

LIVING GENEROUSLY

a stewardship narrative series presented by TENS

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I have a friend at my local coffee shop who often wonders how I can read the paper every day. Much the same might be said of our biblical texts this week! Indeed, they ring many bells contained in the daily news of our world. Violence, loss, destruction, desolation, suffering, and injustice—all of these bring suffering, grief, incredible sadness, and tears. The stewardship theme before us, generous living, is mystifying in light of this. How, with all the loss and bad stuff of our world, can we live generously? Even to speak of generosity in such a context seems incongruous and unrealistic.

And then there's God! For some, in biblical and in contemporary times, there's not much evidence of God's presence. And this often creates anger, frustration, and lamentation. Yet our laments become prayers—calling for the community and for God to remember. In that remembering we recall and reaffirm our relationship with the One who takes away, and gives; who destroys, and creates; who visits retribution and justice on all, both us and our oppressors.

In the midst of all this bad stuff, in the context of our prayer, there is a move-



reflection questions

- What does our community of faith lament today?
- What, and where, do we remember and have hope?
- In the midst of lament, remembrance, and hope, what does living generously look like?

ment from lament to hope, from despair to trust, from frustration and fear to confidence. Calls and prayers for hope witness to something easily forgotten: that we have a relationship with God that can and will sustain in the most difficult of times. Yes, we will cry and lament and sometimes praise will be difficult to achieve. But we are called to live in that hope and that relationship—to live generously and faithfully—no matter what the world looks like, no matter how much we've earned and own, or how much we've lost.

When everything seems depressingly hopeless—in that time, through our tears and prayers, comes a realization that God is there, and that God is more than enough. For none of it is ours anyway, as our gospel lesson makes clear: “We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done.” To paraphrase another biblical writer: “If we treat gold as dust, then we'll come to understand that God is our gold.... We will have delight in God and we will have answered prayers.” And then, in light of and because of our rich relationship with God, we can, and will, live faithfully and generously.



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