



Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As you may know, the leaders of our congregation have embarked upon a journey of learning as they are participating in a course conducted by the Rev. Mike Ward. This study is called "Creating a Culture of Generosity."

So often when we think of the word generosity or stewardship, we immediately turn our minds towards money. It is not surprising that we do so because humans have taken the gifts of God and built what we now call an economy around everything we do. Indeed, it is hard for any of us to imagine that there was a time in our world when currency was not needed. And yet the scriptures tell us it was so in the beginning. So, we have created a reality that we all must live where money is needed to accomplish almost everything in our lives. This is true not only of the world but of the church as well. But as I mentioned, this situation was not the creation of God.

When you think about stewardship and generosity in the way of God you realize that those words mean so much more than the definitions that we apply to them, for generosity includes generosity of heart, of spirit, and this is where we discover the strength of faith, as I borrow some words from the Shema. (Hear, O Israel: The Lord your God, The Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Deut. 6:4-5)

I want to share a story about someone who taught me a wonderful lesson in what true generosity of the spirit actually looks like and how such a way of living changes not only our hearts, but the world.

Years ago, I worked as a make-up artist in the film and television industries. I had the pleasure of meeting many wonderful and diverse people from all corners of the globe. And one of those I will never forget was Jane Royle. While working on the film *Last of the Mohicans* there were many make-up artists involved, for there were days that we had more than eight hundred actors on the set. Some make-up artists were seasoned veterans and others were fairly new to the craft. But there were so many that they were working beneath circus tents in the middle of the wilderness where we were on location.

As I was walking through the tent one day with Jane, she observed a young make-up artist doing something that she did not approve of. So, I watched patiently as she intervened. Jane began by telling the girl how talented she was, that she had a natural flair for the art and would go far in the business. The young girl was absolutely glowing to be flattered by one of the best artists in the business. Then Jane asked her, "May I show you something?" The girl quickly surrendered her brushes to her and excitedly said, "Yes!" Jane then carefully and beautifully corrected what the girl was doing while the girl watched with complete focus taking in everything that Jane was

doing. Then Jane said, "Here, you try it." The girl then duplicated what she had seen exactly, and Jane once more said, "That's beautiful darling! I told you that you were born to do this!"

As Jane walked back toward me and we continued walking together I told her, "Jane, that was truly amazing!" She surprisingly said, "What was?" "What you did," I said. "You saw something you didn't like, you complimented the girl, corrected it by sharing with her, and then complimented her again. She never knew that you didn't like what she was doing or that anything was wrong."

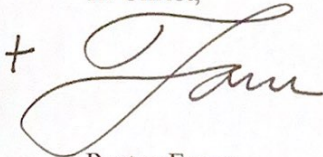
Jane looked at me and smiled saying, "As you travel through this world there will always be others that know things that you don't. If you treat them with the love and the human dignity that they deserve, they will share those things with you." I will never forget her words or the time we spent together during the five months of principle photography.

Jane died many years later at her home in the English countryside, but she left something of her kind spirit with me. We had remained friends through the years until she passed, but because of her I was blessed to see what a generous spirit actually looked like and also adopted the love of tea as well.

In all things, we must never put the cart before the horse, and realize that when we follow Christ in thought, word, and deed, then not only are we changed, but the world becomes a much more beautiful place. It does so when we are living into the love that comes from God. Once this happens, then we grow in generosity and stewardship in every possible way for it is Christ who guides us towards having hearts of generosity.

I continually pray for blessings upon your journey here and throughout your lives. And will always be thankful for the way you remind me of Christ. Keep living for Jesus as you beautifully do.

In Christ,

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Pastor Faron