

I grew up in a home where politeness was a high value. You learned the “magic word” at an early age, you didn’t talk with your mouth full, you asked to be excused when you finished eating dinner and were getting antsy in your chair.

And I’m pretty sure that somewhere in my politeness education, I learned that you don’t invite yourself over to another person’s home. You could invite others to your home, or you could drop subtle or not-so-subtle hints, but you weren’t supposed to say, “Hey Bill, why don’t you have me over to your house for dinner today?” It wasn’t polite to do that in Korea, and I’m pretty sure it’s not polite to do that in America either.

However, being in ministry as a pastor has changed me how to deal with the politeness in life. Politeness is not one of Jesus’ top values. I don’t think he was much interested in it at all. Jesus doesn’t seem to think twice about inviting himself over to a stranger’s house in the reading we heard a few moments ago, and there’s a good reason for it. Jesus focuses on the mission of His life, and there’s no time for worrying about being polite. Jesus is out to seek and save the lost.

Zacchaeus might not immediately seem to fit that big category of “the lost.” He’s not particularly vulnerable: he’s not a widow or an orphan, he’s not poor, he’s not a foreigner living in a strange land. Zacchaeus is a tax collector—a chief tax collector, according to Luke—and he’s rich. It may sound to us like he’s a person who’s got all together—a steady job in upper management, a good salary, some measure of authority.

He may have all those things, but as a tax collector, Zacchaeus is an outsider in his hometown. Jesus noticed Zacchaeus up in a tree—a man who had made himself an outcast in his community by giving into his greed; a man wanting so badly to see Jesus that he couldn’t help making a fool of himself.

When Zachaeus met Jesus, everything got changed—not only his heart, but his hands. The same fingers that once reached to extort filthy lucre, now extended with generosity to the poor, and to pay back fourfold anyone he’d defrauded (Luke 19:8). How we handle our money has everything to do with how we orient on Jesus.

Like Zachaeus, the author of Gospel Luke is highly educated man. Luke is one of the four evangelists in the New Testament. The early church fathers ascribed to him the authorship of both the Gospel Luke and the Book of Acts. The letter to the Colossians Apostle Paul wrote refers to him as a doctor. He is thought to have been both a physician and a disciple of Apostle Paul.

This privileged man shows his generosity in sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Most notable about Luke's gospel compared to others is his emphasis on the place of women, the poor, and outcasts, including lepers and Samaritans, in Jesus' ministry and in the early church. St. Luke, the Evangelist, is *generous* in his inclusion—in sharing the story of Jesus that is for all people, without regard to financial status, nationality, gender, or social class.

We do not know how Luke used his privilege before he became a follower of Jesus. We do not have a “before” picture of Luke like Zachaeus. However, we know he opens the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people by using his “privileged education” to articulate the gospel to be more hearable to all people.

In the Gospel of Luke, he shows that generosity is a sign of a regenerate soul. There is no such thing as a Christian scrooge. We may know some scrooges who claim to be Christians, but I don't think anyone can claim to really know Christ and be a stingy person.

All people I met at the 2017 Blitz Build of Habitat for Humanity last week were Christians who gave of themselves so generously in building 10 houses in 10 days for those who are in need of home. Giving generously is a sign of a regenerate soul.

Next year, our church is challenging ourselves to be 9% more generous in our giving and sharing the blessings we have received from God. The generous giving and sharing starts from the counting the blessings we have received from God. During this month of September, I would like to encourage us to count the blessings we have received in life. In reflection of that, please prayerfully fill out the pledge card for next year.

The pledge card is available at the greeting table. This week and the following week in the mail you will receive the pledge card for offering an opportunity for you to give generously as a witness of Jesus Christ. Please know that God's love is

not contingent upon our generosity. However, it is God's abundant love that makes generosity possible.

I would like to conclude the message with a story about the little Johnny in Sunday school. A Sunday school teacher asked her class if they would give a \$1,000,000 to the missionaries. "Yes!" they all screamed! "Would you give \$1,000?" again, they shouted "Yes!" "How about \$100?" "Oh, yes we would!" they all agreed. "Would you just give a dollar to the missionaries?" she asked. The class responded, "Yes!" just like before, except Johnny. The teacher noticed that Johnny clutching his pocket. So, she asked. "Johnny, why didn't you say 'yes' this time?" "Well," the boy stammered, "I have a dollar in my pocket!"

What's in your pocket?

May God bless us open our pocket of blessings more generously for God's loving sake. Amen.