

"The Generous Nature of God"

Mark 1:9–13

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Background

Join us on Sunday as we jump into week 3 of our sermon series, “Jesus is Good News”. We plan to look at Mark 1:9–13 which contains the account of Jesus’ baptism and ensuing travel into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. What might be surprising to you about our sermon on Sunday is the title of the message; “The Generous Nature of God”. You might be thinking, “How do you garner God’s generosity from this story of Jesus’ baptism and temptation”? Well, I’m glad you asked! That’s what we’ll explore together on Sunday! See you then.

Sermon Text *Mark 1:9-13*

⁹At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹²At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- What is the best thing you heard on Sunday?

2. Sunday Questions:

1. The Paradox of Generosity in Brokenness

The sermon opens with a conversation on a plane where a man struggled to believe in God because of the visible brokenness in the world and the frailty of human bodies. Pastor Darren counters this by arguing that God is fundamentally good and generous, even in a broken world.

- **Discussion:** How do you personally reconcile the reality of a broken world with the truth of a generous God? When you are going through a difficult

season, how hard is it to shift your perspective toward "under-the-radar" gifts like our physical senses, community, or the beauty of creation?

2. Cultivating Awareness of the Spirit's Presence

According to Truth #2, the Father generously blesses believers with the immediacy of His life-giving Presence through the Holy Spirit. The sermon suggests practical steps to foster this awareness, such as taking a neighborhood prayer walk.

- **Discussion:** If the Holy Spirit is actively dwelling within us to provide wisdom, comfort, and transformation, why do we so often live as if we are on our own? What are the biggest "reasons" or distractions that dull your awareness of His presence during a normal week?

3. Deconstructing False Views of God

Pastor Darren explicitly notes that Jesus redefines who God is. He states that God is *not* a detached cosmic entity, a scowling judge with folded arms, or someone tracking a checklist to catch us doing wrong. Instead, he shares a vivid imagery of Jesus proudly showing off a never-ending hallway filled with illuminated photos of His children.

- **Discussion:** Which of those false, negative views of God do you find yourself accidentally slipping into when you mess up? How does the imaginative image of Jesus looking at a photo of *you* on His wall—knowing your story perfectly and speaking of you with joy—challenge or heal that perspective?

"He gets excited and speaks with great joy, love, admiration for each person. He even shares the difficulty with each person, but how he carried them through."

4. Embracing the "Stress-Test" of Faith

One of the most counterintuitive points in the sermon is Truth #5 and #6: that testing and difficulty are actually acts of God's generosity meant to refine and strengthen our faith. The pastor compares this to a cardiovascular "stress-test" that prepares the heart for future exertion.

- **Discussion:** Think of a past trial or "wilderness" season that you successfully navigated. Looking back, can you see how it served as a crucial proving ground that built your spiritual muscles? Why is it so incredibly difficult to view a *current* trial as a generous gift from God while you are right in the middle of it?

5. Passing on the Kingdom's Generosity

The sermon highlights a beautiful, trickling-down pattern of divine generosity: what the Father gives to the Son, the Son gives to us, and we are then commanded to give to others. We are meant to be the "hands and feet of Jesus to a broken world".

- **Discussion:** If we are called to communicate love and ascribe value to people through both words and actions, what does this look like practically in your life? How can you extend this radical form of generosity to a "problematic" or difficult person in your workplace, family, or neighborhood this week?