time and at the right place in your lives, you received just what you needed. I am sure that you said to yourself, one day, I will give so that others will receive like I did. Why? Because you are grateful for God watching over you and for the fact that someone else listened and trusted God to do for you what you could not do for yourself. And in the end, it gave you a bigger and better view of humanity.

Generosity also fosters an environment of trust and support. When we give generously, we create a culture of openness, encouraging others to do the same. Think about how it feels to be part of a community that supports one another. This kind of generosity cultivates relationships that thrive on mutual trust.

When we are generous with our emotional and spiritual resources, we become conduits of God's love. This can be as simple as offering a word of encouragement or standing alongside someone during a difficult time or buying a cup of coffee for someone else. In Galatians 6:2, we are called to "bear one another's burdens." This sharing of burdens is a profound act of generosity that requires us to be vulnerable and present.

Generosity has the power to change lives—not only the lives of those we help but also our own. When we embrace a generous spirit, we become more attuned to the needs of others and less focused on our own worries and desires. This shift in perspective can lead to transformative experiences.

Consider for a moment our free-food give away on Monday. It began with a few individuals recognizing a need and deciding to give of their time and resources. They went out to local restaurants and asked them not to throw away food but to give it to us. We collected some from the congregation and repackaged what we could. What started as a small effort quickly blossomed into a movement that provided nourishment to countless families. The impact was not only on those receiving the food but also on the volunteers who found purpose and fulfillment in their giving.

In 2 Corinthians 9:11, Paul writes, "You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion." This is the beautiful exchange of generosity: as we give, we are enriched. Our hearts expand, and our understanding of community deepens.

Generosity is, ultimately, a challenge—a challenge to open our hearts and our lives to the possibilities that God places before us. Revelation 3:8 reminds us of the open door set before us. We must ask ourselves: Are we willing to step through that door? Are we willing to open doors for others?

This might mean stepping out of our comfort zones to support a neighbor in need or investing in a local cause that aligns with our values. It requires intentionality and a willingness to listen to God's leading. Each act of generosity we undertake serves as a key to unlock doors of opportunity for others.

In closing, I urge you to reflect on your own life. How can you embrace the open door of generosity? What resources, time, and love can you offer to create pathways for others? Remember that every small act of generosity is significant in God's eyes. As we commit to opening doors for others, we become instruments of His grace, spreading love and hope in our communities.

Let us remember that generosity is not merely about what we give; it is about the doors we open for ourselves and others. When we entrust God with our resources and embrace a spirit of generosity, we become part of His divine plan, transforming lives and communities along the way. May we step through the open door of generosity and allow God to use us to make a difference in the world. Amen.