

## GENEROSITY

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

*Luke 6. 36-42*

Some of you may be aware that this will be my last opportunity for a while to stand up in front of you and – what shall I say? – preach, pontificate, instruct, elucidate. I'll leave it to you to choose the right word! I hope you have found my thoughts helpful. I don't claim to have all the answers, but I have tried to offer some ideas which you may like to reflect on.

Today's reading from Luke's Gospel is brisk and practical, giving us some very valuable instruction. It begins,

*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

The language is rather formal, and we may not respond very positively to the word *merciful* these days, but other translations offer alternatives which help to shed light on the meaning. One says this, *Have pity on others, just as your Father has pity on you*, while another gives the following: *Try to show as much compassion as your Father does*. I think that the message is clear – we should be generous in our dealings with others and should avoid being over-harsh in our criticism. In fact, in the next sentence we are told,

*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.*

Who amongst us is so righteous that they do not need forgiveness? Show me such a person, and I will show you a hypocrite.

But there are, indeed, many 'experts' who would like to correct what they perceive as the faults or shortcomings of others. *Brother*, they say, *let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye*, all the time being completely unaware of the great plank that obscures their own vision. Are they unaware, or simply unbothered by it? It's so easy to make excuses, to dismiss one's own little foibles as unimportant, and a casual slip by someone else is so much more interesting. Show me such a person, and I will show you a hypocrite.

You may say, we are all good Christians – we are not like that. But what does it mean to be a good Christian? We are told in various places to love God and to love one another, and Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, describes this love in some detail. (Incidentally, in the King James version the word used is not *love* but *charity*, another word which has fallen out of favour in recent times.) *Love* is a very complex word with a vast array of meanings.

Here, however, we are given a very simple instruction – so simple and practical that we need spend no time in comparing translations. Jesus tells us,

*Give, and it shall be given unto you,*

and it is in giving that we show just how much love we have for others – giving material goods to help those who are less fortunate than we are; giving our time and attention to those who are lonely or distressed; giving of ourselves, freely and joyfully, because we care, because – if you like – it is an expression of our love for others and for the Father who cares for and loves every one of his children. Let us give generously of our love, because it is like a well of sweet water that will never dry up. Indeed,

*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.*

The Revd Canon David Crawley

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