

A Cup of Generosity
Pastor Dana Karen Reardon

*You will be enriched in every way for your great **generosity**, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; 2 Corinthians 9:11*

Before I was a pastor, I was a pediatric intensive care nurse and then a nursing supervisor. One night when I was working as a supervisor, I got a call from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit that they needed a part for the ECMO machine. I called another hospital to make sure they had the part and then called 911 to get it in time to hook up a very sick premature baby. ECMO has been in the news more recently because of its use for COVID patients but it was used first for babies whose lungs were not fully developed. It buys time for lungs to mature while oxygenating the blood outside of the body and then returning it. I remember this night because it was the first time I saw a gray and sickly baby turn pink before my eyes as the machine started doing its job. It is a lot like what happens when people have bypass surgery to open blocked arteries in their hearts and blood is allowed to flow freely to heal their hearts. They go in weak and sick and are often so much stronger and pinker and healthier after.

This is my metaphor for what tithing does for us. I am not a legalist who tells people they have to tithe. Instead I offer them the opportunity to be changed. Tithing opens our hearts enough to let the love flow freely. And perhaps as with ECMO it hooks us up to breathe in the Spirit.

When we begin to tithe some shifting often has to happen. Should we spend less on certain things so that we can give more? Often it causes us to rethink everything. Rethinking everything is good. Perhaps in the rethinking God can become part of the process and we can develop more generous hearts.

I have seen this happen as surely as I saw that baby turn pink before my eyes. I have seen people's hearts opened by beginning to tithe. One of the proofs of what I say is how hard it is to find an ex-tither. Once we feel that connection to the spirit of generosity God gives us, we don't want to lose it.

I invite you to try it. I am making the invitation, not for the sake of those to whom you give but for your sake so that your heart may be open and strong and generous. You will be changed and the way you see the world will be changed. What I experienced is that I saw even more clearly the generosity of God all around me.

Let us pray,

Lord open our hearts so that we might be changed into your likeness and reflect your love. Amen

