

## Fall 2007 Sermon Series: A Season of Generosity

In the past months we have been using the book of Acts in our on-going conversation about the “missional” church. In the book of Acts, we have the kingdom promised by Jesus demonstrated as his followers move out from Jerusalem, into Judea, and ultimately into all the parts of the known world. They demonstrated a way of *shalom* – peace with God and with each other. They relinquished ownership of their possessions and shared with others as their narrow understanding of being blessed and chosen by God was broadened to include being a blessing to all nations. The visible results were generous hearts and scenes of joyful meals. Those normally thought to be outside of God’s blessing – the physically disabled, the socially unacceptable, the sinners, and the gentiles – were invited in.

As the Holy Spirit brought new insight – eyes and ears were opened and hearts were healed by the transforming love and grace of God. The new followers of Jesus were empowered to speak to the structures of religious and social power, bringing the message of God’s blessing to all through Jesus. Everyday they were called to “reorient” ourselves to the ways of God’s kingdom and invest in the ways that make for *shalom*. There was no formula, however new ground was being laid.

It is no different for us today as it was for those early followers. We are called to daily “reorient” ourselves to the ways that make for *shalom* in our relationships, in our neighborhood and in our world. We are called to relinquish our privilege – whether our possessions or our power – and accept responsibility to bring about God’s kingdom. We are blessed to be a blessing to others. In light of this call, we must ask, “What does that mean for us today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?”

There are many areas and themes we could examine, but in the seven weeks leading up to Advent we will be exploring the themes of generosity, stewardship and simplicity in our sermons. Scripture claims a correlation between our treasures and our hearts, and in our affluent society we can accumulate a lot of treasure. So, in view of kingdom values, how can we swim against the tide of material consumption? Can we resolve the conflict between the desire to make and spend money and the desire for a simple life; are there alternatives to the “busyness” and fast past of life? What is generosity, and how can we cultivate that spirit in us? Does contentment exist?

To promote deeper conversation on our sermon themes, two small groups will be offered using the Voluntary Simplicity course materials from the [Northwest Earth Institute](#). Jody Jones will facilitate the Wednesday evening group beginning October 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:45pm and the Sunday morning group will meet during the education hour at 9:30am. The course materials will be available for purchase for \$9.00 and contain a collection of thought provoking articles to be read prior to the group meeting.

For more information please look for the information in the church foyer or email Lynn at [lynn@northvalleyfriends.org](mailto:lynn@northvalleyfriends.org)