DEVOTIONAL

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Generous Righteousness

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Day One

How do you define being rich and what would being rich in the gospel mean to you? This time of year, we think a lot about giving and generosity. Whether it is a charitable donation of money or time, a gift to a loved one or being generous by hosting family for a holiday meal these actions become richer when we consider the gospel.

Before the world knew Jesus, he was rich. Seated in the throne room at the right hand of God, his riches are not conceivable with the human mind. But: *You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that through his poverty might become rich* (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus gave up his riches in heaven to become a man. He came lowly and humble. He came to heal and serve. But, more than this, he came to suffer and die on the cross for our sins.

And, for those of us who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, this becomes the foundation of our riches. The riches we have as believers are spiritual riches bound up in promises in the gospel. He chose us, we are holy and blameless before him, and we are his beloved. We are redeemed, forgiven of our sins, receivers of the Holy Spirit, and lavished in his love. (Ephesians 1: 3-14) God did all this for our sake.

> *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

We could never earn this righteousness. It was generously given to us. God made us right with him through our faith in Jesus!

But what about this righteousness is rich? Proverbs 15:6 tells us that: *the house of the righteous contains great treasure.*

God's Word helps us understand that we are to follow Jesus' example of giving up his riches for our righteousness. In the house of the righteous there is great treasure!

What does this treasure look like to the rest of the world? As we look to the richness of the spiritual gifts we receive as believers in the gospel, how do we reflect 2 Corinthians 5:21 in our lives?

How can we think more about righteousness being the quality of being morally right, just, and aligned with what God declares to be good and true?

Day Two

Are you righteous or self-righteous? Balancing righteousness and self-righteousness sounds easier than it is for those of us who believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior! A constant reflection of Jesus himself becoming poor so that we could become rich can help, but what is the difference between the two?

Self-righteousness depends on measuring one's own goodness. As believers, we know we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) Are you measuring your own goodness like the Pharisee in Luke 18: 9-14? This man trusted in his own righteousness and looked at the tax collector with contempt. He thanks God for not being like the awful tax collector and recounts all the things he does in worship to God like fasting and tithing. All the while, he is judging the tax collector.

Unlike the Pharisee, the tax collector stands far off, lowering his eyes and crying out to God for mercy for his sins.

We surely have disappointed God in our work, and none of our self-righteous accounts can earn our way to forgiveness. Righteousness is wholly dependent on God's grace and our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Just as we have disappointed God, others have surely disappointed us from time to time. We can choose to be generous in extending grace when this happens.

Have you ever asked someone to complete a task, and it doesn't get done? What is your reaction to them? Are you angry? Or do you seek to understand why the work didn't get done? Maybe they tell you that they didn't understand the project but were too embarrassed to come back to ask questions. Perhaps they had a family emergency and could not complete the work on time.

Maybe you told a colleague something you thought was private and learned they shared the information with someone else.

Has a subordinate showed up to a meeting unprepared? You were expecting them to finish a presentation, and instead they wing it in front of a new customer.

How can you approach these situations? Asking questions is always better than making a statement. And extending grace can go a long way. How you respond in extending them grace matters and helps you reflect the underserved grace you have received from God.

Day Three

The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches, honor, and life. (Proverbs 22:4) Being righteous is about being aligned with what God declares to be good and being wholly dependent on God for his grace.

Thinking again about the differences between the Pharisee and the tax collector, we can look at the prideful, self-righteousness of the Pharisee and the humble posture of the tax collector. Self-righteousness produces pride. Humility reflects our Savior, Jesus, and with this comes riches, honor and life.

Pride shows up in some expected and unexpected ways at work. Are you resentful when you don't receive recognition? What about receiving feedback? Do you become defensive, explain away mistakes or make excuses? Do you compare yourself to others like the Pharisee did with the tax collector to the point where you are unable to celebrate someone else's success?

If you are a leader, are you delegating important work or keeping it to yourself so you can save the day? Are you a micromanager and require your team to check in too often? How do you treat others around you at work? Are you dismissive to those who aren't quite at your level or who do work different than yours? Has achievement become your primary identity, and you focus on influence and achievement to the point where resting feels unproductive?

I know this seems like a lot of self-reflection, but this is important if we want to give righteousness generously at work. The work of self-reflecting on our motivations can help us become more aware of pride when it starts to creep in. We need to reflect to understand both our motivations and our impact on our colleagues and subordinates.

Being in a humble posture does not mean that you shrink away, think less of yourself and never receive recognition, feel down about some feedback, or desire to achieve a new position at work. It does mean that we think about how we can best reflect our position as ambassadors of Christ at work knowing we can pursue excellence by working for the Lord and not focusing on our earthly position. (Colossians 3:23)

It may be as simple as giving credit to someone else for a job well done or receiving hard feedback and saying thank you for it! Perhaps you delegate important work to a subordinate who wants to grow professionally. When you hear someone speak poorly about someone else, how can you redirect the comments to be more positive?

Less of you—more of Jesus. Less of you—more of others.

Day Four

Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice (Proverbs 16:8). One of the ways we show generous righteousness is striving to seek justice within our work. This proverb tells us having a little and being righteous is far better than serving an injustice and being wealthy.

> *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God* (Micah 6:8).

Justice and kindness are paired here with humility and remember how we defined righteousness as doing what God declares to be good and true.

Most workplaces are set up to be just or fair and morally right. We have federal employment and pay laws and even professional standards built in for positions in law enforcement, medicine, law, or finance. Often reflected in a company's values, we find these guidelines built into codes of conduct and ethics and employee handbooks. Policies cover everything from workplace harassment to how to use things like electronic communication and company credit cards. But, as you know, just because it is written doesn't mean it is followed.

People often find ways to work around the written rules in an organization. One that has come up often is how companies follow internal opportunity posting processes and honor them. Recently, I was praying for one of the women in our Anchored prayer community as another manager was trying to block her employee from applying to work in her department. Not only did this leader need the position filled, but she felt the person applying was a perfect fit! The process took longer than expected but eventually the transfer was approved.

Have you ever seen someone take on a new role at your company that you didn't even hear about? Or, as a leader, have you had an employee taken from your department without any warning? It can be frustrating on either side of the equation. And it is one small injustice at work. Not providing people equal access to opportunity can lead to more problems than hurt feelings. In some cases, it may be seen as a form of discrimination, especially if protected classes are repeatedly left out. This can include race, sex, or even age!

Reporting an injustice whether a violation of a policy or harassment can also lead to more injustice in the form of retaliation. People should not be afraid to speak up. This is generous righteousness.

Looking to Jesus, we need to be bold to speak up for others that may be facing things beyond their control. Like he spoke up for the woman who was going to be stoned in John 8:1-11, we should speak up. As leaders and colleagues, we should follow processes set forth that ultimately work to create a more just workplace. Ultimately this honors God.

Day Five

One thing is certain, I know I can't do much good without God! I am thankful daily for my faith and the beautiful communities of believers I am blessed to be a part of. This includes all of you.

Righteousness recognizes a personal need for God and assumes no position of personal superiority. What does this look like? I like to think about it as being generous with my weakness. Simply stated, I rely on my Lord for all good things, and I want to let the people around me know.

Are you obedient to God even when there is a cost? This could look like saying no to telling a small lie about why something didn't get done on time, or it could be bigger. I once had someone offer to pay me if I raised their consulting fee higher! While extra would have been nice, it surely was dishonest and against what honors the Lord in my work. Cost can even look like leaving a job that doesn't align with your Christian values.

Are you faithful in your work even when it is difficult? Do you work with excellence as an expression to serving God? (Colossians 3:23) Difficult means different things to different believers. For one, it is taking a job below what they are qualified for to provide for their family. For another, it could mean working long hours to complete a project. And, for someone else, it could mean showing up even when you don't enjoy the actual work or feel like you don't have any colleagues you really get along with.

Whether it is being obedient or faithful, the key is showing up in a way that honors God so people around you may ask why you are different or how you continue to endure in what you are doing. Are you prepared for the answer? This is the most important part! Be honest about your reliance on God and be generous in giving him praise and honor for all things!

And, even if no one asks, you can still be generous with your praise! Praising God, even when things are hard honors him. Praying to God when you don't know what to do when things get difficult honors him. Admitting your reliance on him and your weakness honors him.

Remember, we can never earn righteousness. This amazing gift given to us by God is a call to us to reflect his goodness each day to bring him glory!