

TUESDAY 07 June 2022 "Generosity" (Acts 2:44,45)

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

When was the last time you were so overwhelmed you simply couldn't speak! Perhaps you sat down so you wouldn't fall down in amazement. That was exactly what was happening in Jerusalem about 2000 years ago during the Pentecost Festival. *Oh, Jews had gathered in Jerusalem by the thousands every year for this wonderful festival, but never before had there been a Pentecost like this one!* Luke summarizes it in this one statement: **"Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles."** (Acts 2:43)

A day or two earlier, the coming of the Holy Spirit of God with a loud wind and tongues of fire landing on the heads of Jesus' friends and followers without burning them, and then their speaking in languages they did not know and had never studied, left the crowd of people **"Amazed and perplexed, asking one another, 'what does this mean?'"** (Acts 2:12)

Jesus had frequently amazed people with His miracles and left them perplexed with His teachings. Jesus had said something amazing to His disciples in the upper room that final night together before He went to the cross: **"Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in Me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."** (John 14:11,12) I imagine Jesus' friends were stunned by this statement and because Jesus was saying so many new, powerful things that evening, it was simply filed away in their minds someplace. But here, 54 days later, on Pentecost day, when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke the Gospel in languages they didn't know, I think these words of Jesus came alive in their hearts! It was true... Jesus had repeatedly said the Holy Spirit would come upon them ONLY after HE returned to heaven, and it happened just as He promised, 10 days after they had watched Jesus ascend into the sky!

Luke continues his description of what was happening in Jerusalem those days with this statement: **"All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."** (Acts 2:44,45) Now don't get confused here friends, this is not suddenly socialism taking over. *Rather, this is outrageous generosity happening among these people who have the Holy Spirit of God alive within them!* Poverty or at least financial inequality is common in every part of the world, every city. It has always been this way, and always will be. Governments and societies and families respond very differently to the needs of people, don't they? Remember Jerusalem was filled to overflowing at this Pentecost Festival time with Jewish people who had come from every corner of the Roman Empire, and even lands beyond the Empire!

Among the Jews generosity was something highly valued from the days of Moses and God's law handed down as the penniless slaves came out of Egypt.

But I wonder if you see the extreme generosity Luke is describing here in Jerusalem among these new followers of Jesus. First, they were spending lots of time together sharing what they had with each other. Now remember friends, these people are strangers to each other. They've come to Jerusalem from all over the known world. We can assume most had never met each other, didn't know much about each other yet they are sharing their meals, and inviting strangers to stay in their homes if they needed lodging while in Jerusalem! Have you ever seen this happen where you live in the world? *Have you found that when you meet someone who loves Jesus, as you do, and is filled with the Holy Spirit, as you are, that you suddenly feel like family and a natural generosity rises up within you?*

Now I need to ask a hard question. My wife and I have noticed that in America something has waned to the point of almost being obsolete. Do you know what it is? **Hospitality!** When was the last time you were invited to someone's home for a meal and friendship time together? Nothing more. No agenda! When is the last time you spontaneously invited someone over to your home for fellowship and maybe a meal? *Here in Jerusalem suddenly their unity in Christ caused everyone to open their hearts, their homes and even their wallets to each other! That was amazing!*

But Luke tells us it went much further, did you notice in his description he wrote: **"They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."** (Acts 2:45) Now that is outrageous generosity, or maybe some might call it ludicrous or even insanity! I presume this means many among these new believers were poor. Perhaps some had borrowed money from friends to make the Pentecost Festival trip to Jerusalem and now as they prepared to return home, they knew they had debts awaiting them. What Luke describes is almost beyond our understanding, but we know he reported accurately (Luke 1:1-4) ... some people actually sold property and possessions to help others in need! WOW! So how do you explain that my friends? *Where does that type of sincere generosity come from?*

A few days ago, we spent more than a week looking at the disciple Matthew's record of a long message Jesus gave the people toward the beginning of His public ministry. Some call it the "sermon on the mount" because it was delivered on a hillside, outside Capernaum, to a large crowd of people. Do you remember Matthew records Jesus talking about how *God provides everything He knows we need*, because He created us, designed the human race to need what only He can provide, and He loves us. Jesus said, **"Your Father in heaven know what you need, even before you ask Him."** (Matt. 6:8)

Jesus talked about trusting God to know our needs better than we do and that God would provide for our needs.

One way God does that is providing us the energy, physical strength, and intelligence to work and that work is rewarded whether you work a garden to grow your own food, or you are employed and paid so you can buy your food, or on rare occasions, like this Pentecost Festival in Jerusalem, God leads the wealthy to help meet the needs of the poor through generosity! Matthew had dedicated most of chapter six of his record to these amazing teachings of Jesus about trusting God for our needs and God led generosity.

In fact, this matter of Holy Spirit led generosity is a theme through much of the New Testament and even one particularly powerful chapter of the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 8. I think these words Paul wrote to Timothy give us a very wise perspective on the matter: **"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it... Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money have wandered away from the faith and have pierced themselves with many griefs."** (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

My friends, may I share with you that my wife and I have developed in our 49 years of marriage, a simple but difficult to maintain principle that shapes our financial philosophy and our spending practices: *Everything we have... everything is God's not ours. God owns it all. House, car, furniture, clothes, food in the refrigerator, computer... everything! And more... God owns every moment of TIME that God gives us; every penny of FINANCES that God allows to come into our hands by any means; every ABILITY or TALENT God has given to us; even every OPPORTUNITY God places before us... God has entrusted it all to us to manage and use for God's glory, however He leads us. We do our best to remain open and alert, all day every day, to any leading of the Holy Spirit in HOW God wants us to use or spend any resource God has given us to help accomplish God's purposes that day, always for God's glory. Now...the antithesis of this of course is SELFISHNESS! When we start seeing what we have as OURS, to be used for OUR pleasure or accomplishment of OUR agenda... oh my, that's trouble because almost always selfishness is in direct conflict with God's purposes and living our lives for God's glory!* Now, I wonder what you think about this my friends? *Does that sound like what Luke is reporting was happening in Jerusalem in the days following the Pentecost arrival of the Holy Spirit?*

Let's pause right here. I invite you to take your journal or a piece of paper and write a statement that would accurately reflect your generosity philosophy? And spend a few minutes asking God to help you see all resources which God makes available to you as Jesus sees them. I wonder what the Holy Spirit will speak into your heart and mind on this very important issue, my friends?

Today's Scripture is Acts 2:44, 45.