Sermon Summary – Sunday 18 June 2023

LEARNING TO RECEIVE (Calven Celliers)

Read Galatians 6:2 – The problem which results in the way most, *if not all of us*, read that Scripture, is that there's a tendency to read it from a very biased, and skewed point of view: that we are to carry burdens for others. Carrying burdens for others, coming alongside others in their struggles, loving and caring for others who are going through a tough season is something which we are supposed to do as Christ-followers. God designed us, built us, and intends for us to lend our strength to others, to those who need it. Unfortunately, few read that Scripture from the other side, which is of course that we must allow others to carry *our* burdens too.

The very thought makes most of us shift somewhat uncomfortably in our seats, because as grateful as we are for any help being offered, learning to receive stretches us far more than our offer to give and normally reveals some stuff tucked away in our hearts that needs to be dealt with. When people love us and generously offer to either do for us or give to us, we usually bump up against pride in our heart! And if you struggle to let people help you, then you need to deal with your pride, because as James warns us in James 4:6, pride sets us up in opposition to God – **Read James 4:6.**

Learning to receive means that you and I need to be transparent, and in that vulnerability, we needed to accept, with grace, the love that is being tangibly offered. We can't ask God to meet a need and then let pride hinder the way He meets it!

Consider what the apostle Paul was getting at when he said that if we carry one another's burdens then we are in fact fulfilling the law of Christ. Scripture is full of all kinds of laws, but there is one law that sums up and trumps them all: the law of Christ. **Read Mark 12:28 – 31.** Love God and love people! That's the law of Christ, and we fulfil this law when we choose to come alongside and help carry the burdens of the people around us, and the same can be said when we reverse the process and humble ourselves and allow those around us to come alongside and help us carry our burdens.

Letting others help us is hard, but looking at Scripture, it's clear that God wants us to acknowledge our need, not hide from it. And so, I want to share some truths with you that will hopefully soften your hearts and help you be more open to those around you.

Firstly, needing help has always been part of God's plan for us. Sometimes we avoid asking for help out of fear that it admits weakness. We think, we should be able to handle this on my own, but that's pride – **Read Proverbs 16:18.** Pride in the context of this verse refers to an arrogant attitude that manifests itself as independence and contrasts strikingly with humility.

The meaning of the passage is clear-cut: pride leads to humiliation. To choose pride is to set oneself up for a fall. Terms like destruction, fall, disaster, ruin, and downfall in these passages can be understood as a punishment or discipline meted out to the proud in order to humble them. God never wants to humiliate us. But He does want us to exercise humility. Biblical humility is not hanging my head in embarrassment, shame or weakness. Biblical humility is being empty of self. It's the opposite of pride, where I'm full of self. They cannot co-exist, and so we need to deal with this issue of pride that may very well be hindering you from receiving all that God has for you.

Consider these two or three practical applications that will go a long way in helping you overcome the hurdle of pride.

Any counsellor will tell you that the first step in overcoming a problem is **acknowledging that there is a problem**. If you are human, it is more than likely you struggle with pride. Take a long, hard, honest look at yourself and your attitude. Ask God to show you, to reveal to you if there is any pride in your life that may be a stumbling block in your path. In Psalm 139, King David speaks about the fact that God is familiar with all of our ways. Spend a moment asking Him to search your heart – **Read Psalm 139: 23 & 24.**

If God reveals to you that there is pride lurking in your heart, not only should you confess it, but on a very practical level, you need to **take deliberate steps to dent your pride**. Let people in! If someone offers to help you, let them. If you need help, ask. If you find yourself constantly making choices that will protect your pride, make a conscious effort and choice to do the exact opposite. Don't ever let pride cause you to be in a battle with your will against God's will. Humble yourself, submit yourself to God

And then lastly, **guard your heart against pride through prayer.** Be open, honest and authentic with God in prayer. There is no magic formula for saying a prayer. God hears an honest plea. Just be open with God and talk to Him about anything and everything. Be honest with Him about your feelings, your struggles, your situation.

And face up to the reality that God created us with a need for help. Asking for help isn't admitting to failure or weakness, it's simply recognising the way that God made us. Even before the fall of man, God created Adam to be receptive to help as opposed to being self-sufficient. God provided all of Adam's material needs.

God provided fellowship for Adam through His own presence. But God also created Adam with a need of help to be met through another person – **Read Genesis 2:18.** Have you ever considered that God built into you and I a need for help, from the very beginning of time? And then He fulfilled that need by surrounding us with other people. God created human beings to both give and receive help. It seems to me that it has always been God's design for us to not only give help to each other, but also to need help from one another.

Secondly, **asking for help is a blessing to others.** Now this is where the devil has a field day deceiving many Christians. Many, many people resist asking others for help for fear of being a burden or inconvenience. When all you're really doing is denying people the chance to bless and be blessed. You see when you ask someone to help you carry a burden, to help you, to assist you, to lend you a hand, what you are really doing is affording them an opportunity to serve God by serving you, and in this way sharing Christ's love. Isn't that what giving and receiving really is? It's a transaction of love. One person generously showing love, and one graciously receiving love through vulnerability and an open heart. The question that remains in my mind then, is why on earth would you ever want to deny anyone you know, and especially anyone you love, a blessing?

In closing I would like the opportunity to speak into any leadership roles. I learnt as a pastor that God created each of us in the body of Christ with different strengths, calling us to use our strengths fully to glorify Him and build up others. Mervyn taught me when I first came into ministry that the art of leadership is delegation. And that doesn't mean that you pass the buck and bark orders, it means that you play into other people's strengths. That's a great leadership quality. Weak, insecure leaders try and do everything themselves. Leaders need to have a humble estimation of themselves, and to face up to their weaknesses in certain areas; it's wise to give someone who is strong in an area,

where you might not excel, an opportunity to exercise their God-given strengths. By playing into each other's strengths, by asking for help, I believe we are honouring Gods purpose in gifting us differently, and we also honour each other by giving each other opportunities to use our gifts and strengths.

"[2] Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2[NIV])

Love God, love people, AND LET PEOPLE LOVE YOU!