

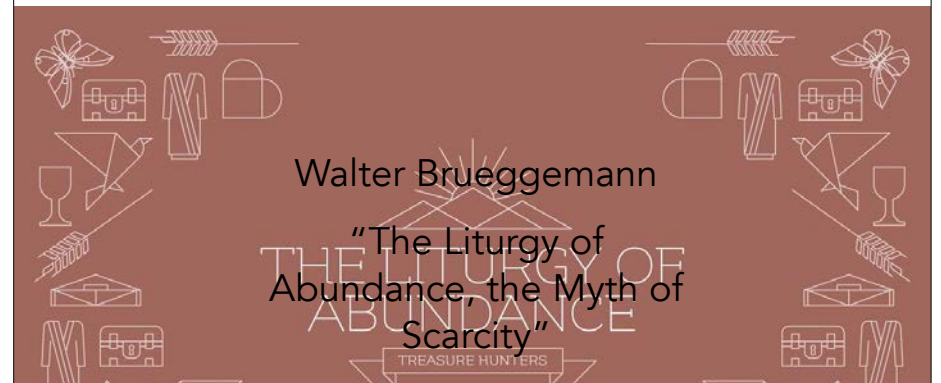
God's Generous People, Part 2 Some thoughts from the Early Church

Tyler Williams
Trinity Sunday
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Scarcity or Abundance?



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Generosity in the Early Church

The early church captured this vision of abundance in their life together, and were known for both their devotion and their generosity.

Generosity in the Early Church

"... All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need" (Acts 2:44-45).

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had...."

Generosity in the Early Church

... And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need" (Acts 4:33-35).

Generosity in the Early Church

Their generosity with their time, talents, and treasures was an expression of their life together or *koinonia*.

- *Koinonia* (κοινωνία, κοινωνεω) - partnership, participation, communion; sacrificial sharing and living life together (Acts 2:24; 4:32).

Generosity in the Early Church

"All things are owned in common, and therefore gifts are impossible: that's the Marxist utopia. Gifts are most generously given, and therefore all things are in common: that a Christian vision of the world to come" (Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge*, 73).

Grounded

in the ideals of ancient Israel:

"There were no needy persons among them" (Acts 4:34).

"There need be no needy persons among you, for in the land Yahweh your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you" (Deuteronomy 15:4).

Inspired

by the example of Jesus Christ:

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Valued

by the Early Church:

“Share with the Lord’s people who are in need”
(Rom 12:13; 15:26-27).

“... others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else” (2Cor 9:13).

Valued

by the Early Church:

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share”
(1Tim 6:18).

“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased”
(Heb 13:16).

“But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, [Christ followers] display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners.... They have a common table, but not a common bed... They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all.”

— *The Epistle to Diognetus* 5.4-11

Enabled

by the Holy Spirit:

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship/sharing of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2Cor 13:14).

“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion...” (Phil 2:1).

Generosity in the Early Church

Grounded in the ideals of ancient Israel
Inspired by the example of Jesus Christ
Valued by the Early Church
Enable by the Holy Spirit

Conclusions

Our generous life together matters:

- It matters for our spiritual health and growth.
- It matters for our witness the world.

Conclusions for Trinity Sunday

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2Corinthians 13:14).

