



CROOKWELL UNITING CHURCH

“To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known”

HOME PRAYER PACK FOR SEPTEMBER 2023

As we continue to worship from home, please find enclosed materials to assist.

If you are unsure where to start, perhaps the following is a useful guide (with thanks to *A Sermon For Every Sunday*):

- If you are with your spouse, partner, and/or family, gather around a table. If you are on your own, find a place that is quiet and comfortable.
- Light a candle to symbolise the presence of the Holy Spirit, and that you are entering sacred time.
- Start with a simple opening prayer, acknowledging that Jesus promised to come to wherever people gathered in His name.
- Read through the weekly readings, as outlined in our newsletter. If in a group, take turns on reading out loud to the group.
- Follow up with a discussion based on the readings.
- Enter into a time of prayer. This can be as simple as “What am I thankful for?” and “What am I concerned about?”

If you need a bible at home, please call the church on 4832 1026, and one can be provided. If you are interested, *Songs of Praise* airs on ABC TV at 11:30am each Sunday, and can also be watched any time at <https://iview.abc.net.au>

Stay safe. God bless.

**September 3, 2023**

John Van de Laar, *Connecting With Life*, "Sacredise"

The journey continues and this week, following on from God's gift of salvation, we encounter God's call for us to be agents of God's grace, compassion and love to the world. It's not easy. It will ask of us great sacrifice. But it also promises life for us and for our world, if we will but take up our crosses and follow Christ.

Worship will probably not be comfortable this week. May we thank God for God's call, and respond willingly and sacrificially, laying down our comforts, our needs, our preferences and even our lives to live as people of all-embracing love.

**READINGS:**

**Exodus 3:1-15:** Moses encounters God in a burning bush while feeding the flocks of his father-in-law, and is called to be God's messenger to tell Pharaoh to release God's people. When Moses asks for God's name, God tells him that he must say that "I Am" has sent him.  
OR **Jeremiah 15:15-21:** Jeremiah pleads with God to save him from his persecutors and to end his suffering, for which he can find no reason. God replies with the assurance that he will not be overcome, and that God will save him.

**Psalms 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c:** A song of instruction for God's people to praise God and to remember God's wonders when God made the Israelites greater than the Egyptians and sent Moses and Aaron to them.

OR **Psalms 26:1-8:** A plea for God to test the Psalmist and declare him innocent because he has not joined with the wicked and has remained faithful to God's love and truth.

**Romans 12:9-21:** Paul encourages the believers to be committed to a life of love for one another and even for enemies – seeking to bless and not curse, and to conquer evil with good.

**Matthew 16:21-28:** Jesus tells the disciples about his coming death to which Peter responds with a rebuke. Jesus in turn corrects Peter and calls the disciples to take up their crosses, to follow Jesus (in his suffering) and to give their lives in order to save their souls.

**REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

What does God's call mean for us? What can we expect when we receive God's call? These are the questions at the heart of this week's Lectionary, and they flow beautifully out of last week's challenge. If you are following the Moses readings, the clear progression is from Moses' own personal salvation (last week) to his call to go back and save God's (and his) people, in spite of his fears, uncertainties and the struggles which will come (this week). If your focus is the Gospel, the movement is from Peter's declaration of who Jesus is, and, the

foundations of Church in bringing Christ to the world (last week) to Jesus' embrace of the cross and call for us to follow (this week). Jeremiah's plea for God's vindication echoes Jesus' own suffering in spite of his innocence, and the Romans reading supports both the Gospel and the Moses story as it calls God's people to live in love for one another & for enemies, giving themselves for the well-being of others in practical ways. Finally, the Psalms both express praise for God's salvation and the plea for God to recognise the innocence of the Psalmist and God's people – even as Jesus suffered though innocent. So, what God may be wanting us to hear this week is that we are all called to follow Christ to be liberators of others, serving and loving all people, including our enemies, and that as we respond to this call we must be willing to lay our lives down and embrace the inevitable suffering and sacrifice that will come. Yet, even in the midst of this tough word is a light of hope. It is in this self-giving love that we find our 'souls' (our true, God-given selves) and we discover true, abundant life.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** In our pain-avoidant world, the idea that we should embrace sacrifice and suffering as a response to God's call sounds ridiculous. Yet, as we seek healing and sustainability in our world, we cannot but see the wisdom in this call. We may not be a Moses or a Jesus, but as each of us embrace our "calledness", we can have global impact in our own small way. But it will require us to release our places of privilege, to turn away from our consumer, accumulation mentality, and to embrace the sacrifice of simple living, of greater financial contribution (if we are among the more wealthy – which if you're reading this, you almost certainly are), and of personal willingness to relinquish comfort and luxury. We may find ourselves choosing to walk more or to ride a bicycle instead of using our cars as much. We may need to reduce our meat intake. We may need to allocate more of our income to giving and support of those with less. We may have to take stands in uncomfortable ways among our friends and families over issues like inclusion of the marginalised, and loving our enemies. It may mean choosing to give our vote to a difficult and unpopular cause. We may need to learn more about a foreign culture and seek to understand people we would normally consider "enemies". It may mean giving up on certain clothes, foodstuffs or sweets in order to ensure we don't participate in the oppression or slavery of others. One thing is certain, though: God's call will lead us to take our global citizenship seriously and to contribute sacrificially in whatever way we can to the healing of our world and its inhabitants. And as we as individuals and groups respond to God's call, we become part of a movement of grace, healing, love and sacrifice that has the power to really change things for the better.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** The old adage, "Think Globally, Act Locally" is relevant to today's message. The global healing that is required in our world today will come about as individuals and communities embrace the call to sacrifice and to "losing our lives" in our local settings. As we feed the hungry, clothe the naked and reconcile with our enemies, we contribute to a more compassionate, connected and whole world. As we give ourselves in small practical acts of love for one another and for those who are hurting, marginalised and

different from us, we help to bring equality, connectedness and peace to our world. It is a pity, when we recognise the difference that we can make to the world, that we have reduced the call of Christ to a passive one – waiting for a heavenly evacuation when we die. It is sad that we have made Christ’s message about little more than praying a prayer and joining an exclusive group in the wait for the afterlife. There is little impact on people’s lives and little sacrifice required of us when we approach our call in this way. We would do better to look around us at the people we worship with, live with and share a neighbourhood with, and see where we can give of ourselves – be it our time, our expertise, our financial resources, our friendship, our network, our forgiveness, our open-heartedness, our commitment to peace or our willingness to learn – and make a commitment to act in small, practical, loving ways – as Paul described – to serve them and bring life to them in whatever we can, even (or especially) when it hurts us to do so.

### **September 10, 2023**

John Van de Laar, *Connecting With Life*, “Sacredise”

Moving on from last week’s call to be agents of salvation, this week follows it up with a call to be those who confront evil – within ourselves, our communities and our world – which is, of course, a large part of what God’s salvation is about!

We face another challenging week of worship this week, as we face the darkness that must be transformed within us and our world. May we not shy away from this work, but worship courageously and go out to be people of love – even for our enemies.

#### **READINGS:**

**Exodus 12:1-14:** God gives Moses and Aaron the instructions for the Passover meal – for the animal that must be chosen, sacrificed and eaten, how it is to be prepared, and the way the Israelites must eat it, with urgency and ready to travel. The blood of the animal is to be placed on the doorposts of their homes so that the plague of death which comes on the Egyptians will not harm the Israelites.

OR **Ezekiel 33:7-11:** God instructs Ezekiel to be a watchman to Israel and to give the people God’s message that God does not delight in the destruction of the wicked, but wants all people to turn from wickedness and find life.

**Psalms 149:** An exhortation for God’s people to praise God both publicly (in the assembly) and privately (on their beds) and through their praises to proclaim and establish God’s reign and overcome wicked kings and nations (Note: The sword image is a metaphorical reference to the power of the praise expressed by God’s people, not a literal call to religious violence).

OR **Psalm 119:33-40**: A plea for God to teach the psalmist God's decrees and to foster love for God's laws in his heart.

**Romans 13:8-14**: Paul exhorts the believers to owe no debt to anyone except the ongoing debt of love, which fulfils the law. Because of the urgency of their hope, Paul encourages the believers to live pure lives, free from the dark deeds to which they may be tempted.

**Matthew 18:15-20**: Jesus teaches his followers a gracious process for making right with those who have hurt them – going first to the individual, then, if necessary, taking along a couple of witnesses, and finally, taking the matter to the church. Then he encourages his followers to agree, for in doing so, they find power in prayer and Christ's presence in their gathering.

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

After the last few weeks in which we have explored God's salvation and our call to share it with the world, we come this week to the challenging issue of confronting evil, which is an inevitable result of our commitment to bringing God's reign into visible manifestation in our world. The Moses story leaps forward from Moses' call, to the final result of Pharaoh's failure to negotiate the Israelites' freedom – the judgement of the Egyptians and the rescue of the Israelites. Paul encourages God's people to go further than those of Moses' time by loving all people and seeking to live pure lives even in the face of wickedness. Jesus, on the other hand, brings the confrontation right into the gathering of believers, making it clear that we will face conflict and injustice inside the church as well as outside of it. Finally, the Psalms support this theme in their challenge to praise God both privately and publicly and in so doing manifest God's reign in our lives and world ([Psalm 149](#)) and in the plea for God's laws to guide our lives and for God to nurture love for God's ways in our hearts ([Psalm 119](#)). So, we are challenged this week to confront evil – within ourselves, in our communities and in the world – and overcome it with praise of God and in living lives filled with and expressing God's love.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** Overcoming evil with good – the good of love – is a seemingly naïve approach to injustice in our world, yet there are so many powerful examples of people who did exactly this. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Mother Teresa – the list is long and challenging. There is much evil to be confronted in our world – this goes without saying – and it takes strength and boldness to stand against it. But, as Henri Nouwen said, "If, in order to overcome the beast, we in turn become the beast, the beast has won." Herein lies the problem of Christians who take on a dominating and aggressive view of Christian influence in the world – seeking to overcome terrorism through war, violence and "shock and awe" tactics, seeking to overcome the structures of wealth and power that lead to poverty and oppression through argument, slander, corporate warfare and public attack, seeking to stop abortion by killing those who practice it, or seeking to "protect" heterosexual marriage by attacking gay marriage. In all of these

situations, our actions are not those of love, or of Christlike goodness, but are those of the very systems we seek to change. We cannot bring peace by declaring war, we cannot heal poverty by destroying the rich, or empower the weak by disempowering the strong. We cannot protect our children by killing adults, or bring security to our nation by embracing violence against the violent. We cannot protect “our” relationships by undermining those of others (irrespective of how we may feel about the morality of those relationships). No, as we seek to bring peace, justice, community, equality and responsibility into our world, we must embody the principles we preach, by loving those we oppose and seeking their well-being as well as our own and that of those we defend. And, lest we fall prey to “us and them” thinking, let us heed the challenge of Jesus to face the conflicts and disagreements we have in the Church with grace, love and compassion, even as we stand strongly against the evil that lives within us and within our brothers and sisters. It is not an easy task, nor, usually, a pleasant one, but the Gospel’s call is both an invitation and a confrontation, and our journey into Christ-likeness is about learning to embrace and proclaim both of these elements even as Jesus did.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** It is a sorry state, and a massive blow to our witness for Christ, when Christians point fingers at one another, argue with one another, and treat one another with disdain and violence. It is a sorry state, and a massive blow to our witness for Christ, when Christians “circle the wagons” and throw accusations and aggressive words out at those we disagree with. In both cases we are only projecting our own evil outward, and in both cases we have abandoned the example and the teaching of Christ as we seek to confront evil in the world. As a friend once said, “The problem with the Church is not that it has a dark side. The problem with the Church is that it tries to deny that it has a dark side.” But, when we can face the evil within us – both as individuals and communities – honestly and with a true desire to change, evil is overcome. In the same way, when we can confront the evil we see in others with a genuine love for them and a concern for their well-being and that of the community in which they live and work, we will find that evil can be overcome. Sometimes, as Moses found with Pharaoh, and as so many people through history found, this loving confrontation will require us to be strong and to embrace suffering, pain and possibly even death at the hands of those we seek to lovingly confront. But, if we choose to abandon the way of love and become like the evil we seek to address, we have become part of the evil, rather than a solution to it. This is as true of calling “sinners” to repentance, as it is of facing criminals, abusers or addicts. Judging others never brings change. Loving them enough to enable them to see their own goodness and nobility and desire to live into it, does. Our calling is hard, sacrificial and will often cost us dearly. But, this is the work of Ezekiel’s watchman (or woman), and of Paul’s encouragement for us to live pure and loving lives.

**September 17, 2023**

John Van de Laar, *Connecting With Life, "Sacredise"*

This week we will be asked to listen to the tough, but life-giving Gospel message of forgiveness. In a world of conflict, terrorism, and serious inequalities the idea of forgiveness can sound naive. But without forgiveness, we doom ourselves to repeating cycles of violence, division and scapegoating of one another.

May our worship challenge us to move away from seeking to end violence through violence, and lead us into the path of forgiveness which alone can bring peace and healing.

**READINGS:**

**Exodus 14:19-31:** Moses stretches his hands over the sea and it opens a path for the Israelites to walk on dry ground. Then, as the sun rises and all the people have crossed, he stretches his hands over the sea again, and the waters return to their place, drowning the armies of Egypt.

OR **Genesis 50:15-21:** When Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers, afraid that he might now exact retribution from them, tell him that Jacob asked him to forgive them. Joseph, weeping, assures them that he does not hold their actions against them, and that God brought good out of their sinful acts.

**Psalms 114:** A celebration of the earth's response to God's mighty acts, and a call for the earth to tremble before God.

OR **Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21:** The song of victory and praise that Moses sang after the liberation of the Israelites.

OR **Psalms 103:(1-7), 8-13:** A song of thanksgiving and praise, inviting worshippers to remember God's mighty deeds, God's grace and forgiveness, and God's love and compassion.

**Romans 14:1-12:** Each believer works out how faith is to be lived for themselves and must decide between them and God how to practice their faith. Therefore, as people of faith we are not to judge one another, but to celebrate each one's commitment to living out their faith before God.

**Matthew 18:21-35:** Jesus tells a story about a man who is forgiven a huge debt, but then refuses a small debt which is owed to him. When the master, to whom he owed his debt, hears about it, he is angry that the man did not show others the same mercy he received, and he instructs that the man be imprisoned until he has paid back his debt in full.

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

After last week's confrontation with evil, this week's emphasis is both surprising and elegant – the focus on forgiveness is clear in the readings and is the only appropriate response to evil if we are not to become what we oppose. The parable of the unforgiving servant is the centre around which all of the other readings rotate. The related Old Testament reading moves into territory that the continuous readings were covering a few weeks ago – the story of Joseph and his brothers. In this case, though, the focus is on Joseph's forgiveness of them. Psalm 103 picks up this theme with a celebration of God's forgiveness and grace, while in Romans we approach the subject from a different angle – that of not judging those who express their faith and live out the daily ramifications of faith differently from us. The connections in these readings are all very clear. The continuous Old Testament reading (Exodus 14), and the related Psalms (Exodus 15 & Psalm 114) seem to have the exact opposite message here, though. Pharaoh and the Egyptians have offended God and enslaved God's people and the response seems to hold no forgiveness at all. Rather, there is judgement, death and the celebration of the death of the enemy. On the one hand, this need not trouble us – the continuous readings are meant to be a separate focus, and don't have to be fitted into the other readings. However, on the other hand, there is a wonderful opportunity in this contrast. If nothing else, it demonstrates how Jesus changed things, and how important it is not to lift stories like the Exodus out of their context and make them directive for us today. Rather than adopt a Mosaic attitude of violence and judgement against enemies, and a celebration of their demise, Jesus invites us to a different response to those who hurt us – the response of forgiveness and relinquishing of judgement, and of ending the cycle of violence and retribution and choosing to actively seek peace through the tough, but healing act of forgiveness.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** How are the words "peace" and "forgiveness" relevant in a world of war, crime, corruption and religious conflict? Last week's focus on resisting evil raises the challenge of how to stand against injustice and destruction without becoming what we resist. This week provides a strong answer to that challenge. In the last few months the world has seen war, terrorism and judgement on a massive scale. But, perhaps more disturbing, has been the discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping, vengefulness and violence breeding more violence that has followed close behind. In the face of all this, the call to forgive is more than just a call to deal with hurt feelings. It is a radical call for peacemaking, for ending the cycle of violence, and for refusing to exact retribution even on those who hurt us. Further, this week's readings call us to re-examine how we view God (through Mosaic eyes, as a violent overlord, or, through the eyes of Christ as a non-violent peacemaker), how we view other people of faith (refusing to impose our practices and conscience on others, but giving them the freedom to find and follow God according to their own conscience – or, perhaps, even religion) and how we view ourselves (not just as those who are hurt – like the indebted servant – but as those who are capable of hurting others – as the servant did to his debtor; not just as those who must give forgiveness, but also as those who must receive it). This call for forgiveness goes against our angry, human quest for "justice" and "retribution", it does not satisfy or heal us of the deep wounds that enemies have inflicted on us. But, it does ensure that we do not make the hurt worse, for ourselves



or others or for our world. It does ensure that healing can come. And it does challenge us to take the difficult, but transforming call of the Gospel seriously. I pray that we have the courage to proclaim this in our worship this week.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** The work of forgiveness, on an individual and community level is easy to speak about – and we often do in the Church. It is less easy to put into practice, it seems. It is disturbing when Christians are seen to act in ways that are anything but forgiving – burning the sacred books of other faiths, calling natural disasters God’s judgement on certain groups of people we disagree with, preaching judgement as if we are God’s agents and have the right to choose who is “in” and who is “out”. When we do this, we are not reflecting the Reign of God, and we are not proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather, we have become part of the imperialistic, violent system that brings so much hurt into the world. The same is true when men use the Bible to suppress and control their wives, or when parents use God as a whip to keep their children in line. The same is true, whenever Christians in dispute with one another, or with others, turn to violent words or actions, and adopt methods that create more destruction in our world and communities. Into all of this – all of the ways in which our differences and brokenness result in conflict and pain – Jesus invites us into the difficult, but life-giving, peace-making and healing work of forgiveness. The challenge is whether we are prepared to release our need to be “right” and our need for “justice” and “retribution”. In the end, the “justice” we seek is not true justice at all. It is just a feeble attempt to balance the scales in our favour. But, the result is always a cycle of more pain. And so, once again, as hard as it is, we are faced with the shocking, but unrelenting call of the crucified one to follow his example, and offer forgiveness even to those whom we may feel don’t deserve it.

**September 24, 2023**

John Van de Laar, *Connecting With Life*, "Sacredise"

If we did the work of last week well, we will find ourselves in a place of tremendous comfort, celebration and challenge this week. After reflecting on the difficult work of forgiveness, especially in the light of the significant moment of memory last week, we now move beyond just forgiveness, into the recognition that God seeks the best for us, and that we are called to actively seek the best for others. This generosity must work itself out in how we view and treat others, in how we use and share our resources, and in how we engage in the struggle for equity and justice in our world.

May our worship this week lead us deeper into God's generosity and lead us deeper into lives of generous grace.

**READINGS:**

**Exodus 16:2-15:** The Israelites complain that Moses has brought them out into the desert to die because they have no food. But God tells Moses to inform the people that God has heard their complaints and will send them food. Then, in the evening, quails fill the camp, and in the morning manna covers the ground.

OR **Jonah 3:10-4:11:** When the people of Nineveh repent because of Jonah's preaching, Jonah gets upset and finds a place outside of the city to brood. Then God provides a plant to grow and shield him one day, and a worm to destroy the plant the next, using this to confront Jonah about his anger at God's compassion.

**Psalms 105:1-6, 37-45:** A celebration of God's action on behalf of the Israelites, remembering God's provision of manna and quail in the wilderness.

OR **Psalms 145:1-8:** A psalm of praise for God's greatness, God's mighty acts that will be told from one generation to the next, and God's compassion, mercy and forgiveness.

**Philippians 1:21-30:** Paul reflects on how he is united with Christ whether he is alive or dead, but how he is convinced that he must remain in order to keep serving God's people. Then he encourages them to continue to live in ways that reflect God's reign, even when it results in suffering.

**Matthew 20:1-16:** Jesus tells a story about an employer who hires workers throughout the day, but pays them all the same at the end. When those who started at the beginning of the day complain, he challenges them, asking whether they resent his generosity to others. This story leads Jesus into his famous words about the first being last and the last first.

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

The central theme, that flows through all of this week's readings, is a simple one – God is compassionate and merciful, generous and forgiving. This is a fitting response to last week's focus on forgiveness, because we must recognise, if we are to take Christ's message seriously, that God seeks the best for people, and that God encourages us to do the same – which takes us beyond just forgiveness into a life of seeking the blessing of others. Jesus' parable demonstrates God's generosity and challenges us not to resent generosity shown to others, but to rejoice in it. Paul is a living example of this since, though he expressed his desire to come to his life's end and go to be with Christ, he was willing to continue to suffer and serve for the sake of the Philippian church which he had founded. Both Psalms celebrate God's generous goodness to God's people with Psalm 105 (which we have encountered before in the last few weeks) connecting with the continuous Old Testament reading (Exodus) in which God provides food for the Israelites in the wilderness in spite of their doubt and complaining. Psalm 145, celebrates, among God's mighty acts, God's forgiveness and the blessing God gives to God's people. Finally, Jonah is a mirror for us showing how bitter we can easily become when God shows mercy and generosity to others, and how easily we become ungrateful for what we have enjoyed, especially when we fall into a feeling of entitlement. The challenge of this week, then, is to learn to appreciate what we have received from our generous God, while celebrating God's generosity to others. This applies, most especially, to God's mercy and forgiveness and the welcome God gives to all people to share in God's reign.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** There are two ways this week's readings challenge us, as followers of Christ, on a global scale. The first relates to how we understand our faith, and our place in God's grace and generosity, in a multi-faith world. It is common for Christians to adopt a rather ungenerous view of people who are not "part of us", stating categorically that God's mercy and grace cannot extend to them unless they join our religion. It's like we've taken the message of God's grace and invitation and turned it into a message of "Christianity is the only way", which is not what the Scriptures say. It's like we want to determine who God can show generosity to and who not (like the first workers in the parable). But, all of the readings challenge us because they show radical, sacrificial generosity to those who don't deserve it – the complaining Israelites, the late-coming workers. Even Paul's self-giving for the Philippians falls into this category, although they may be considered 'deserving'. The second way in which we are challenged is in the practical use of the world's resources and how they are shared and distributed in the world. It is common for us to hoard our wealth for ourselves and share it only with our "allies" or those from whom we expect to receive something in return. It is also common for us to deny adequate resources to those with whom we disagree or from whom we can gain nothing. Because of this the world's resources, which are more than adequate to address the needs of the entire planet's population (our God is a generous God!) are not equitably shared, with the few enjoying more than they need, and the vast majority living with great lack and need. In the light of God's generosity, we cannot help but be challenged to change how resources are shared. In my home, South Africa, this is a particularly stark issue, because we have among the largest gaps in the world between rich and poor. Perhaps it's time for Christ followers to be more

vocal and visible about embracing lifestyles of simplicity and sharing, and of voting and lobbying for an end to unfair trade subsidies and regulations, rampant and unregulated globalisation, and exploitation of workers and suppliers in countries where they do not have the political clout to ensure that they receive fair recompense for their work and resources. Buying fair trade, reducing our consumption and unnecessary waste, and contributing to respected and effective aid organisations are all ways of participating in sharing God's generosity with all.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** It is disturbing the way in which God's generosity has been defined in many of our churches today. In a rather Old Testament view of things, we have made "health, wealth and happiness" equal to God's blessing, and sickness, poverty and suffering to be a sign of God's curse. Jesus consistently challenged this view in his day, and as Christ's followers we need to as well. This means we need to change both our understanding of God's generosity and our practices of giving, sharing and celebrating. First, we need to recognise that those who are "blessed" receive blessing not for themselves, but for all – in order to share. Neither wealth nor poverty are signs of God's approval or lack thereof. They are simply realities of the world and of life. But, they are also an opportunity to express the principles of grace and generosity that characterise God's reign. Second, we need to move from our individualistic view of the world, to a more community-oriented one. There are always people, in any community or family, who are effective at accumulating wealth, and the onus is on them to share and support those who do important and necessary work (or are unable to work for whatever legitimate reason). In this way we become a source of God's generosity to one another. But, it also goes further than the practicalities of economic realities. God's generosity is also extended as an inclusivity to all people, even those who may appear, in our idea of "fairness" not to deserve it. This means that as we encounter those who work differently, live differently, believe differently and behave differently we are called, rather than to a position of judgement, to a position of generosity and kindness. If we can be generous with grace, with forgiveness, with seeking the best for others, and with welcoming all people into God's community, we will find that we, almost automatically, begin to be generous with other things, including material wealth. And through our generosity, God's generosity is manifest in our communities and our world.