

## Reaping God's Generosity

**[Jesus said,] “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius”** (Matthew 20:9).

**Scripture:** Matthew 20:1-16

**Song:** “God Is So Good”

I was not raised in a religious home. I don't recall my parents ever taking me to church. But when I was in sixth grade, a friend invited me to her church. For the next year, my life revolved around that church. Then my family moved two states away to be closer to my older brother. The new friends I made did not invite me to church, and faith became a distant memory. I didn't find God again until my early twenties, and I only truly began spending time with Jesus and studying His Word in my early thirties.

I sometimes feel like those workers in today's passage who were hired late in the day, and I'm grateful to reap the benefits of God's generosity. God grants salvation to all who come to Jesus at whatever stage of life they may be.

God knows before we are born the path each believer will take to find faith in Him. Whether we come to know Him from early childhood or not until our twilight years, God calls us to work in His kingdom, and He rewards us with grace and eternal life.

**Father,** thank You for Your generosity with the greatest gift ever. Lead me to someone who needs to hear about You today. In Jesus' name, amen.

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February 10–16. **Linda L. Kruschke** lives in Oregon with her husband of 37 years. She enjoys flower gardening, cooking, writing poetry, and having their adult son over for dinner.

## Sharing with the Needy

**Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all. . . . The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor** (Proverbs 22:2, 9).

**Scripture:** Proverbs 22:1-9

**Song:** “Make Me a Blessing”

My son, Benton, attended art school in downtown Portland, Oregon, commuting by bus each day from our sheltered suburb. Many times, as he walked from the bus stop to campus, homeless people would approach him and ask for spare change. On one such occasion, Benton offered to buy a disheveled man with a kind face some lunch from a nearby food truck. They sat down to share a meal and conversation.

God honors the generous heart. He calls His people to give to others out of the blessing He has bestowed on us. Jesus once said that we will always have the poor among us (John 12:8); there will always be those who need something to eat. Throughout Scripture, God commands His people to look after the less fortunate, the orphans and widows, the homeless and downtrodden.

None of us can eliminate poverty in this broken world. But we can each ease the physical and relational needs of a hungry and lonely person we encounter along the way. As we show generosity in whatever way we are able, we will reap God’s spiritual blessing.

**Father,** help me to see those in need as You see them: as bearers of Your image. Give me a heart to care prayerfully and practically for those I encounter along my way. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Holding Fast to Faith

[Jesus said,] “Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man” (Luke 6:22).

**Scripture:** Luke 6:20-26

**Song:** “I’ll Fly Away”

In 1551, John Bradford was ministering at St. Paul’s Church in London, England. He preached the gospel and was imprisoned when what he taught conflicted with the official doctrine of the state church. A model prisoner, Bradford’s keepers trusted him to go unaccompanied to visit the sick because he always returned before the appointed time. Authorities offered to set him free if he would recant his beliefs, but he refused. He was eventually burned at the stake but not before sharing the Word of God with fellow prisoners as well as with the crowds who gathered at his execution.

Although his fate was cruel, Bradford was blessed with a congregation who loved him and visited him often in prison, as well as with a faith that conquered all fear. As a devoted servant of Christ, Bradford knew without a doubt that after his death he would enjoy fellowship with his Lord.

God’s Word promises eternal life to those who belong to Christ. Regardless of the trials we face in this earthly life—even if others hate and ridicule us for our faith—we stand secure in the promises of God, blessed by His presence in our lives now and forever.

**Father,** I look to You to hold my faith steady as I testify of You and Your gospel to those who may reject and despise me for it. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## The Impact of a Life

**Command [the wealthy] to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share** (1 Timothy 6:18).

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 6:17-21

**Song:** “I Love to Tell the Story”

Born into a wealthy English family, Arabella Katherine “Kate” Hankey (1834–1911) was rich in good deeds. She taught Bible classes and Sunday school to young working girls in London and visited sick people in the hospital. She provided financial support for missionary work and served as a missionary nurse herself. She also wrote Christian poetry and gospel tracts. The lyrics of her poem “Old, Old Story” were adapted for the popular hymn “I Love to Tell the Story.” If not for this, she may not be known to us today.

Kate Hankey demonstrated love for people near and far by bringing them the gospel story—the story she had been raised hearing and believing. Her life reminds us that the world’s standards of fame and success are not God’s standards. He calls us to be faithful to His command to love our neighbors—to be generous and willing to share what He has entrusted to us.

At times we may wonder if our lives are having an impact in God’s kingdom. We can be assured that as we faithfully love and serve Him by loving and serving others—especially by telling them the gospel story—His name is being exalted.

**Father**, as I fix my eyes on You today, I will leave behind concerns about ministry success and simply offer myself to serve You. All glory and honor belong to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## God to the Rescue!

**Hannah prayed and said: “. . . There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. . . . He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap” (1 Samuel 2:1-2, 8).**

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 2:1-10

**Song:** “A Shelter in the Time of Storm”

Born in Essex, England, Vernon J. Charlesworth (1839–1915) was a minister and hymn writer. One of his most beloved hymns is “A Shelter in the Time of Storm.” At the age of 30, he was appointed headmaster of the Charles Spurgeon Stowell Orphanage, a post he maintained until his death. The orphanage served as a shelter—a refuge from abuse for hundreds of parentless children who otherwise would have been sent to the poor house and used as slave labor. At the orphanage, these children were loved and cared for free of charge, and many were placed with Christian families, including the Charlesworths’.

In today’s passage, we hear Hannah’s heart of praise to God for bringing her relief from a storm of distress. As a barren wife, she had been mocked and shamed by her rival, but God had come to her rescue by giving her a son who would become a great prophet in Israel.

In this life, God is our sure refuge. No matter what storm may be buffeting us today, we can run to Him and find the shelter we need.

**Father,** as I hide myself today in Your comfort, provision, and strength, I’m grateful that You invite me into Your sheltering love. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Praise Now and Forever

**Praise the LORD, you his servants; praise the name of the LORD. Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore** (Psalm 113:1-2).

**Scripture:** Psalm 113

**Song:** “Doxology”

Christian tradition holds that the author of the book of James was among Jesus’ half-brothers. But Scripture reveals that Jesus’ brothers didn’t always believe in Him (John 7:3-5). Like many from Jesus’ hometown, Jesus’ brothers scoffed at His claim to be sent from God. But all that changed when James saw Jesus as the risen Christ. After Jesus’ resurrection, James became a pillar in the church and lived to make Jesus’ name and gospel known. His New Testament letter opens with these words: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1). From scoffer to servant—what a testimony!

Psalm 113, a song of praise, would certainly have been familiar to James. What a wonder it must have been to be singing this old, familiar song with a new understanding about the Messiah! James would later be killed for His testimony about Jesus, but no one can snuff out the praises that belong to our Lord for all time and eternity.

The risen Savior is worthy of all the praise of Heaven and earth. No one compares to His majesty as He is seated at the right hand of the God the Father. May His praise be on our lips today and every day.

**Father**, when I rise each morning and go about my day, I want to praise You, not only in song but also in how I live to serve You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Holding Grief and Joy

Jesus looked at [his disciples] and said, “. . . With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:16-30

**Song:** “God Will Make a Way”

I sat in her quiet hospital room as my sister Peggy breathed her last. I was thankful I had heeded advice to drop everything and go see her before it was too late. The next day on the three-hour drive home, tears blurred my vision, so I stopped at a rest area. My mind flashed to the birthday party I would be hosting in two days, a joyous occasion I had looked forward to for weeks. I struggled to hold my grief and my joy at the same time.

I called a dear friend, who is the best of listeners and always has good advice. She reminded me that though it is hard to hold conflicting emotions while honoring both, with God even this seemingly impossible feat is possible. Her godly encouragement helped me to live in the moment for a wonderful party.

God’s Word of truth and hope speaks to us in times of sorrow and in times of joy. In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul said we should “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15). Some days we are called to do both, and God gives us the grace and strength we need, if only we ask.

**Father,** when I am holding conflicting emotions, as I so often do, help me to trust that Your grace will uphold me and to remember that all things are possible with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.