

In a Word - Benevolence –Proverbs 9:17

Introduction

- Beginning before Thanksgiving and on thru the holiday season, acts of benevolence are more prevalent and easily seen.
 - There are food & clothing drives, and the bell ringers are in front of the stores. Toys for Tots and our own ladies toy drive.
- It seems that benevolence increases because of at least two reasons:
 - Thankfulness for being so blessed
 - During times of hardship: Natural disaster or pandemic
- Benevolence Defined: The quality of being well meaning, an act of kindness, goodness
 - The word “benevolence” itself is not found in our English translations of the bible.
 - However, the scriptures are rich in the teaching that God’s people are to be benevolent

I. Benevolence in the Old Testament

a. The law concerning the poor and needy

(7) “If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, (8) but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. (Deuteronomy 15:7–8)

b. Benevolence was part of the tithe offering, it was a religious act

(28) “At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. (29) And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do. (Deuteronomy 14:28–29)

i. The priest were to be provided for as well as the needy

“When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. (Deuteronomy 24:19–21)

- ii. Harvest of olive trees, you shall not go over the branches again; it was for the poor
- iii. Harvest of grapes in the vineyards, the missed fruit was left for the poor
- iv. At the end of these laws they were to remember that they too were slaves in Egypt

c. Taught in the books of poetry

- i. Job described his own benevolence and was blessed for it

(12) Because I delivered the poor who cried out, The fatherless and the one who had no helper. (13) The blessing of a perishing man came upon me, And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. (Job 29:12–13)

- ii. He went on to say...
- iii. I was eyes to the blind, And I was feet to the lame. I was a father to the poor...
(Job 29:15–16)
- iv. We read of care for the less fortunate in the Psalms and Proverbs... (KEY VERSE)

(1) Blessed is he who considers the poor; The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. (2) The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, And he will be blessed on the earth; You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. (Psalm 41:1–2)

He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given. (Proverbs 19:17)

(21) If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; (22) For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, And the LORD will reward you. (Proverbs 25:21–22)

- v. Take note of the principle taught by this proverb, because we will see it continue into the New Testament and applicable today

d. Taught in the books of prophecy

If you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday. (Isaiah 58:10) (Also Matt. 5:16)

(8) Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, (9) "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion Everyone to his brother. (10) Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, The alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart Against his brother.'" (Zechariah 7:8–10)
(Also James 2:15-17)

- e. It is not difficult to see that God intended for Israel to be benevolent. A desire that the Lord would continue to require from His people in the New Testament.

II. Benevolence in the New Testament

- a. The New Testament contains so much teaching concerning benevolence that it's difficult to choose which passages to read and discuss today...
- b. We must certainly look at the benevolence of Jesus
 - i. Not only did Jesus show His benevolence by healing the sick and feeding the multitudes but His teaching was full of instruction towards showing kindness to others...

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. (Matthew 4:23)

- ii. Give to those who ask, lend to those who borrow (Matthew 5:32)
- iii. Help those who you'd be less likely to help (Samaritan) (Luke 10:30-37)
- iv. Do it all so that God gets the glory (credit) (Matthew 5:16)
- v. Don't do your charitable deeds to be seen, or get praise (Matthew 6:2-4)
- vi. Feed the needy expecting nothing in return (Luke 12:12-14)

c. True religion defined by benevolence

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Hebrews 13:16)

d. The cause and effect of benevolence

- i. What happens when I freely and unselfishly give? When I am good and kind?
- ii. Remember what we read in Proverbs 19:17?

He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given. (Proverbs 19:17)

Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38)

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

e. Benevolence can and should be a means of evangelism (as seen in Matt. 4:23)

- i. You may not be able to conduct a bible study, but you can still share the word
- ii. Include a bible or New Testament in your gift, a brief outline of the gospel
- iii. When we offer assistance to others, it can be a teaching opportunity...

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

- iv. Jesus goes on to teach that the things we worry about are temporal, but we must first seek God and His kingdom.

III. Benevolence on the Day of Judgment

- a. Just as God required His people to be benevolent from the very beginning, He also warned them about selfishness and failure to care for the less fortunate.

Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard. (Proverbs 21:13)

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. (James 4:17)

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:17–18)

- i. Missed opportunity: The woman with arm in a sling loading groceries to her car
- b. One of the most eye-opening stories Jesus told concerning benevolence is the story of the Great Judgement in Matthew 25.

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. (Matthew 25:31–32)

c.

IV. Conclusion: Benevolence of this Church

- a. We must always use God-given wisdom while helping others.
 - i. There are times when helping, showing kindness will only further dependence
 - ii. There are times when we must practice “tough love” and restraint
 - iii. The way you choose (or not) is up to you (liberty)
- b. Giving generously to the church offering, is wonderful
 - i. In Acts we read of church contributions going to help other churches

Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. (Acts 11:29)

(10) Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10)

- ii. Many good things are done through the church (disaster relief, food, HR2)
- iii. You may want to put something aside for light shining (Matt. 5:16)
- c. Just as I am, you are a representative of this congregation within our communities
 - i. In the coming year, I hope and pray that we will improve in our benevolence

I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” (Acts 20:35)

d.