

Sunday 1st March 2026

2 Corinthians 8 v 1 – 14

Way in...

Other than a special occasion, i.e. a birthday, Christmas, anniversary etc. tell of the last time you:

Gave a gift?

Received a gift?

Tell of a special gift you received, not necessarily the most expensive, but special / meaningful.

Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 8 v 1 – 14

The collection for the Lord's people

8 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵And they exceeded our expectations: they gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷But since you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you^[a] – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

⁸I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹For 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.

¹⁰And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. ¹¹Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. ¹²For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

¹³ Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴ At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality.

1. If you had to describe what you think is on God's heart, what would you say?
2. When you read the text again, what do you think means when Paul said, 'they gave themselves first of all to the Lord', before they gave their resources?
3. Paul speaks about excelling in everything; 'in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in love' – how then does he connect this to include 'giving'?
4. What do you think Paul meant when he said he was 'not commanding' them to give, but wanted to 'test the sincerity of their love by comparing it with the earnestness of others'?
5. Read again verse 12 from our text; how does the previous question connect to the story Jesus told in Mark 12 v 38 – 44, of 'the widow's mite'?

One of the big themes of Scripture is the generosity of God and his desire or command for his people to reflect His heart and in turn be generous. For example:

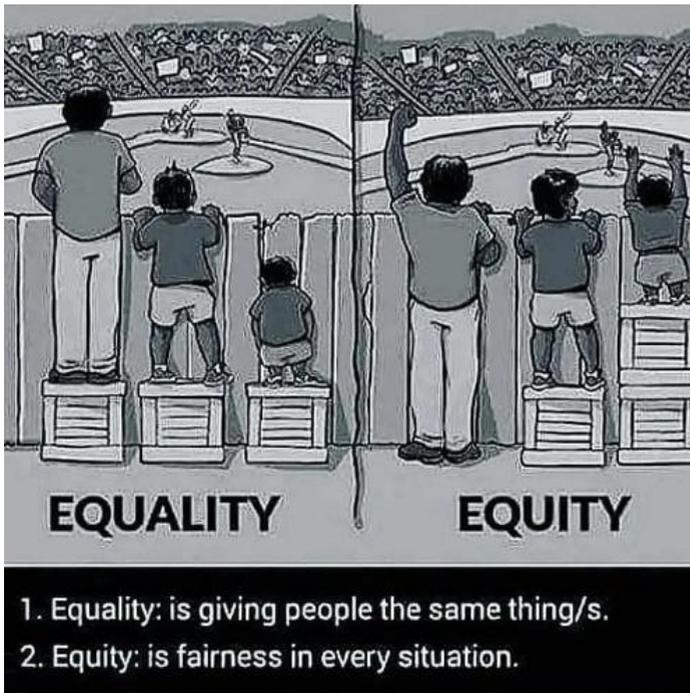
- Deuteronomy 10:18-19 says - ¹⁸ He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. ¹⁹ And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.
- Deuteronomy 24:19-21 says - ¹⁹ When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. ²¹ When you

harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again.
Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.

- Isaiah 1:17 - Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.
6. Can you think of other examples from both Old and New Testaments that also show this?
 7. What do you think these verses tell us about God?
 8. The Bible speaks of the 'widows, orphans and strangers', as people God has a heart for and who need the practical support of His people. Who would you say today are those who are in most need - the marginalised, within our community? Our country? The world?
 9. If we go back to Mark 12 v 38 -44 Jesus appears to have a different response to those who should know the heart of God against those who reflect the heart of God. Does that have anything to say to the UK Church / Salvation Army in terms of priorities?
- Belonging to the Salvation Army means we are part of something bigger than what we see and experience every week. The videos give an insight to what it means to be Salvation Army in another culture. What did you learn / notice from watching this year's Self Denial videos?
 - Also, the fact that Self Denial happens around the Army world in every setting unifies us all – everyone is part of this opportunity to give. When we think about some of the countries the Army works in, where there is extreme poverty, what does this say to us? Can it teach us anything?

Paul concludes the passage from 2 Corinthians 8 v14 with these words, 'the goal is equality'.

- What does the illustration below say to you both in terms of your initial reaction and reflection as you consider the difference between 'equality and equity'?



The presenter of the Self-Denial videos, Lieutenant Renno Rannamäe said in the final video, 'The more I help others, the more I try to help others, the more in some way it helps me to grow'. What do you think this has to say to us as individuals and as a church in this community?