

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin
November 19, 2017

Series: A Generous God Creates Generous People with a Generous Vision

A Generous God Creates GRU

1. Which Gru are you?
2. Live the GRU!

Luke 16:1-9

Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'

³ "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— ⁴ I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

⁵ "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

⁶ "Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied.

"The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.'

⁷ "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?'

"A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied.

"He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'

⁸ "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

For that dishonest manager, life was all about him. He had one goal... that he would be taken care of. And he used his master's resources to make sure that his goal was accomplished.

Gru from *Despicable Me* is my picture of the dishonest manager. Gru's goal was become to be world's greatest villain. Life was really all about him. All his little minions... their purpose was simply to serve him.



We laugh at that image of Gru and we can dismiss the dishonest manager. But just as there was an accounting in this parable, there is an accounting for us. There will be an accounting for our wasted Gru life.

We might dismiss this and easily say, “No, no! I don’t serve money. I serve God.” But what does the Apostle Paul write in Romans 7:7? “For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’”

The law of God reveals what we all might like to cover up... that there is still this sinful nature or sinful flesh living in every one of us. Coveting, being discontent with what God has given us... it is present in all of us. The selfishness that Eve showed in the Garden when she wanted to be like God has been passed down to all of us. Like the dishonest manager, like Gru, the goal of this part of us is “despicable me.” Life is all about me.

But today I invite you to celebrate that there is something new in you. Let’s look again at Romans 7. The Apostle Paul writes of the struggle that is going on in each of us:

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, **it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.**

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For **in my inner being I delight in God’s law;** ²³ but I see another law at work in me, **waging war against the law of my mind** and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin (Romans 7:14-25).

Look again at the phrases in bold. When the Holy Spirit works the miracle of faith in us, we become a split personality. We have to admit that sinful nature part of us... that despicable me part of me... is still there. I’ll have to make war against the greedy sinful nature, the fearful sinful nature, the selfish sinful nature.

But who is the “real you”? The “real you” wants to do God’s will. God writes his Law into our hearts so that what he wants is what we want.

So when the Holy Spirit brings you to faith in Jesus, he creates a new GRU... A Generous Real U! That is your real identity. Like the Father is generous, so you are generous!

Attached to this message (and in the Welcome Center) is a comparison of Psalms 111 and 112. The first describes the Generous God. The second describes the Generous Real U. I'd encourage you to look at the comparison this week and just celebrate this miracle that God has created you to be the new GRU!

In the parable of the dishonest manager, he is speaking to our GRU... our Generous Real U and inviting us to think about how we use our resources.

There was only one goal for that despicable dishonest servant. So also, there is really only one goal for us... A party! Jesus said we are to use worldly wealth so that when it is gone, we will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. In the chapter about the lost coin and the lost sheep and the lost son in the previous chapter, Jesus said, "There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). That sounds like a party to me.

This is our one GRU goal: More people enjoying the party in heaven.

So let's live the GRU. Let's live the life of the Generous Real U!

First of all the GRU's life is Christ's life. Paul said it so well in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

The Generous Real U approaches every day saying, "This isn't my life any more. This is Christ's life!" So what was the purpose of Christ's life? "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). That's the goal of the GRU life.

The GRU works for Christ. The GRU life recognizes that in our daily lives, we really aren't working for a paycheck or for a boss. We are working for Jesus (Ephesians 6:7). If he chooses to bless us and give us joy in our work, we'll be thankful (Ecclesiastes 5:18-20).

And ultimately, the GRU... the Generous Real U invests for Christ. That includes every penny we make and every possession. We have the same one goal as Jesus. He invested his entire life to save us. So let's invest our entire lives to save others.

So the GRU invests...

The devil wants you to think that God is saying that the Generous Real U shouldn't spend a dime on yourself. But that isn't what God's word says:

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who **richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment** (1 Timothy 6:17).

How does this fit the pattern of what Jesus said, “Use worldly wealth to make friends for yourselves so that when it is gone, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings”? God has given us things for our enjoyment. In the Old Testament, God commanded his people, “Take a day off.” Relax!

We can spend money on ourselves, not selfishly, but with a clear purpose. I am investing in myself because I need to be refreshed to attract people to the Savior. How many people are going to be attracted to Jesus if we look like we hate every minute of our lives? So enjoy yourself.

That investment in you will take different forms. For some this weekend, it is money spent on hunting. For others it is money spent on cars that look nice and dependable. For some of you it is the house you live in. For me, it is a chance to go and see things I’ve never seen and to spend time with my family.

That isn’t selfish... it is part of the GRU life... investing in yourself to be refreshed and eager to serve.

Invest in your family. Why buy things for your family? It isn’t just because they need clothes to wear or food to eat. Everything we spend on our family, when it comes from the GRU, will have this goal to make friends for eternity. I want to show God the Father’s love by the way I show love and care for my family. Invest money in your family with the goal to draw them to their generous God... so they can enjoy the party in heaven too.

Invest in your church others, especially your church family. The Apostle Paul encouraged the Christians in Galatia: “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10).

Our generosity to those in need... the Christmas Gift Tree in the lobby, the Food Pantry gifts that give a special meal to those in need at Thanksgiving and Christmas, our response to the needs of our extended family in Puerto Rico suffering from the effects of Hurricane Maria... all this is not simply to supply the physical needs of people. Our ultimate goal is that the GRU in each of us looks like our Generous Father in heaven and attracts others to him.

And finally, invest in a grand vision.

It is a pretty grand vision that Jesus gave to the apostles: “You shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). It is a grand vision that Jesus gave to John in Revelation 7 when he saw

“a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

That’s what you are a part of here at St. Paul’s. One by one, one family at a time, your generosity is allowing us to draw people closer to Christ. Let’s watch just one of those stories. (A video of David and Kristine Kwasinski)

Your generosity allowed us to use Bible study and The Bridge to bring David and Kristine closer to Christ. God has used your generosity to bring 300 children in our school system and 200 more in our youth ministries closer to Christ. This past month, God has used the Reformation series in our traditional services to draw half a dozen new people into the new membership class.

May the GRU in you invest every part of our lives with one goal in mind... the party in heaven. “Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” Amen.

prepared by Pastor Pete Panitzke
414-422-0320 ext. 122
ppanitzke@stpaulmuskego.org

My Personal Next Steps To “Live the GRU”

- Celebrate that the Generous Real U looks like your Generous God. Compare Psalm 111 (describing our Generous God) and Psalm 112 (describing the Generous Real U).
- Find Financial Peace with friends. On the Connection Card, indicate interest in the *Financial Peace* study that will be offered in January.
- Prepare to share Financial Peace with the next generation. On the Connection Card, indicate interest in *The Legacy Journey* study that will be offered in January.