

PRAYER

Dear Lord, at the start of this course we ask for your guidance and help as we engage with your surprising generosity.

ACTIVITY/ICE BREAKER

Ask people to share an example of where they have experienced God's generosity unexpectedly.

VIDEO

Watch video 1: The gift of God

READ

Luke 2: 1-7 (NIV) In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

REFLECTIONS

Sometimes God is generous to us in unexpected ways, so unexpected that we may miss what is going on. We often expect him to operate in particular ways and places. When a young couple shuffled into the noisy, bustling temple complex with a tiny baby in their arms most people were too busy doing the work of God to take any notice. Joseph was just a poor carpenter, Mary just another young woman, neither of them looked at all as if they might be carrying God's powerful plan of salvation in their arms. But two people did notice, Simeon and Anna. They had been waiting, looking, hoping for this day. And because of their way of life they were tuned in when Jesus arrived. Years later (in Luke chapter 8) when Jesus was leading an expectant crowd to the house of wealthy, respected Jairus he stopped them all dead when he felt someone snag his sleeve.

REFLECTIONS

The crowd were confused, wanting to get to the action at Jairus's place, but the action was here, now. Jesus was waiting for the moment he could lift up a broken person, rejected by everyone because of her weakness. That day he brought the gift of new life twice, to Jairus's daughter certainly, but first of all to an unnamed, unpopular woman who took a risk in a crowd.

Earlier in Luke 2 we read of the unexpected story of Christmas. Angels announcing the gift of God to shepherds who were not really rated as worth much. And those shepherds were so keen to see the baby they went rushing away from their sheep. God's generosity drew enthusiasm from them and a willingness to find out more. Later Jesus would describe himself as a shepherd who had come looking for us. Philippians chapter 2 describes all that he gave up in his quest to find us – leaving the glory of heaven and walking a road which would ultimately lead to total sacrifice. When he was tempted in the desert he quotes from Deuteronomy; Men shall not live on bread alone. His words can truly sustain us.

QUESTIONS

1. Share stories of times where you have experienced the generosity of your church family.
2. The woman who touched Jesus' cloak took a risk in asking for help; offering help can feel risky too. Taking a step into the unknown forces us to rely on God not ourselves. What risk can you take this month to be a blessing to your (church) community?
3. What might you do this week to share God's unexpected generosity with those around you in the giving of your time, talents and/or treasures?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, we thank you for the generous gift of your Son Jesus Christ, who came to live among us and died for us. Thank you for your generosity that speaks to us every single day. Help us, as we step into your footprint to be(come) generous too, so the world might see your love through us.