

Title: Do unto others.  
James 3:13 – 4:10

Our epistle lesson commands us

*“<sup>3</sup>Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.”*

One of the visible ways we “show our works” is the way we help others, in particular, the way we help those in need. Take the homeless for example. West Covina has a homeless population of about 0.1%, about 140 people. LA County is 75K The Bible encourages us go to take care of the poor. But I started thinking.... Does giving money to the poor... no strings attached... really carry out God’s plan? “Maybe we should tell the poor.. ‘I’ll give you money if you come to church on Sunday.’”

How does just giving money to the poor further the kingdom of God? Well, in the Gospel of Matt chapter 25 verse 40, Jesus tells us:

*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ When the righteous say “when did we do these things?” Jesus answered them, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’*

So, when we do things for those who are down on their luck... when we help those who are poor.... when we help those in need,... we are serving Jesus himself. We are serving Jesus directly. And secondarily, whenever you do something to serve someone in need, whenever you help another in Jesus name... you serve God by being an active arm of God. So, if you decide to give to the poor, you further the kingdom of God, (not by tricking them to come to church,) but because you are serving Jesus. When you help the poor, in Jesus name, you are sharing God’s love comfort and hope with them. God loves all mankind. When you help another, you are caring for someone He loves very much.

Now some of us worry... If I give my money to the poor, they might just use it for drugs or alcohol or something bad. I think it is right and important that wherever we use the resources of the church, it must be done wisely. We are to be good stewards of the resources God brings to us. Yet at the same time, when Scripture commands us to give alms to the poor... it never says, give only to the deserving

needy. It just says... “give alms.” So, what does this mean? Does it matter if I just give freely without determining whether they will use the resources rightly?

I think that when it comes to “giving to the poor,” we should ask a different question. Knowing what I do, if that person were me... “what would I want from others?” If I was that person... if I was in the same situation... how would I want others treat me? You see, sometimes, money is not what I need. Sometimes what I need is an understanding word. Sometimes what I need is a word of acceptance. Sometimes what I need is a word of encouragement, one that will give me a vision that maybe things might get better. Helping others, even the homeless, may not be served best by just giving money.

You have all heard of the Golden Rule Do unto others as you want others do unto you. Did you know that that comes from the Bible? MATTHEW 7:12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. Treat others how you want to be treated. Do unto others as you want others do unto you. I had learned the Golden Rule, long before I found out that it came from the Bible. When I was young child in school we used to put on the golden glove [Show them the glove.] So, before we touch other people, before we handle other people we put on our golden gloves.

How important is it that I “do unto others as I would have them do unto me.” One reason would be that what goes around comes around. If I do good things to others, good will eventually come to me. If I do evil, eventually it will return to me.

But the Golden rule is more than just “what goes around comes around.” It is not just a rule for making MY life easy. It seeks transformation. Transformation of this world. There was a movie “Pay it forward” with Haley Joel Osment. In the movie, Trevor, a boy played by Osment is given a social studies assignment from his teacher. He is to find a way to change the world. Now most of the kids just satisfy the assignment by just doing a small project for the environment or to help people, or just doing something which helped the world in a small way. Trevor on the other hand, ponders on the project for a long time. He wants something that will have a great impact. His idea, his project – Pay it forward. Do something good for someone something that they can’t do for themselves, then ask that person to pay it forward. Do an act of kindness for someone, only to tell them: “Don’t pay me back – pay it forward. Find three other people and do something for them.” The movie shows how this project transforms the town they live in, in fact, its impact is felt across the nation.

The heart of the “Pay It Forward” project is the Golden Rule. It’s something Jesus thought of 2000 years ago. It’s something that can still change the world today. Jesus calls us to “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” Not only that but it implies... Don’t wait for them to do something for you. Take the initiative. When it comes to the needs of others, ask yourself “What would I want if I was in their place?” If God places it on your heart to give a gift to another in need - “do it.” If you have doubts, then just ask yourself, “is this what I would need if I was in their place?” If so... then “do it” That is how you will be furthering the Kingdom of God. You will serve Jesus by following the Golden Rule.

And like the project “Pay it forward,” serving Jesus by the Golden rule is more than just giving money. The Golden Rule... serving Jesus by serving others... is more than doing something which rescues a needy or homeless person, with a \$100 bill. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” extends out to all the actions of your daily life. In all interactions, ask yourself “what would I need if I was in their place?” I would really be encouraged by a nice compliment... then compliment someone! You need affirmation. Affirm someone! You appreciate tact? Be tactful! You want to be forgiven? Forgive! You feel hurt, wounded, broken and could stand a gentle touch? Be gentle with others! The Golden Rule can transform our actions. The Golden Rule can transform our world. Pay it forward.

The Golden Rule itself does not stand alone. It is important to note that the “Pay It Forward project” did not stand alone. You need someone to start the ball rolling. A person first needs to have something good done for them before they will pass a good deed along to another. That’s not all that different from our relationship to God. But our spiritual “Pay it forward” will not be started by us. We will be able to “pay it forward” because we first received from God. God sent His son, Jesus Christ, to die for us to do something for us that we could never do to be cleansed of our sins. He demonstrated ultimate love to us, And now Jesus asks us, in the Golden Rule, to simply “pay it forward.” Jesus commands us Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

When we were in Youth group there was a project called “R.A.K.” Random Acts of Kindness. Do something nice for someone without letting them know you did it. Do it in the name of Christ. Because if they did not know who did it for them, the only person they had left to thank was God. RAK Random Acts of Kindness.

In carrying out the Golden rule, there are many good deeds you can do, purposefully or just randomly. But the gift you pay forward is not just the deeds alone. When you do these deeds for others, in the name of Christ, you are combining them with a gift which surpasses all others. The greatest gift you can give is to share the love of Christ. It is the greatest gift because the source of that gift is not you. It is the greatest gift because the source of that gift is God.

There is a Christian music group Caedmon's Call. Their name comes from a seventh century story about a man named Caedmon, a man who could not sing. Whenever singing was required, he ran away. One day, after running away, he heard the voice of God telling him to sing. He said "No." Then the voice came again: "Sing." This time Caedmon opened his mouth, and to his surprise beautiful song came out. These songs were so beautiful that singers and songwriters from all around would try to imitate them. But no one could match the splendor and majesty. No one could match it because the songs Caedmon sang came as a gift from God.

Each and every one of you have a wonderful song to sing about Jesus Christ. It will be wonderful to sing because it comes from God. People who give to others... people who practice the Golden rule, people who pay it forward, tell me that not only is the gift a blessing the receiver but it has become a blessing to the giver. You will not know any greater joy, than giving freely to someone in need. There is such a blessing in being a giver. But it is even more than that.... It will be a wonderful song... because it comes from God. Your blessing in giving will be so much more powerful... because it comes not only from a generous heart... but ultimately comes from the heart of God. It is a gift from God to those he loves. Amen