**3 Small Steps – Get in the Habit**

Christian generosity isn’t merely a single act of giving; it is a lifestyle response to our generous God. These **3 Small Steps** focus on the phrase in the Bible, “as was his custom” and look at Biblical habits essential to a generous life, so embedded that they occur without a second thought.

**Step 1: Pray and Give Thanks.** (Daniel 6:10).From his youth, Daniel was in the habit of praying. As it had been a part of his lifestyle for so many years, when a difficult situation arose, he didn’t panic but got down on his knees to get an answer from God, “as was his custom”.

When you face challenges or testing times or hear a bad report - perhaps about the financial state of the church or a tower on the verge of collapse – what is your first response? Is it to run around shouting at those you think should have done something about it before? Or to complain that you don’t have the means to fix it? Or to speak negatively out of fear that the church will soon be gone? Or is it to do like Daniel, to give thanks to and call on the Creator of the universe to guide you to make the right decisions?

Daniel’s prayer was heard and answered, God’s name was honoured and glorified and the same can be your experience too.

**Step 2: Presence yourself.** (Luke 4:16). Jesus had many reasons to stay away from the weekly services. The religious leaders wanted to silence him, trick him and kill him. The Pharisees were more interested in their own standing and building their own kingdoms than they were in building God’s Kingdom. In short, Jesus did not see eye to eye with all of their practices! But, he had one very good reason to keep going, “as was his custom”. This was his Father’s house and he was about his Father’s business.

Are you about the Father’s business? Or do you pick and choose when to attend? When it suits you; when there is communion; when your favourite preacher is taking the service. All of these actions are reflective of a mind-set that says, “What’s in it for me?” Jesus was a giver. Knowing that his presence could bless others, his words could release them and his touch set them free, he disregarded his own comfort for the sake of others. Will you ask God to use you, next and every Sunday, to bring life and joy by your presence?

**Step 3: Proclaim the gospel.** (Acts 17:2). Like Jesus, Paul was faithful in attending the synagogue. Only on this occasion, Paul went, in order to reason with the Jews, “as was his custom”. We are reminded that we need to take every opportunity to be givers of the gospel. Many people say to me, “I just can’t tell anyone about church”. “I’m not an evangelist”. “I don’t know where to start”. As with all things, practice makes perfect! The question is, are you willing to try? It would be a misconception to think that Paul had it easy. When we read on in the chapter it says that the Jews were NOT persuaded by his arguments, which resulted in an angry mob attacking the very person who was hosting him and a life-saving flight out of there! Did it stop Paul giving the gospel? Not one bit! He just went somewhere else and did the same thing again, the church in Thessalonica becoming a testament to his perseverance.

Are you so generous with the gospel that you are constantly looking for opportunities to share your faith? I’m writing this on a train, with a pen I borrowed from a stranger opposite. I wonder if there will be a Christ-centred conversation to come?

Finally, in the tenth year of the Parish Giving Scheme in Cornwall, I must make mention of financial giving. Is that your custom? Have you decided in your heart to outwork your faith in Christ by putting God first in all areas, including financial giving? It is so much easier to do, once it becomes your custom but you have to start somewhere. Will you take these **3 Small Steps** and make a decision this Lent to continually give your presence and prayer, faith and finance in response to the generous God who gave everything for you? Then share with us the wonderful outcome of that decision!