


A GENEROUS JESUS

*THE PARABLES OF JESUS THROUGH THE
LENS OF GENEROSITY*



**THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD**
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated



Safeguarding

The welfare of individuals and their leaders is paramount. Each church or organisation will have its own safeguarding policy which needs to be strictly observed.

If you are intending to use these resources in groups online, then please be aware of any online safeguarding policies or protocols.

If you are in any doubt, please contact the person in your church who is responsible for safeguarding in your own Parish or, if you are still unclear, your Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

Intro

Jesus taught using parables—simple stories intended to impart a spiritual lesson.

Jesus gave us everything we need to know for living a generous life in and through these stories we need only spend time in prayer, study and reflection to absorb and then live out these lessons.

This resource takes an in-depth look at eight of these parables and what they teach us about living generously. The resource is best for small groups, and each parable should take 45 minutes from start to finish.

There is no order or expected number to complete; please enjoy as many of the parables over whatever timeframe suits your small group. The resources are intended to be paired with the video reflections which can be found on the Diocese of Sheffield Youtube page.

Enjoy and God bless!





THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN



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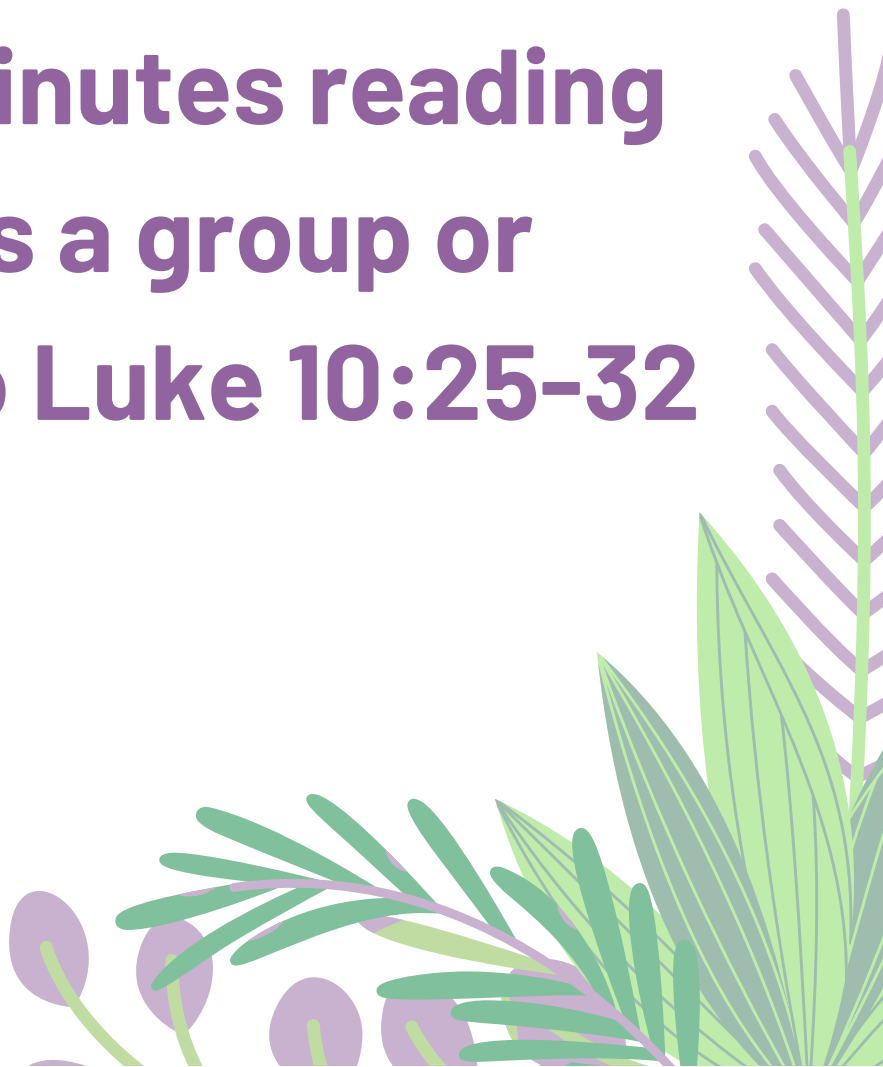
Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

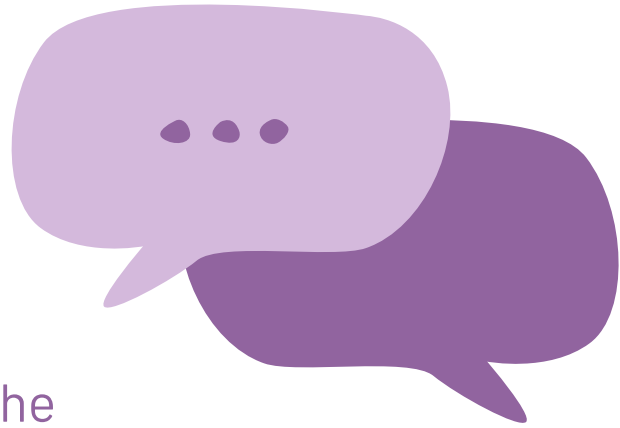
Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

Before you discuss the questions on the next page as a group, spend 5 minutes reading aloud as a group or listening to Luke 10:25-32



LET'S *Talk*



Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

Think of the beaten man in terms of today's society. Who might they represent?

The priest and the Levite found it difficult to love this man by passing him on the street. Who do you find it difficult to love?

In what ways was the Samaritan generous and showed neighbourly love?

The Samaritan took a risk in helping the man on the street. What are the risks of helping someone today? Why is it essential for us to be willing to help others?





Reflection

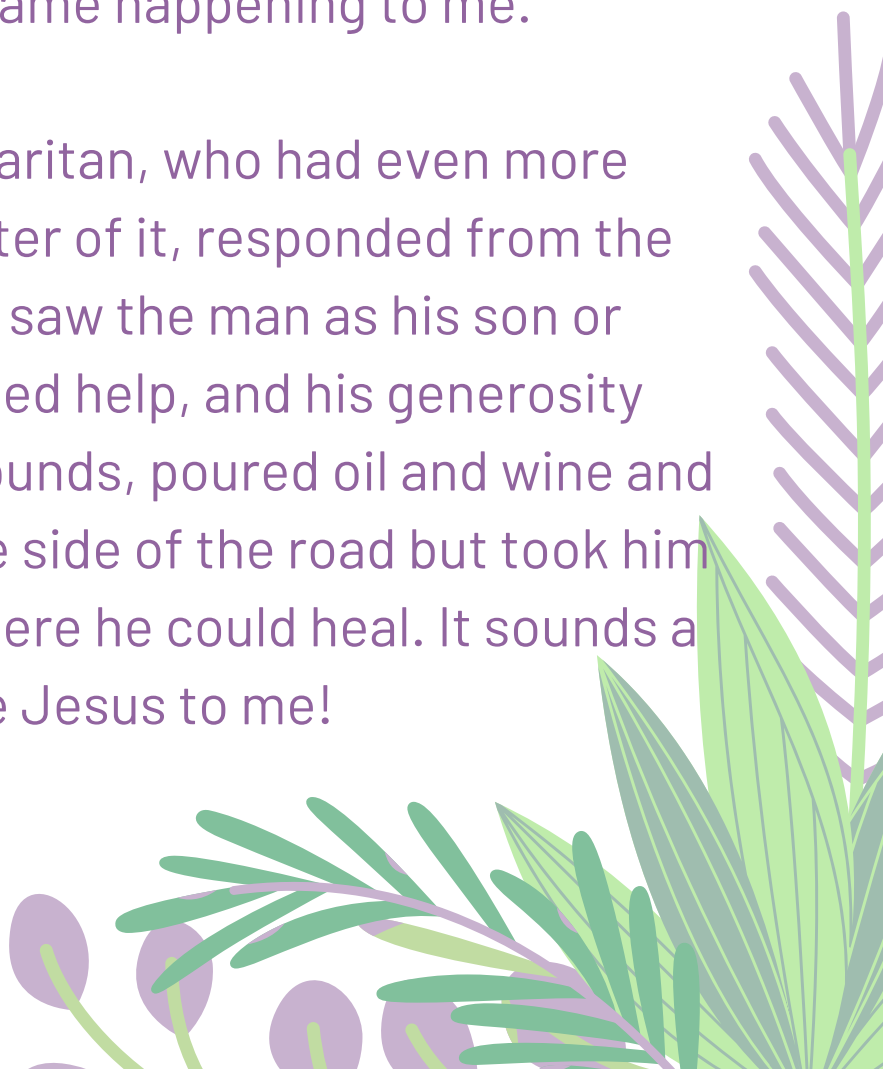


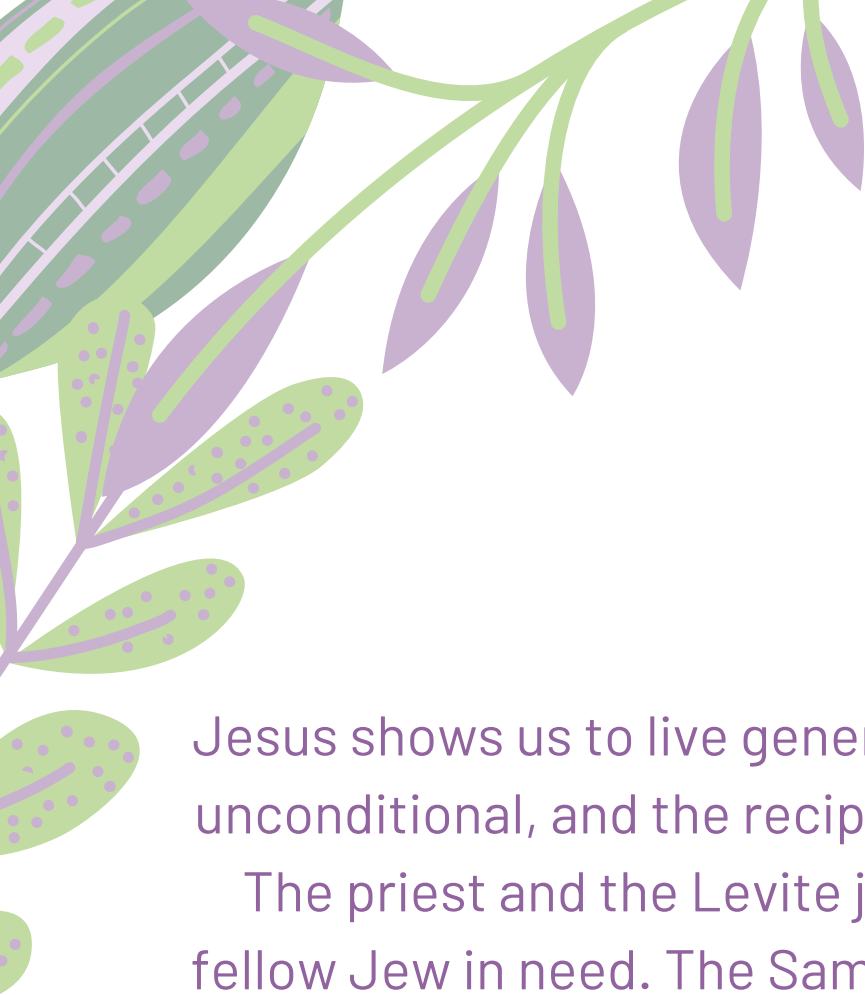
Spend 15 minutes in reflection as a group. As part of this time please read the reflection below and/or listen to the sermon from Hannah Sandoval (Light for Christ Enabler)

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

Jesus teaches us that generosity should respond to the heart's feelings as well as the head's thinking – a holistic whole person response. Through this parable, Jesus is encouraging us to care for others deeply and have compassion for them. The priest and the Levite saw the man in need and perhaps started thinking of all the reasons not to help him out; he's not clean, I've got to get to the temple, I'm scared of the same happening to me.

However, the Samaritan, who had even more reasons to think better of it, responded from the heart's feeling. He saw the man as his son or daughter that needed help, and his generosity flowed – he tended wounds, poured oil and wine and didn't leave him on the side of the road but took him forward to a place where he could heal. It sounds a lot like Jesus to me!





Jesus shows us to live generously means our gift is unconditional, and the recipient should not matter.

The priest and the Levite just walked past their fellow Jew in need. The Samaritan generously gave to a man who, as a Jew, would have been his enemy from a racial and national perspective.

Through this parable, Jesus shows us that this heart feeling should extend to all his children, not just the easy ones to love, like family and friends. To fully follow Jesus is to live a whole life of worship and generosity like the Samaritan and not just go through the motions of religious thoughts, traditions and actions like the priest and the Levite.

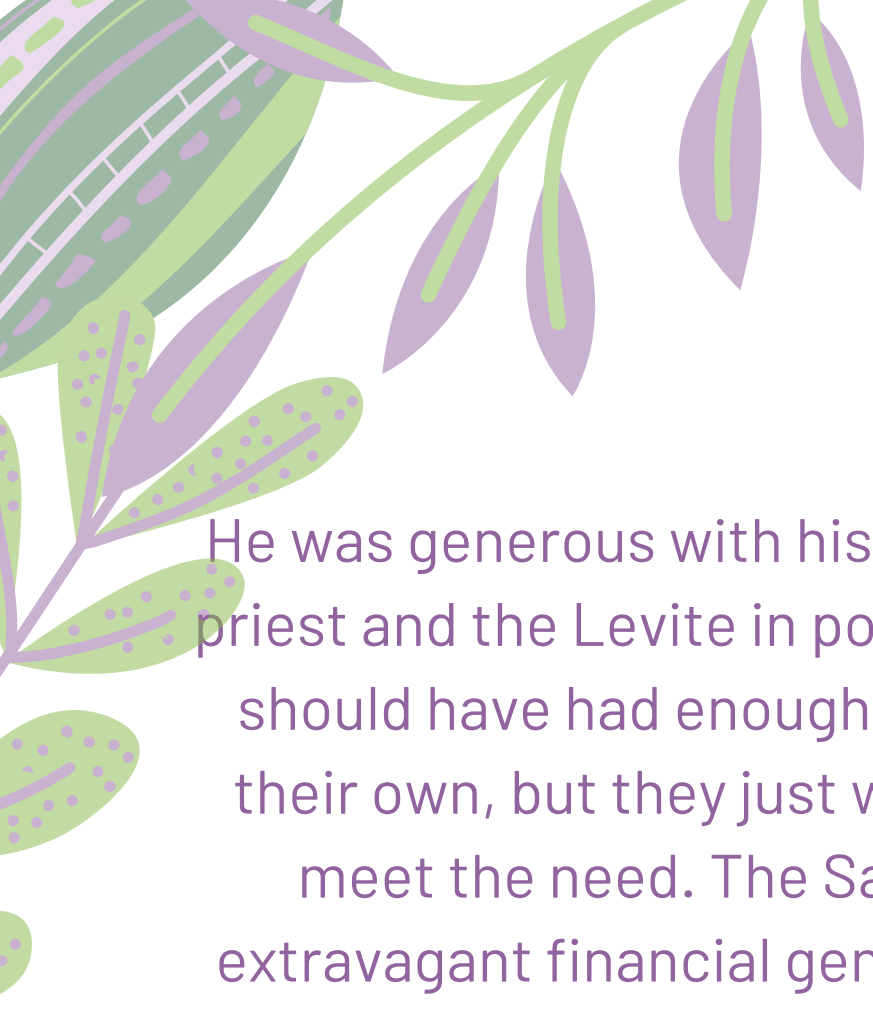
How might we respond?

The Good Samaritan shows us so many ways we can be generous. Let's focus on two specific resources – our time and our treasure.

The priest and the Levite were rushing around and couldn't spare a minute for this Jewish man, who was one of their own. The Samaritan, who may have been just as busy, gave this man a whole day. He spent hours caring for and tending to this man who was a stranger, an enemy even, and sacrificed the one thing you can never get back – your time.

**Are you too busy to notice others in need?
What part of your week could you give to
serve those less fortunate?**





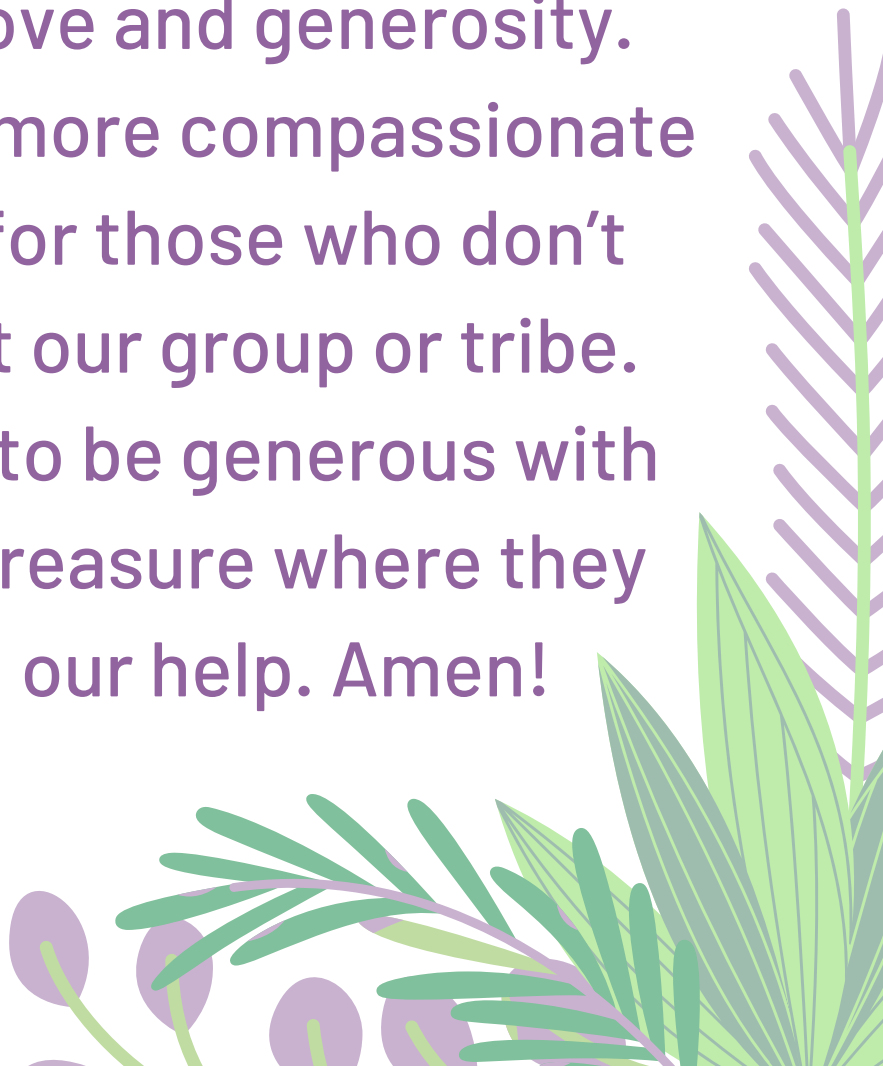
He was generous with his treasure. Again, the priest and the Levite in positions of high office should have had enough left over for one of their own, but they just walked by and didn't meet the need. The Samaritan showed extravagant financial generosity towards the beaten man, who was a stranger. He didn't offer a few pennies to help the man get through the day. He provided two full days' wages to allow him to stay in a room and promised to cover any extra expenses. His wallet followed his heart's response of compassionate love.

**Do you use your money to help others in need?
Is there any person or organisation that might
benefit from your extravagant generosity
today?**

Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, thank you for being the most remarkable example of showing neighbourly love and generosity. Teach us to be more compassionate and look out for those who don't necessarily fit our group or tribe. Encourage us to be generous with our time and treasure where they might need our help. Amen!





THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET



**THE DIOCESE
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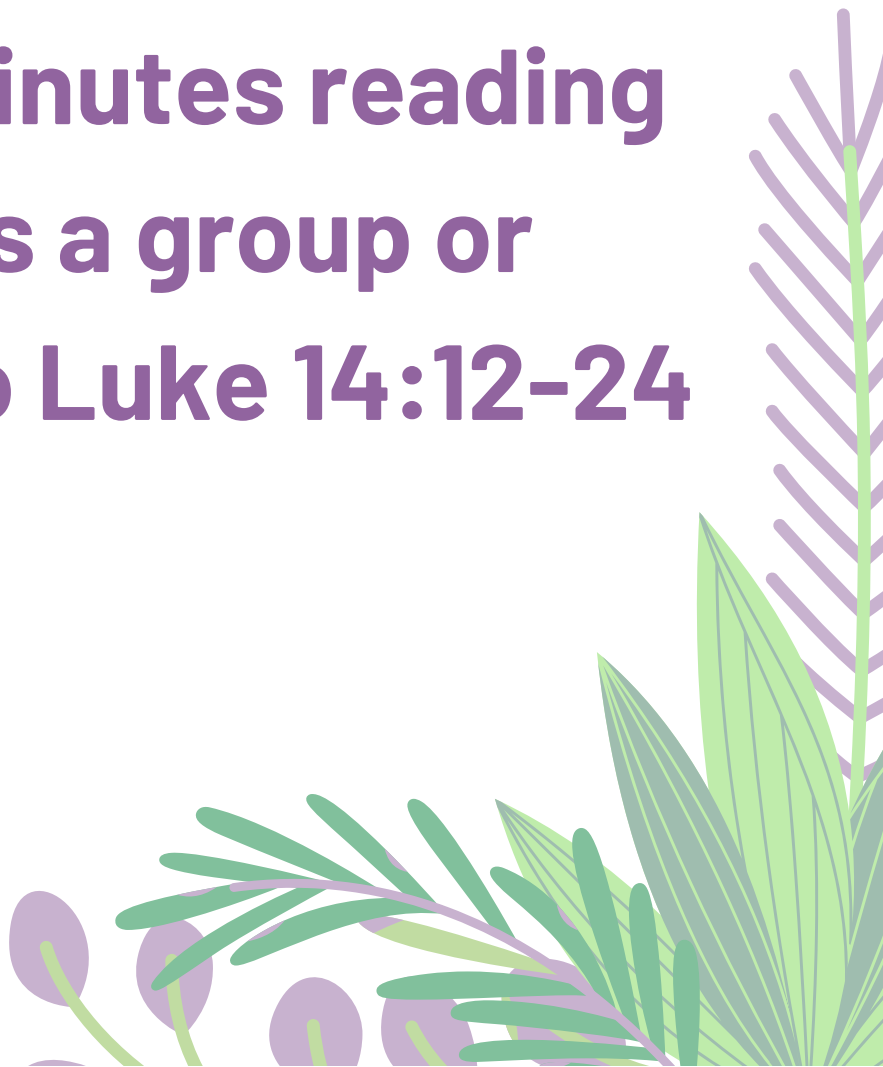
Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

Before you discuss the questions on the next page as a group, spend 5 minutes reading aloud as a group or listening to Luke 14:12-24



LET'S *Talk*



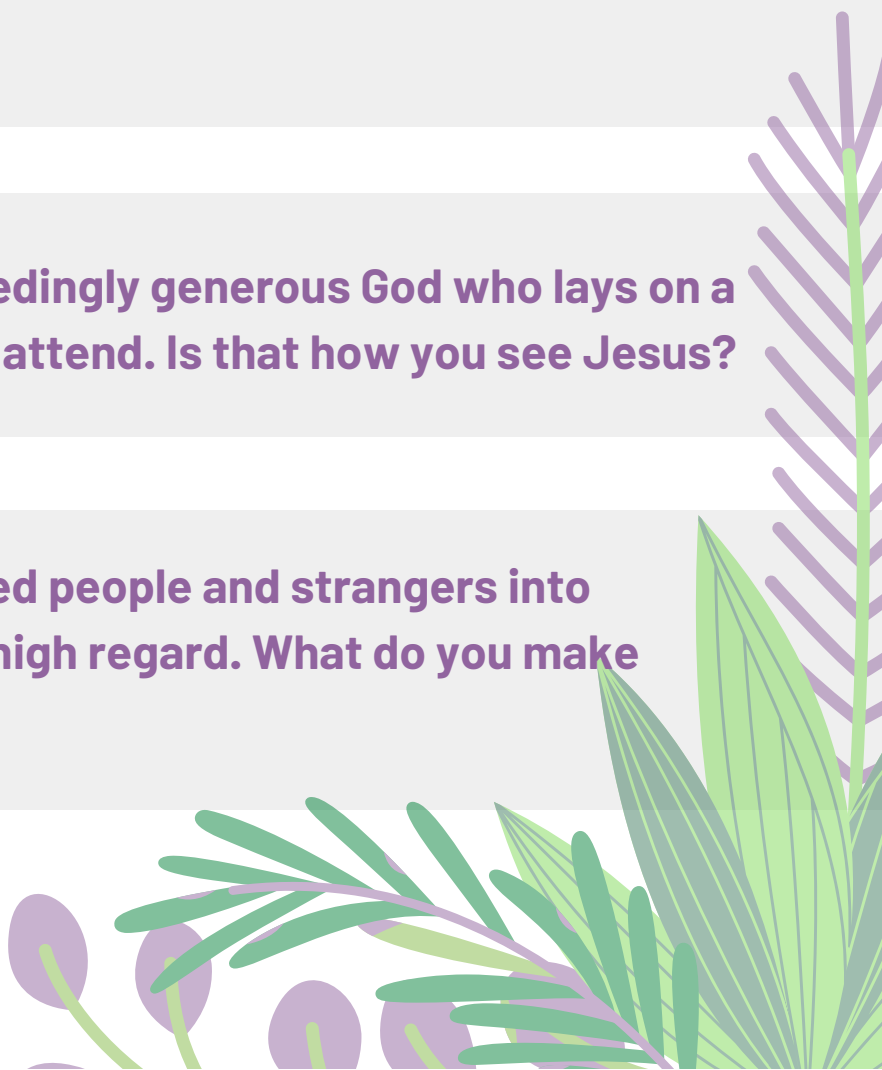
Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

Think of the man who was organising the banquet. How might he have felt when none of his friends turned up?

The excuses this man received were about purchases, business and relationships. Do we let this stuff get in the way of our most important relationship – with Jesus?

The man is an image of an exceedingly generous God who lays on a lavish banquet and invites all to attend. Is that how you see Jesus?

This man invited all disadvantaged people and strangers into his own home and was a host of high regard. What do you make of this man's hospitality?





Reflection

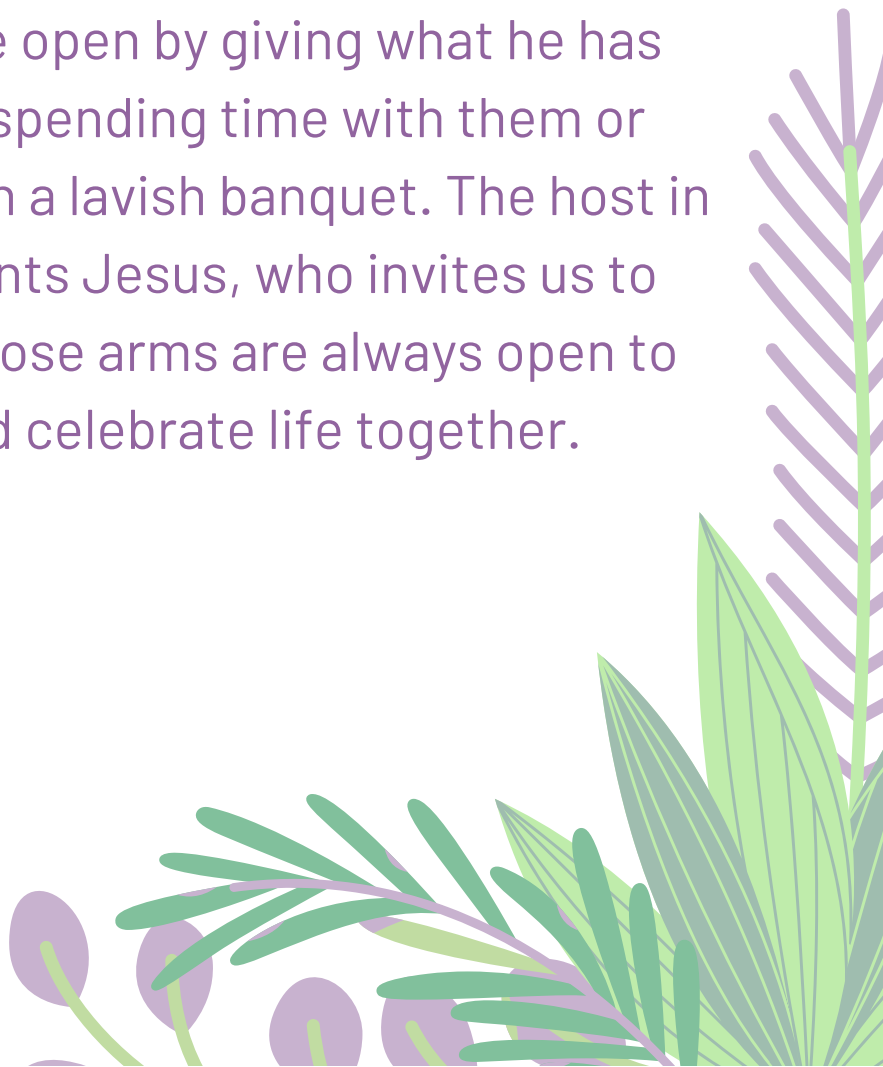


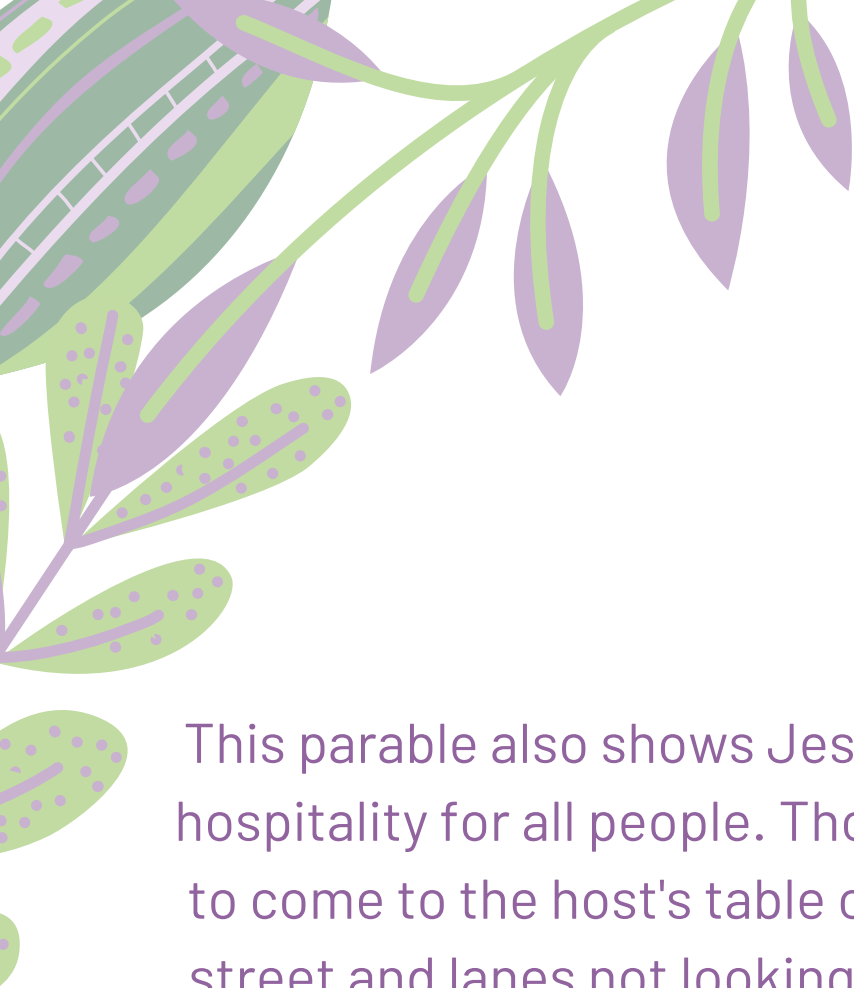
Spend 15 minutes in
reflection as a group. As
part of this time please
read the reflection below
and/or listen to the
sermon from Bishop Pete
Wilcox

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

In this parable, Jesus is showing us through the example of the great host that the practice of hospitality is a foundation for living generously. The host of the banquet's heart is open to others and remains open despite let-downs. The host's home is open to his friends, those who need help, or strangers and is a place of welcome and celebration.

The host's hands are open by giving what he has away for others by spending time with them or spending his money on a lavish banquet. The host in the parable represents Jesus, who invites us to abundant life and whose arms are always open to welcome you and celebrate life together.



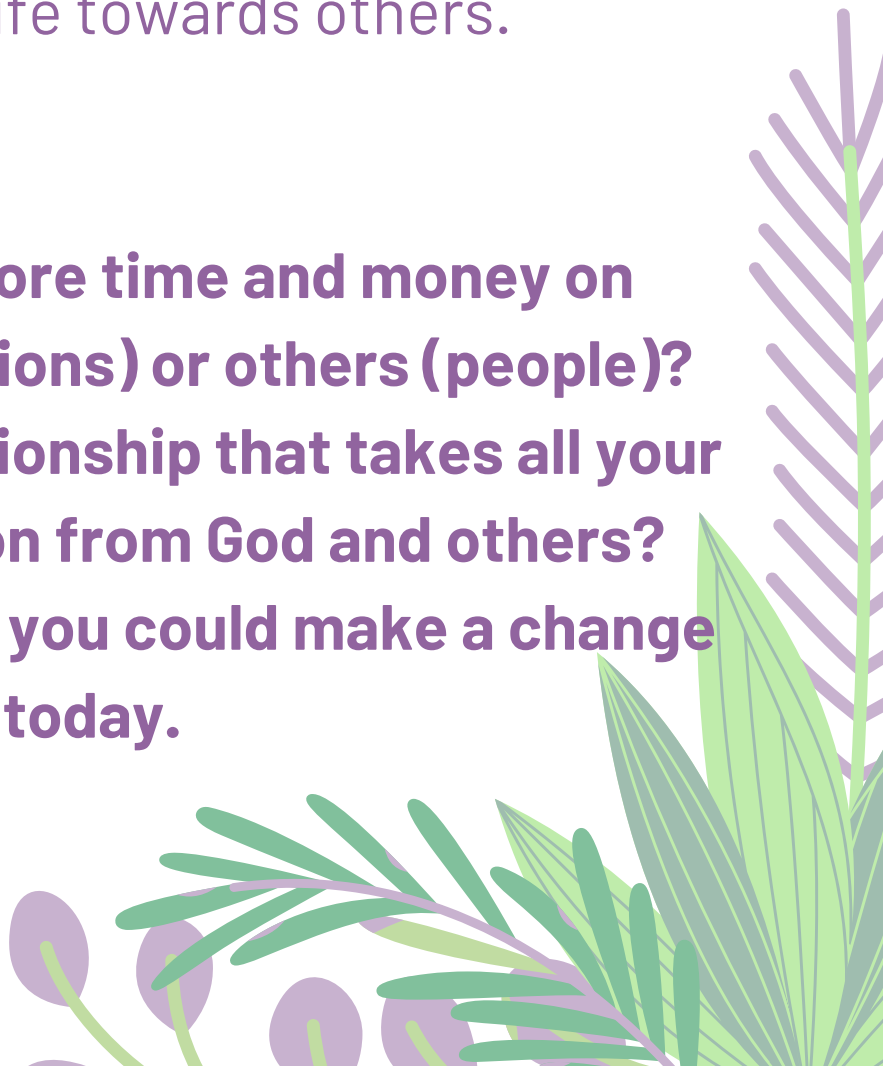


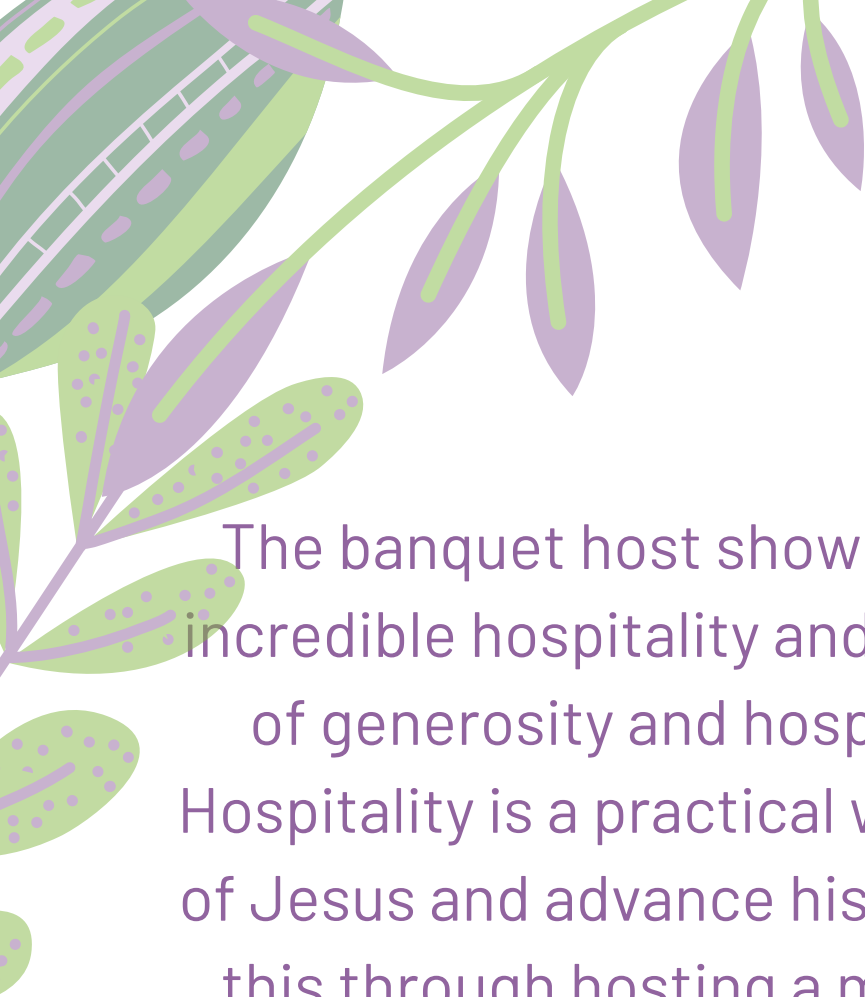
This parable also shows Jesus's generous love and hospitality for all people. Those deemed not worthy to come to the host's table or those wandering the street and lanes not looking for a relationship with the host were invited in as if they were esteemed guests. Jesus as the great host, sacrificed his life on the cross for all of us. This unbelievable generous act of love opened up the way for all of us, not just the chosen few, to have an eternal relationship with Him and the Father.

How might we respond?

In the parable, the guests made excuses not to attend the banquet and celebrate and spend time with the host—the reasons centred on possessions (field and oxen) and relationships (just got married). We often make the same excuses and put our possessions or relationships ahead of our relationship with Jesus and a generous, hospitable life towards others.

**Do you spend more time and money on yourself (possessions) or others (people)?
Do you have a relationship that takes all your time and attention from God and others?
Think about where you could make a change today.**





The banquet host shows grace, favour and incredible hospitality and inspires a response of generosity and hospitality in our lives. Hospitality is a practical way to share the love of Jesus and advance his kingdom, we can do this through hosting a meal if our situation allows or it could be just simply eating and drinking with others. When we serve and give and create an environment of welcome, grace and friendship – it's a glimpse of heaven right here on earth.



**How could you open up your home more?
Are there people you could think of to invite
over for a cuppa or a meal this week? Or
someone to meet in town for a coffee and a
chat?**

Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, thank you for the great hospitality you show to us and thank you for your open heart, open table and open hands towards us. We pray to you to help us put the relationship with you and others before the things and people that distract us. We also pray for the gift of hospitality in creating little glimpses of heaven right here on earth. Amen!





THE PARABLE OF THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD



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Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

**Before you discuss the
questions on the next
page as a group,
spend 5 minutes reading
aloud as a group or listening
to Matthew 20:1-16**



LET'S *Talk*



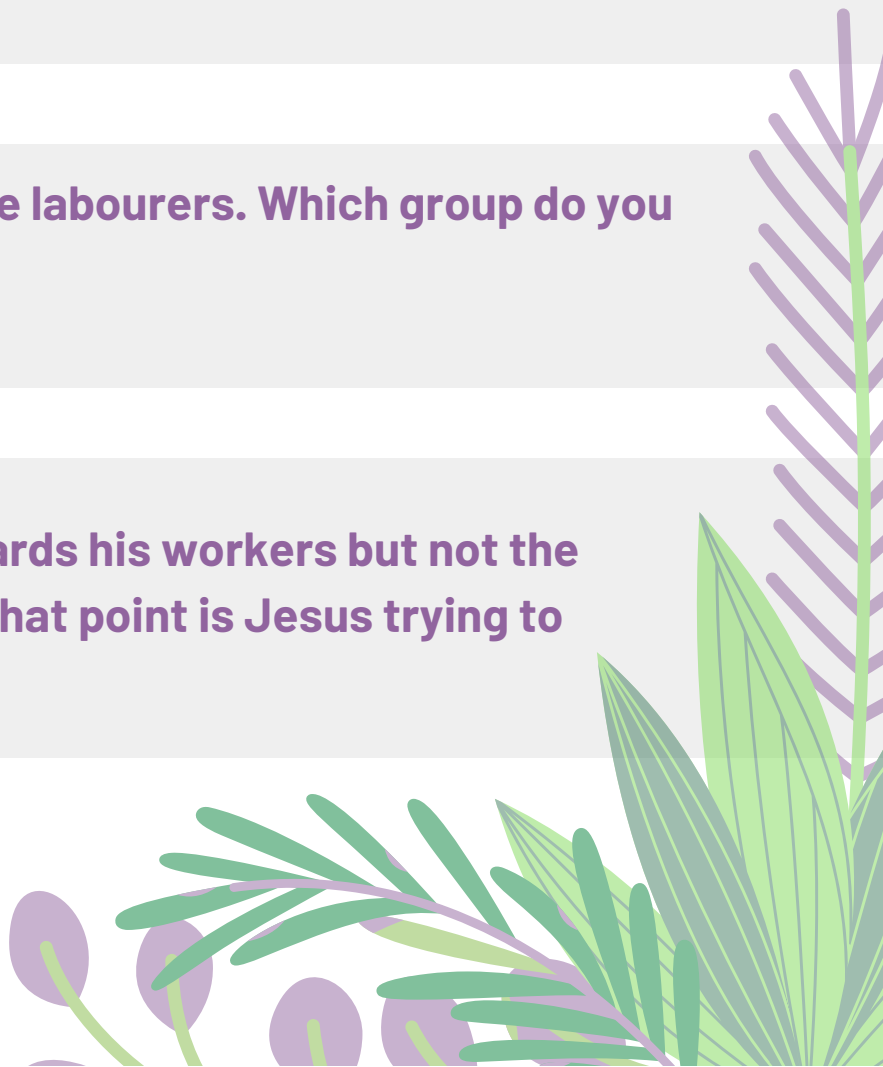
Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

Do you think the land owner was fair in his dealings with those who started early?

The labourers who came after 9 am did not establish a set wage. What do you make of this?

Put yourself in the shoes of these labourers. Which group do you belong to and why?

The land owner is generous towards his workers but not the way the early starters expect. What point is Jesus trying to make with his disciples?





Reflection

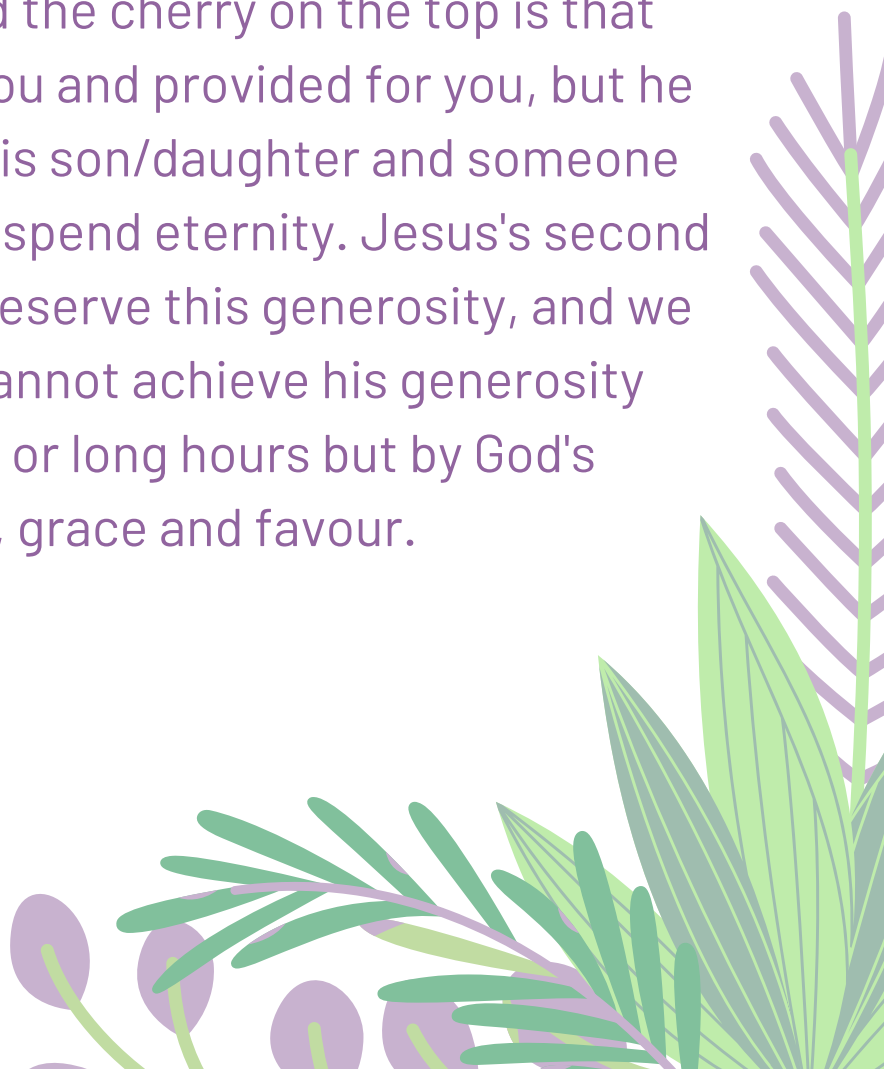


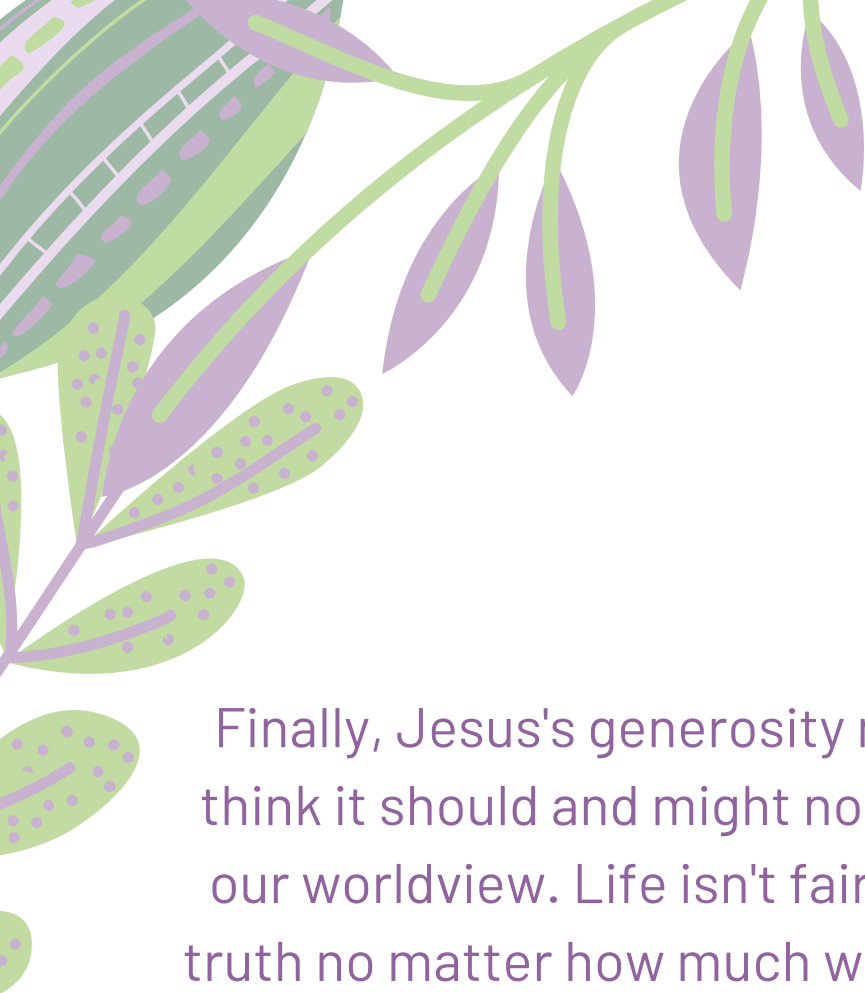
Spend 15 minutes in reflection as a group. As part of this time please read the reflection below and/or listen to the sermon from Mike North (Children and Young People's Adviser)

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

Through this parable, Jesus as the eternal land owner, makes three points very clear to us about generosity.

Firstly, like each labourer's employment opportunity, this life each of us leads is a gift of boundless generosity. It is truly a miracle that we are here in the first place. You and I are a walking, talking miracle. The family you have, the place you live, any money in the bank are all gifts. And the cherry on the top is that Jesus not only made you and provided for you, but he also chose you to be his son/daughter and someone with whom he wants to spend eternity. Jesus's second point is that we don't deserve this generosity, and we cannot earn it. We cannot achieve his generosity through hard work or long hours but by God's generosity, grace and favour.





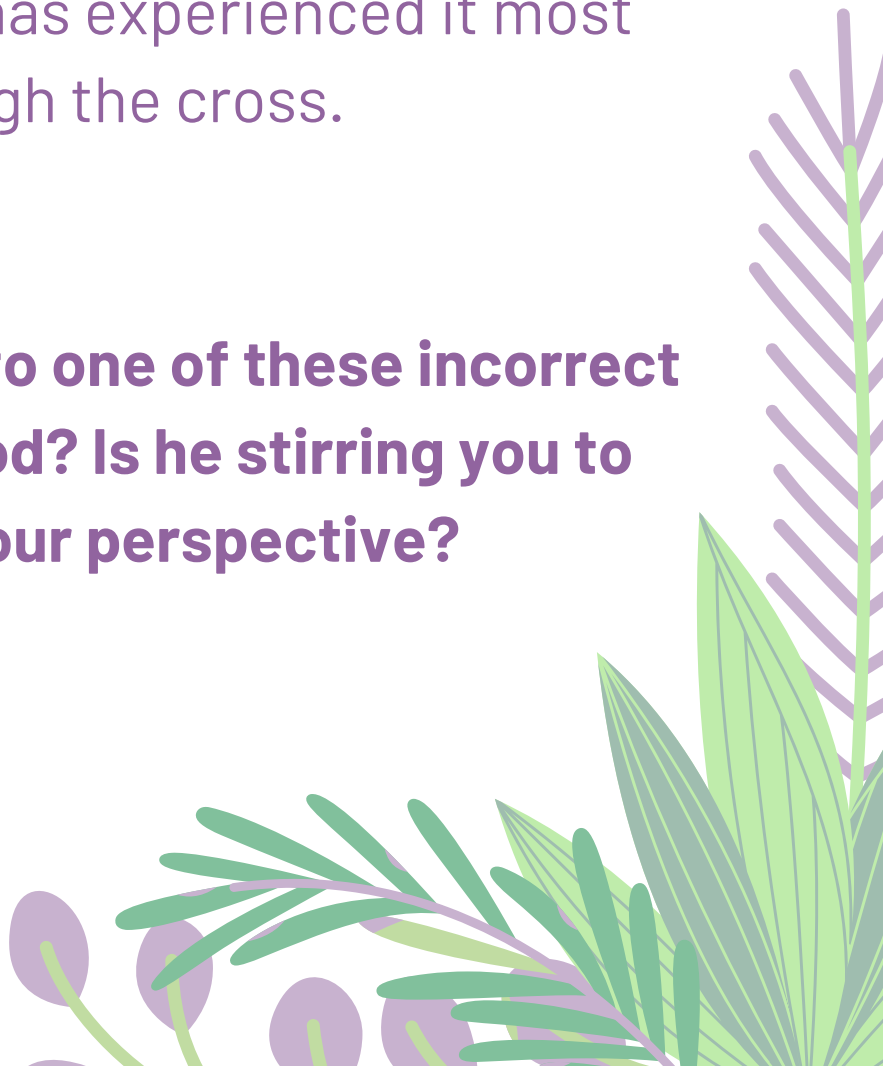
Finally, Jesus's generosity might not look like we think it should and might not be "fair" according to our worldview. Life isn't fair, and we all know that truth no matter how much we deny it. But life being unfair is not the same as God being unjust. God's justice does not work the same way as mine or yours. God sent Jesus to us to bring in this "great reversal" – to turn the world upside down for his good and glory.

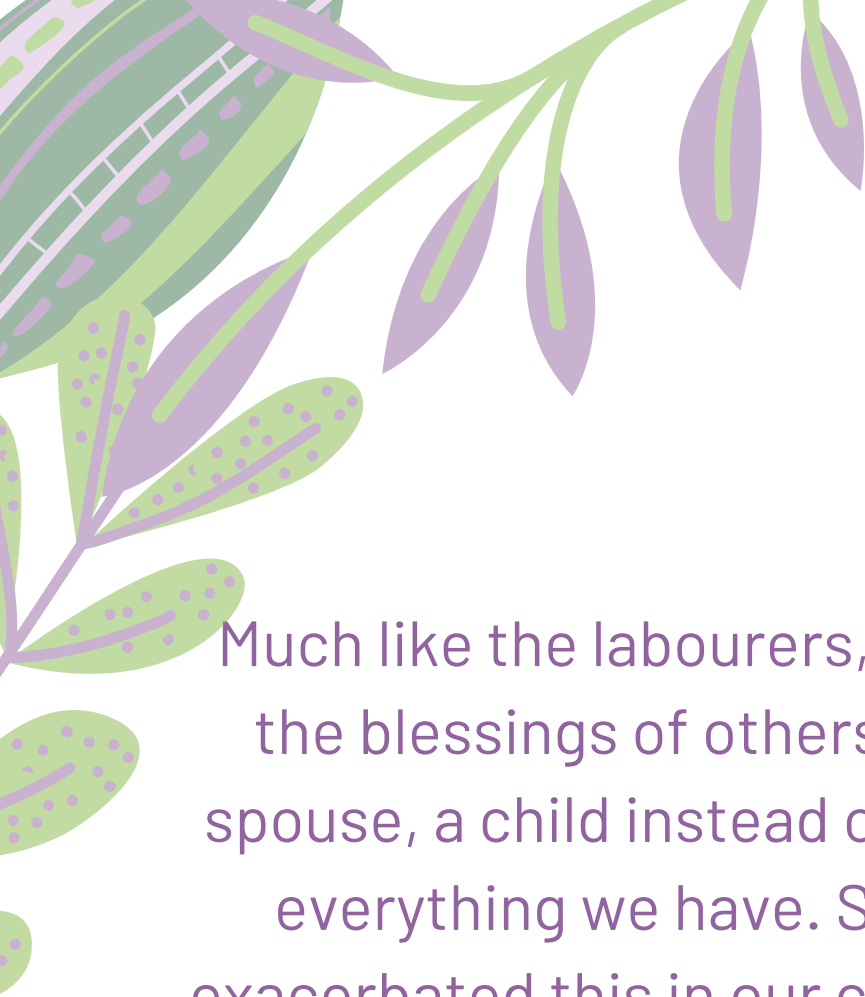
Through Jesus, the poor will become rich, the last will be first, and those who should be dead will have new life. This life and the next one are all a gift and, in a way, we're all late to the party, aren't we? In Christ, it's never too late to come home to the mercy and generosity of God.

How might we respond?

The way God works often seems at odds with our expectations or understanding of what is right or wrong. We usually take our successes as our own and the failure or suffering we experience as being from God. Jesus – the great reverser – shows us that it is the exact opposite – that all blessing comes from God. He is here to help you through battles and suffering as he has experienced it most through the cross.

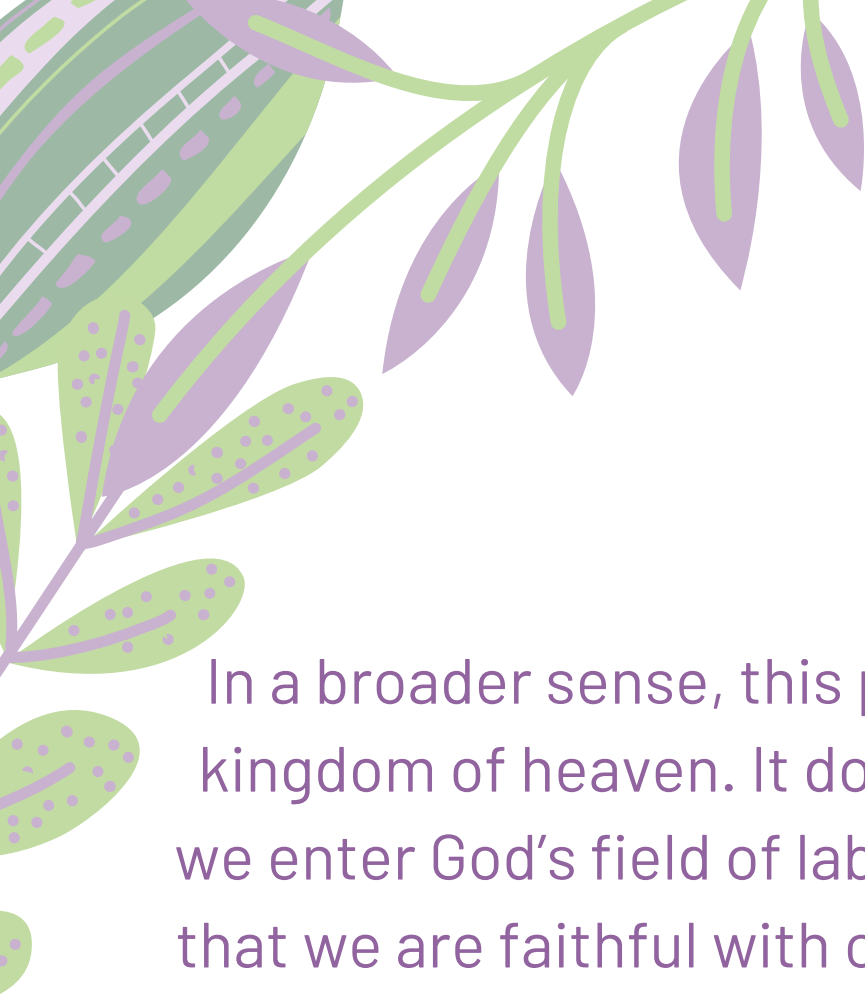
Have you held onto one of these incorrect beliefs about God? Is he stirring you to change your perspective?





Much like the labourers, we envy and covet the blessings of others; a house, a job, a spouse, a child instead of being thankful for everything we have. Social media have exacerbated this in our current age. Through this parable, Jesus is bringing to attention how damaging this comparison culture can be. He calls us live with an attitude of gratitude and celebrates the success of others.

Is there a way you think or act with envy towards others? What could you lay down before God today?



In a broader sense, this parable is about the kingdom of heaven. It does not matter when we enter God's field of labour; what matters is that we are faithful with our time, talents, and treasure when we do. God is generous and will reward all who do so.

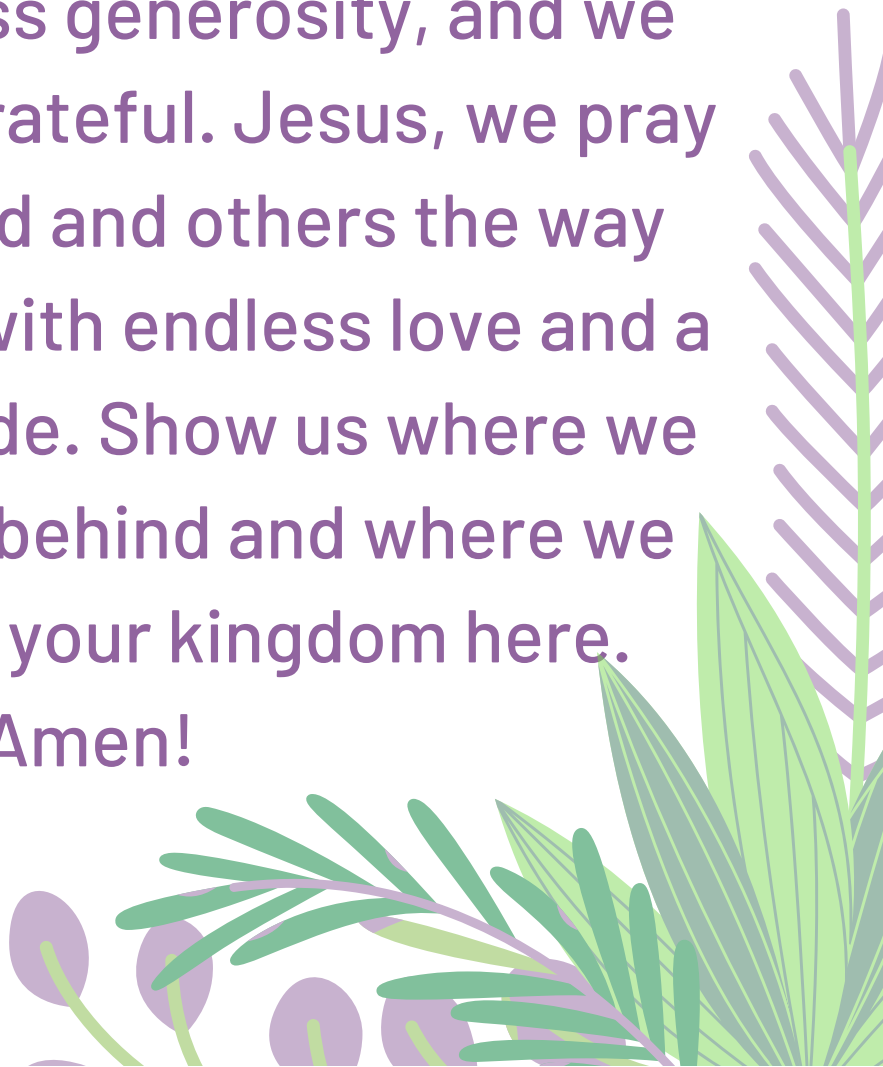
Are there ways you can faithfully use your talents in your workplace? Could you use your time and treasure to build up your neighborhood?



Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Jesus, thank you that we get to spend forever with you. It is an underserved gift of boundless generosity, and we will be forever grateful. Jesus, we pray to see the world and others the way you see them – with endless love and a generous attitude. Show us where we can leave envy behind and where we can help build your kingdom here.

Amen!





THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR



**THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD**
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated



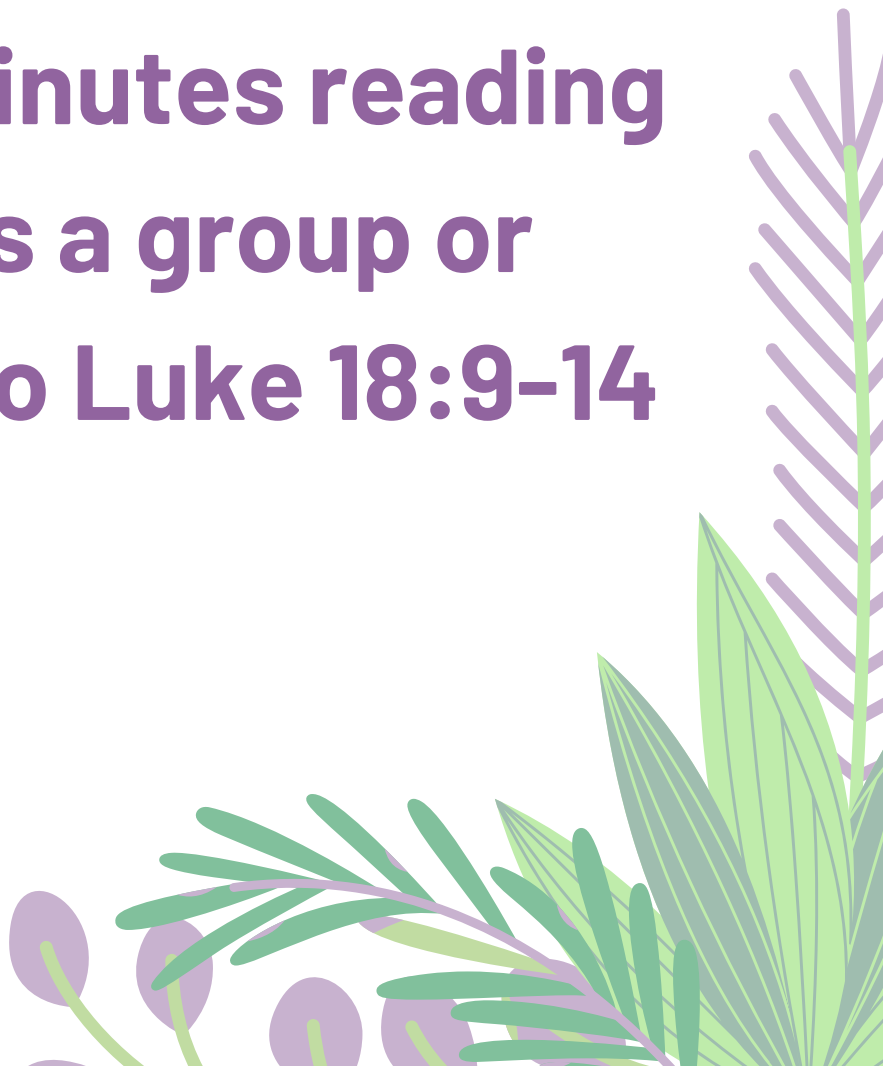
Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

Before you discuss the questions on the next page as a group, spend 5 minutes reading aloud as a group or listening to Luke 18:9-14



LET'S *Talk*



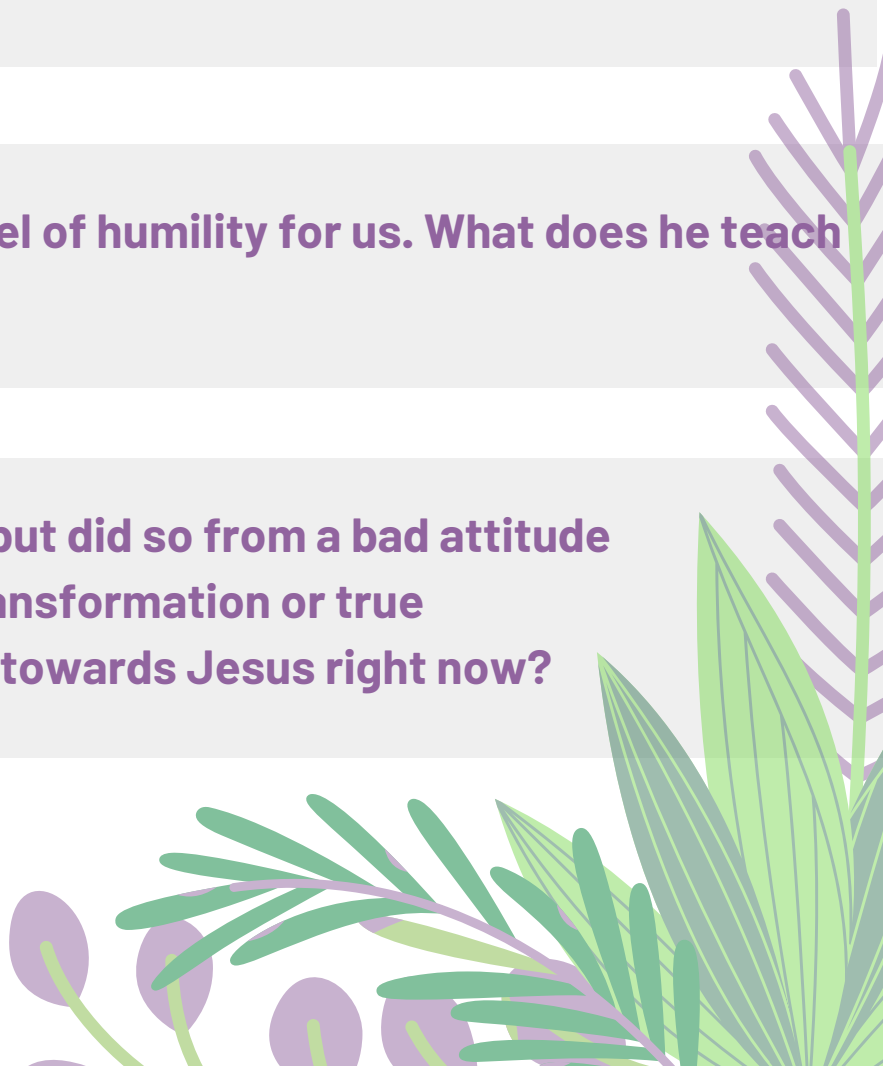
Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

The Pharisee did what his faith/religion had taught him to do. Why do you think Jesus was upset with him?

The Pharisee revelled in his accomplishments and how he compared with other people. Can you think of examples where we do this in modern society?

The tax collector is a great model of humility for us. What does he teach us about being humble?

The Pharisee fasted and tithed but did so from a bad attitude and not from a place of heart transformation or true generosity. Where is your heart towards Jesus right now?





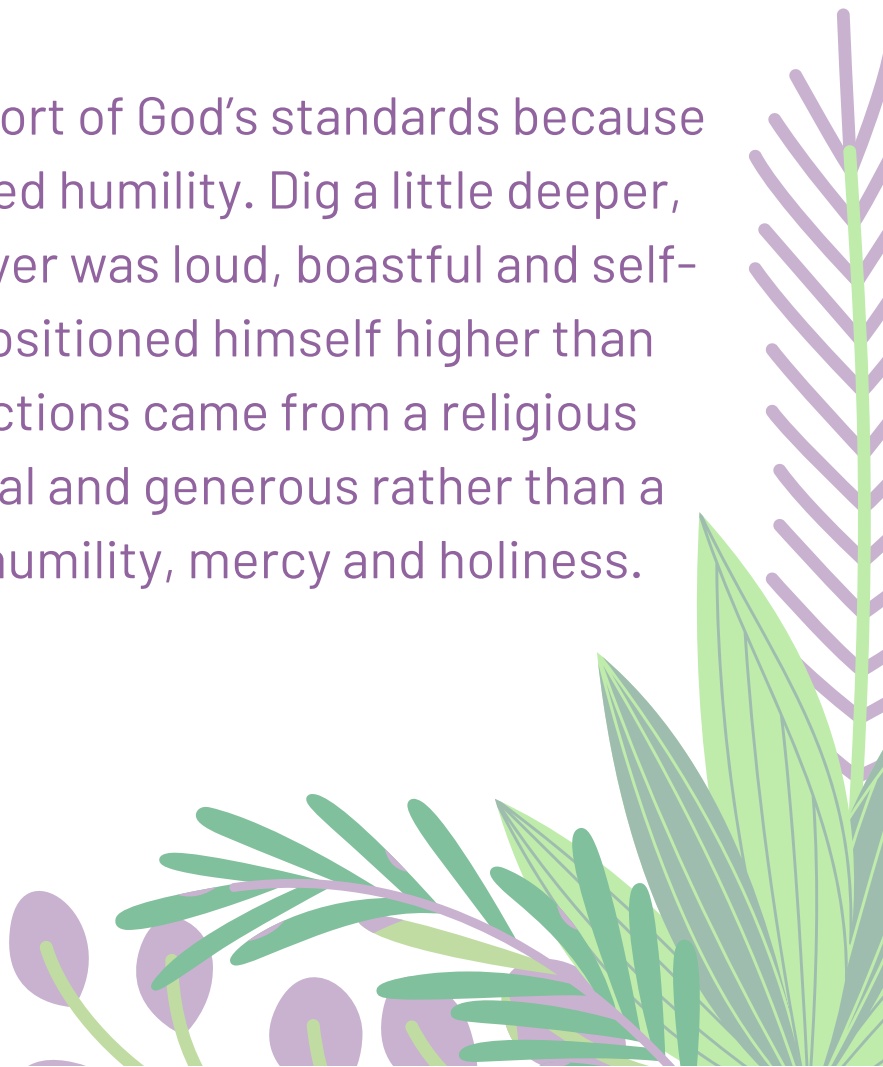
Reflection

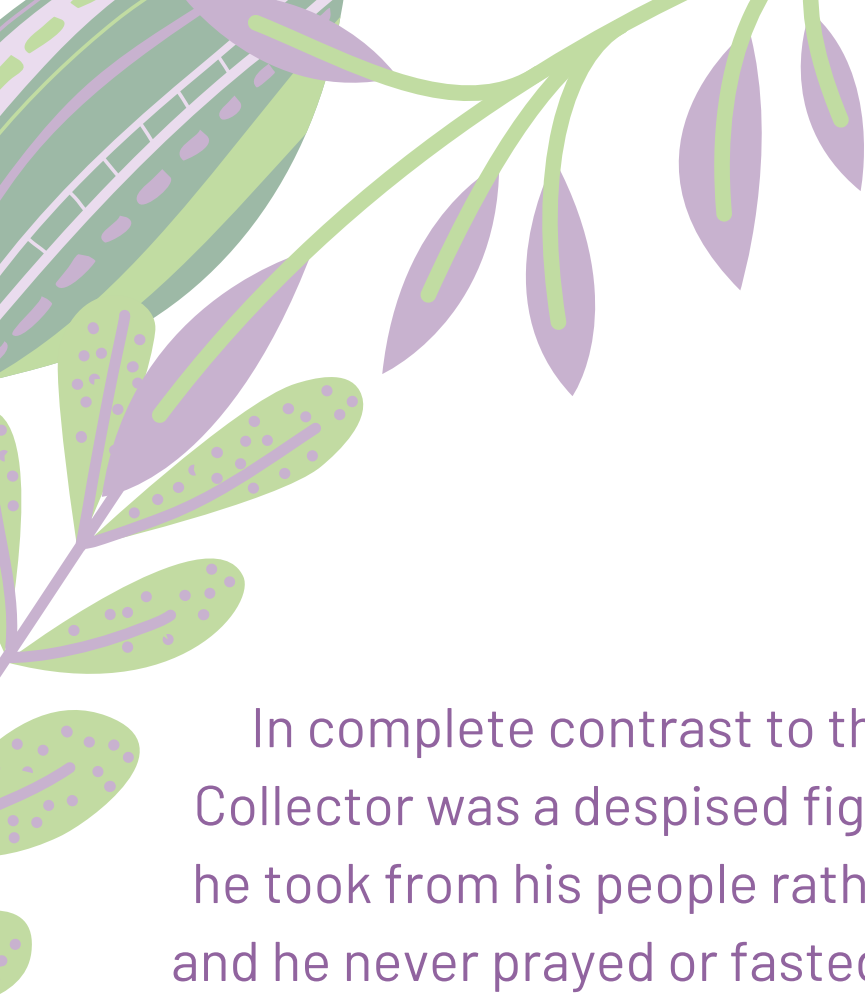
Spend 15 minutes in reflection as a group. As part of this time please read the reflection below and/or listen to the sermon from Luke Bunting (Giving and Generosity Officer)

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

Through this parable, Jesus is teaching us that having a humble heart that seeks mercy and shuns religiosity is a central part of living generously. The Pharisee was doing everything right according to human standards; he tithed his whole income (not just part of it as was expected) and prayed at the temple regularly. He fasted twice a week (again far more than expected) and was a leader in the community.

Yet the Pharisee fell short of God's standards because he and his prayer lacked humility. Dig a little deeper, and the Pharisee's prayer was loud, boastful and self-congratulating; he positioned himself higher than others. His stated actions came from a religious attitude to seem moral and generous rather than a heart compelled to humility, mercy and holiness.



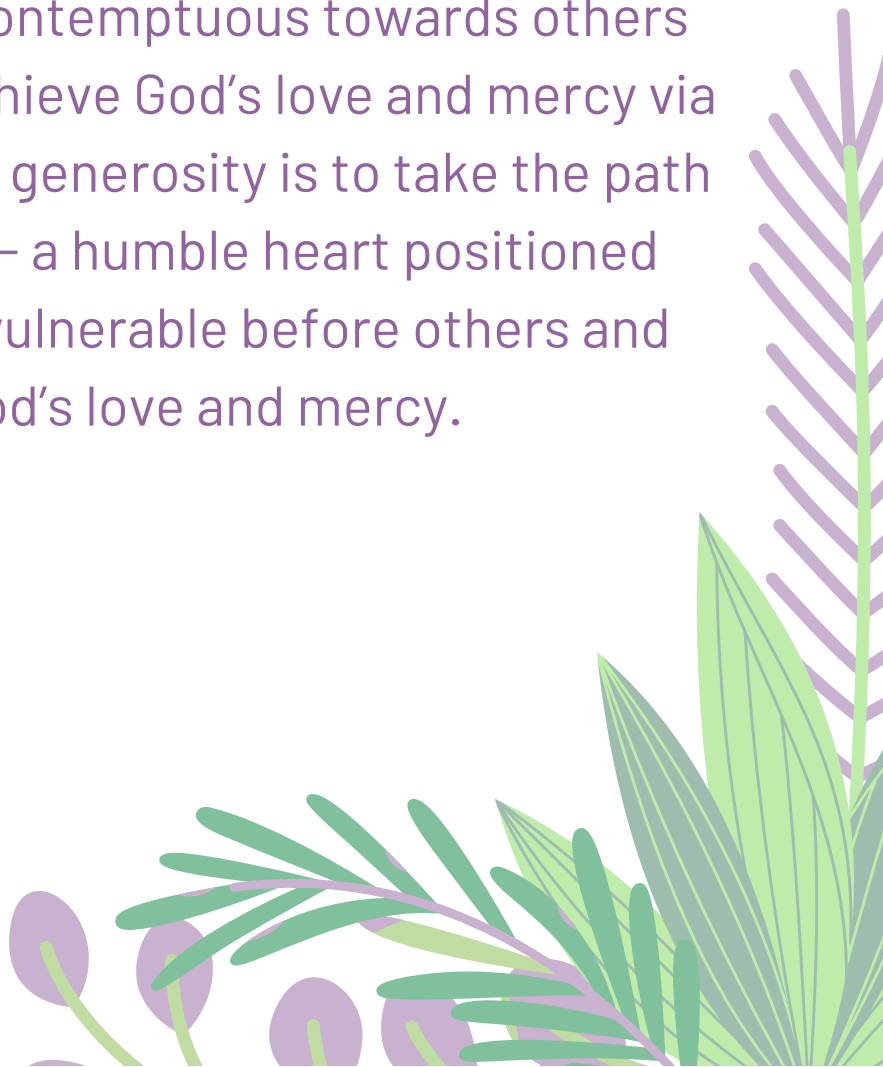


In complete contrast to the Pharisee, the Tax Collector was a despised figure in the community; he took from his people rather than giving to them and he never prayed or fasted. Yet the Tax Collector met God's standards because he came to pray with humility.

He knew he had done wrong and was looking for mercy from God, the only one who could forgive his sins. The reality is that the Pharisee and the Tax Collector seemed so different on the outside. Yet, on the inside, they were both the same, both sinners, both needing God's mercy, but only the Tax Collector recognised this deep need and longing for Jesus.

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” This statement sums up how Jesus sees a generous life. Generosity is not an amount of money, how many times you perform a task or even how well you do it.

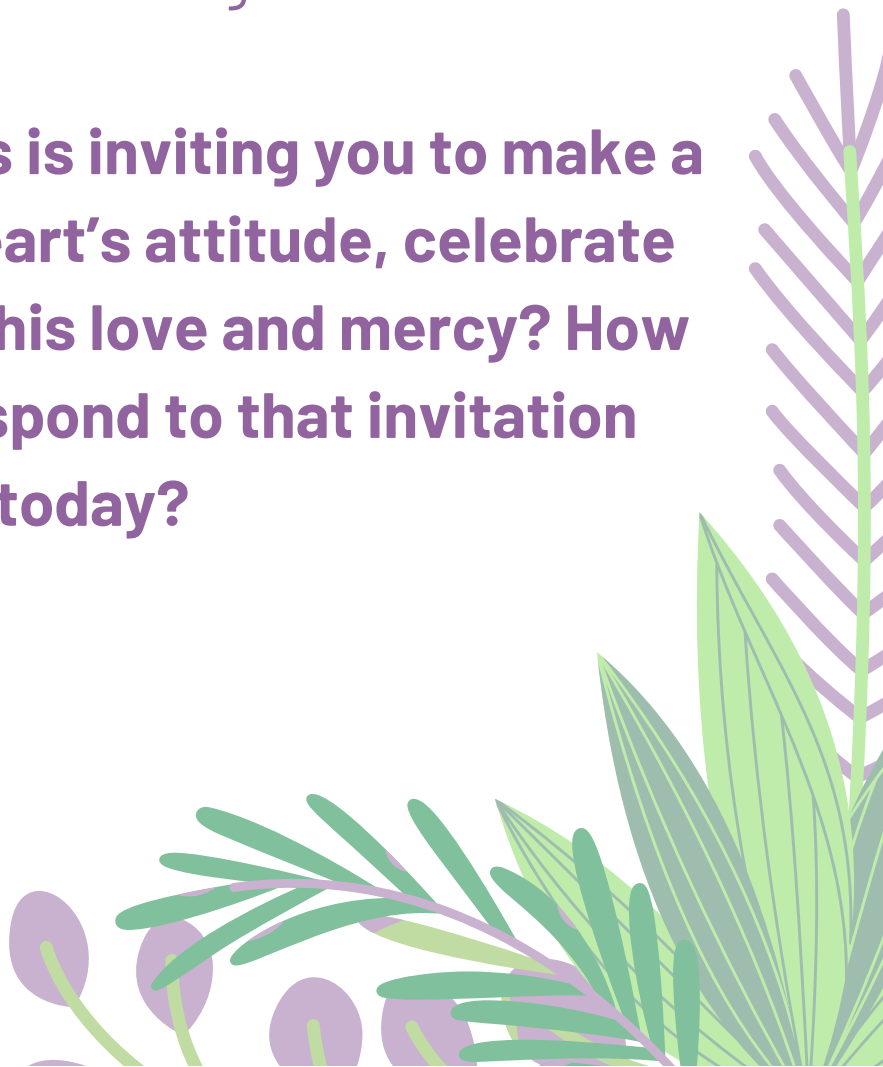
That path leads us to the Pharisee - obsessed with the self and status, contemptuous towards others and thinking he can achieve God's love and mercy via religious actions. True generosity is to take the path of the Tax Collector - a humble heart positioned towards God, being vulnerable before others and receiving God's love and mercy.

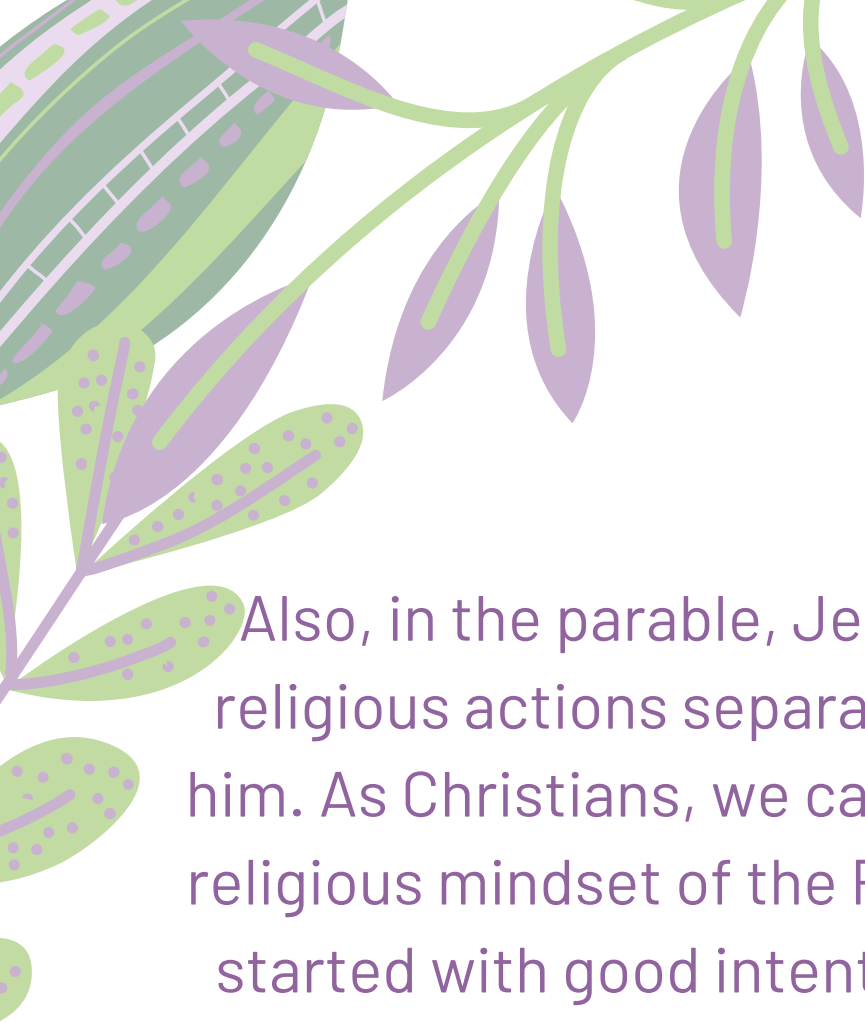


How might we respond?

Through this parable, Jesus is inviting us to adopt this humble position before him just like the Tax Collector did, knowing we have nothing without God's love and generosity. With God, we can live a life of worship and generosity. A life that values a heart's attitude over any actions or amounts, celebrating others over comparison with others and receiving God's love and mercy over achieving it.

Do you think Jesus is inviting you to make a change in your heart's attitude, celebrate others or receive his love and mercy? How can you best respond to that invitation today?





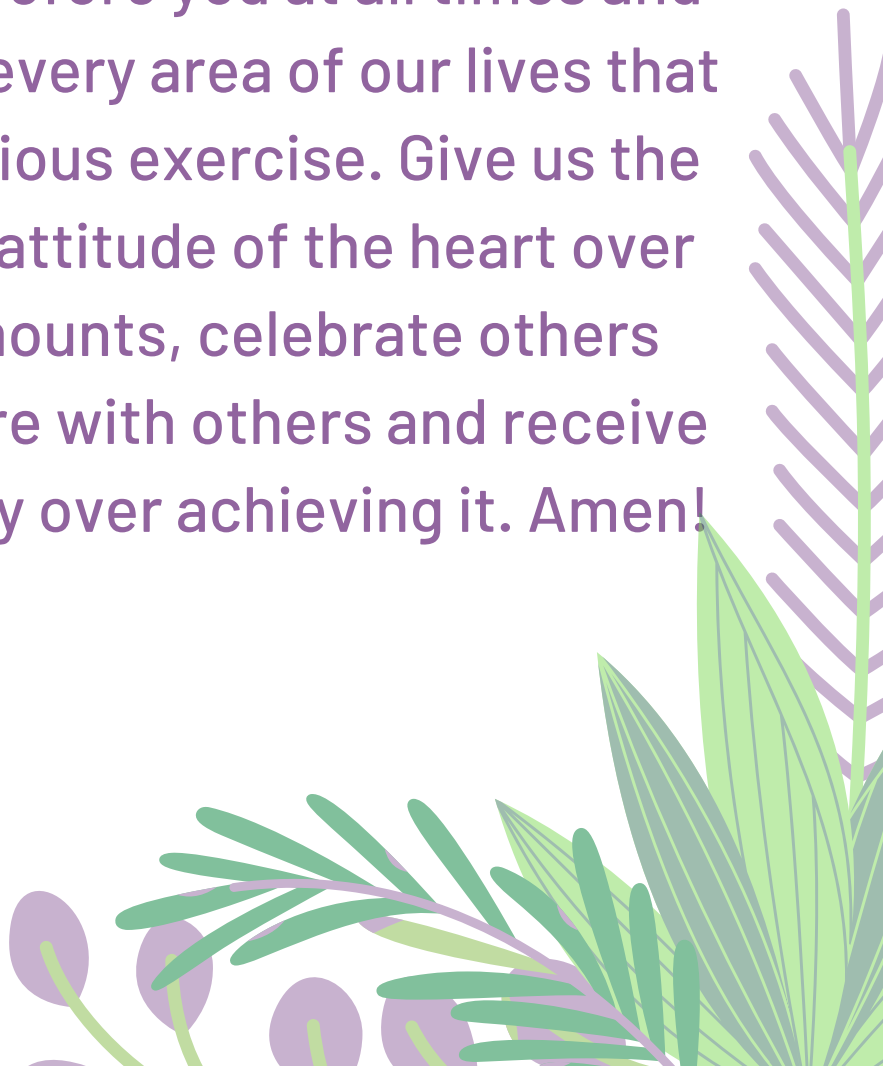
Also, in the parable, Jesus is challenging religious actions separate from a heart for him. As Christians, we can often slip into the religious mindset of the Pharisee, even if we started with good intentions. Our financial giving can stay at the same level and become a formality. We may begrudgingly serve in the same team at church out of obligation or show off what we do for God before others.



**What part of your life has become religious?
Where would you like to make a change in
your heart or habits?**

Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Jesus, thank you for your example of humility in this parable and throughout your life and teachings. We pray that we can learn to adopt a humble posture before you at all times and that you challenge every area of our lives that has become a religious exercise. Give us the grace to value the attitude of the heart over any actions or amounts, celebrate others rather than compare with others and receive your love and mercy over achieving it. Amen!





THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON



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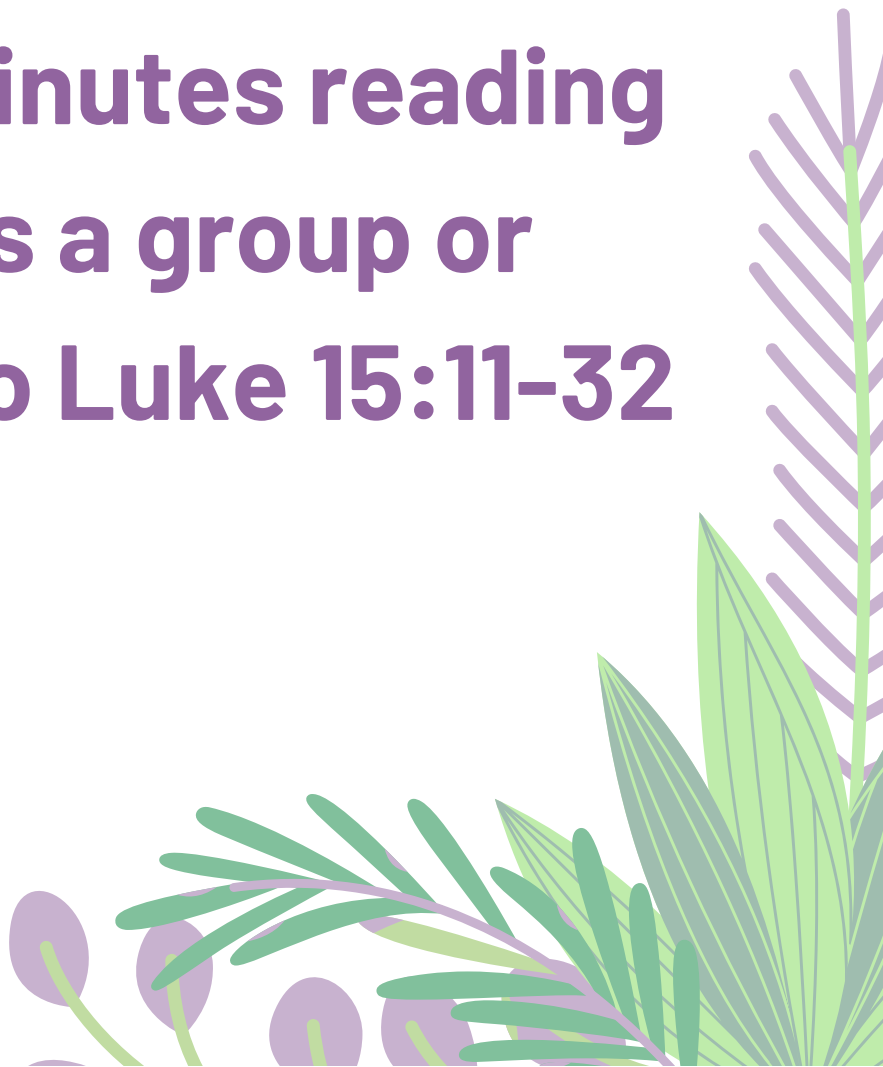
Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

Before you discuss the questions on the next page as a group, spend 5 minutes reading aloud as a group or listening to Luke 15:11-32



LET'S *Talk*



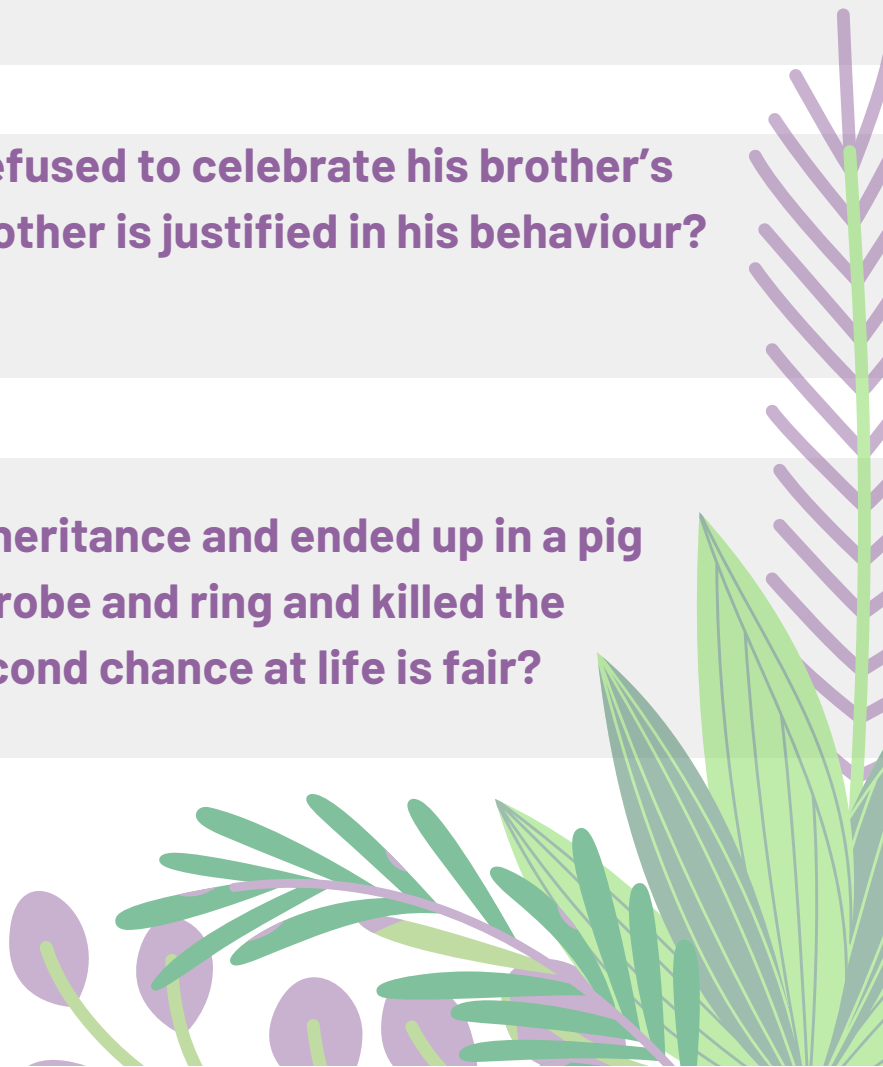
Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

Which of the younger son, the older son or the father do you identify with the most? Why?

The father's response to the return of his younger son is radically generous. Have you shown or received generosity like this?

The older son was furious and refused to celebrate his brother's return. Do you think the older brother is justified in his behaviour? Why or why not?

The younger son spent all his inheritance and ended up in a pig sty. Yet his father gave him the robe and ring and killed the fatted calf. Do you think this second chance at life is fair?





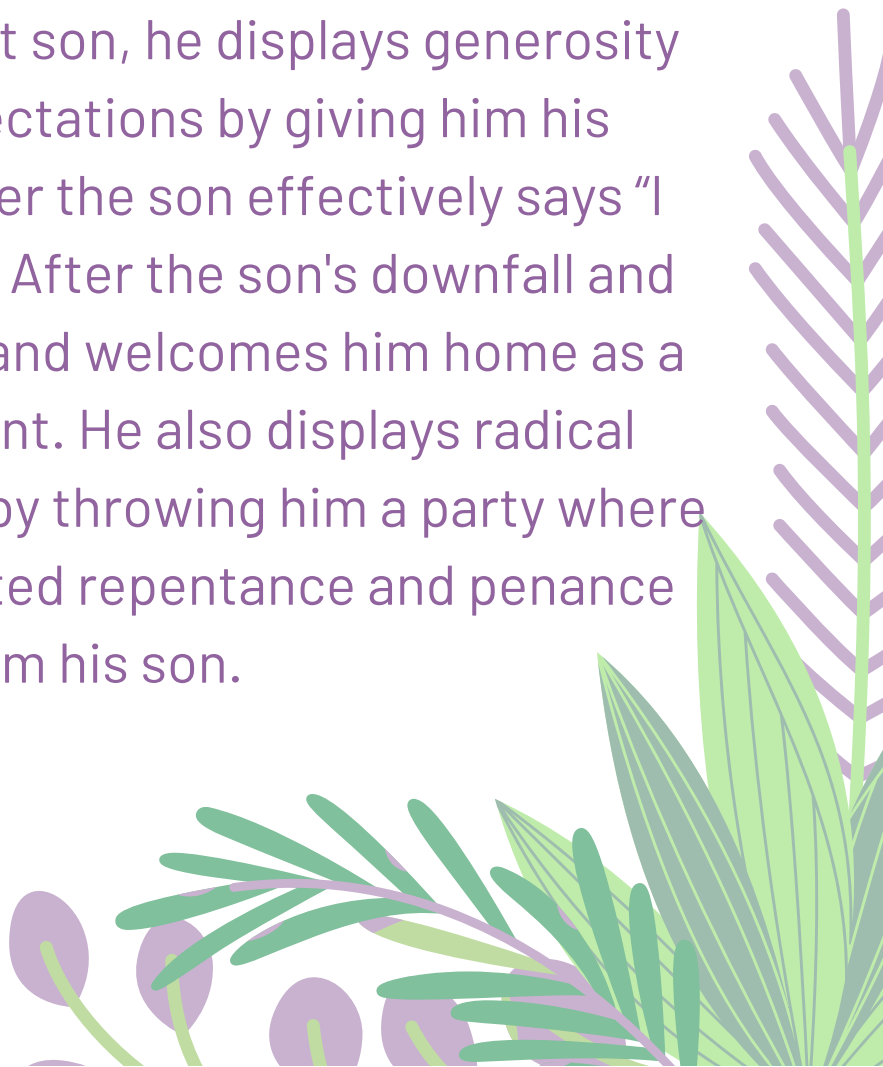
Reflection

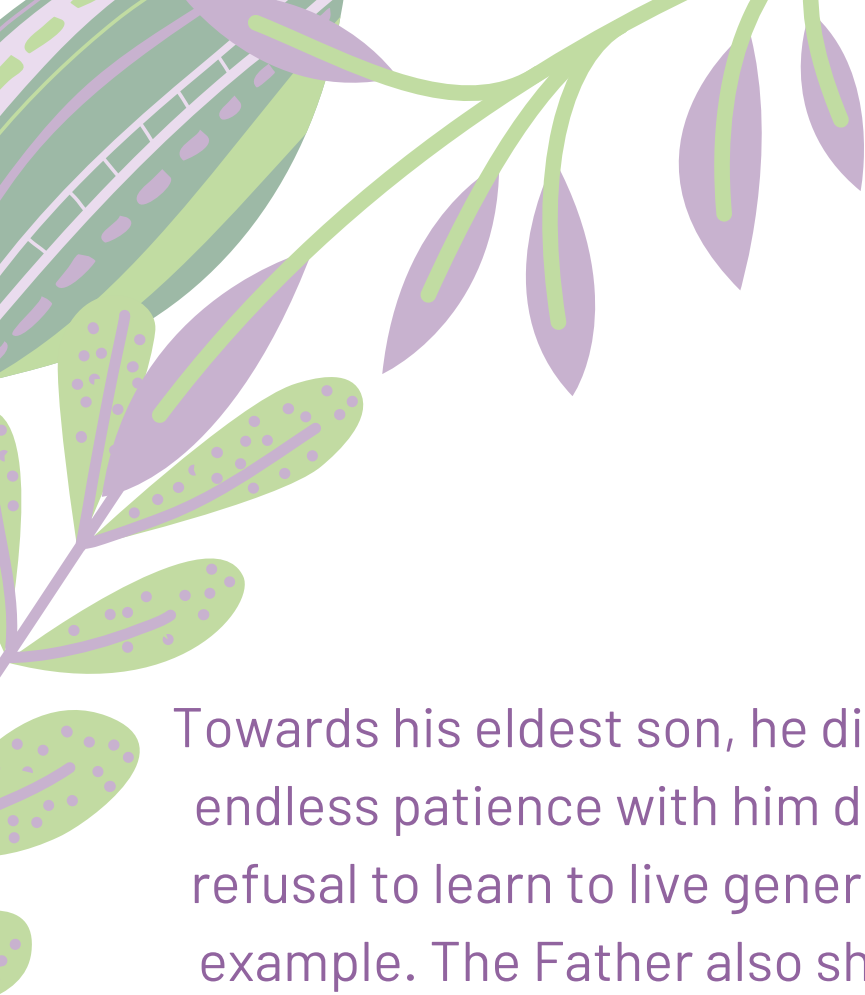
Spend 15 minutes in reflection as a group. As part of this time please read the reflection below and/or listen to the sermon from Bishop Sophie Jelley.

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

This parable that Jesus told is often called the parable of the lost son or the prodigal son. Still, a better title might be the parable of the loving, generous father. This father is one of our most excellent biblical examples of generosity. He models generosity, sharing, giving, kindness, and love in this one parable.

Towards his youngest son, he displays generosity that shatters expectations by giving him his inheritance early after the son effectively says “I wish you were dead”. After the son's downfall and waste, he embraces and welcomes him home as a son and not a servant. He also displays radical generosity and grace by throwing him a party where he could have expected repentance and penance from his son.





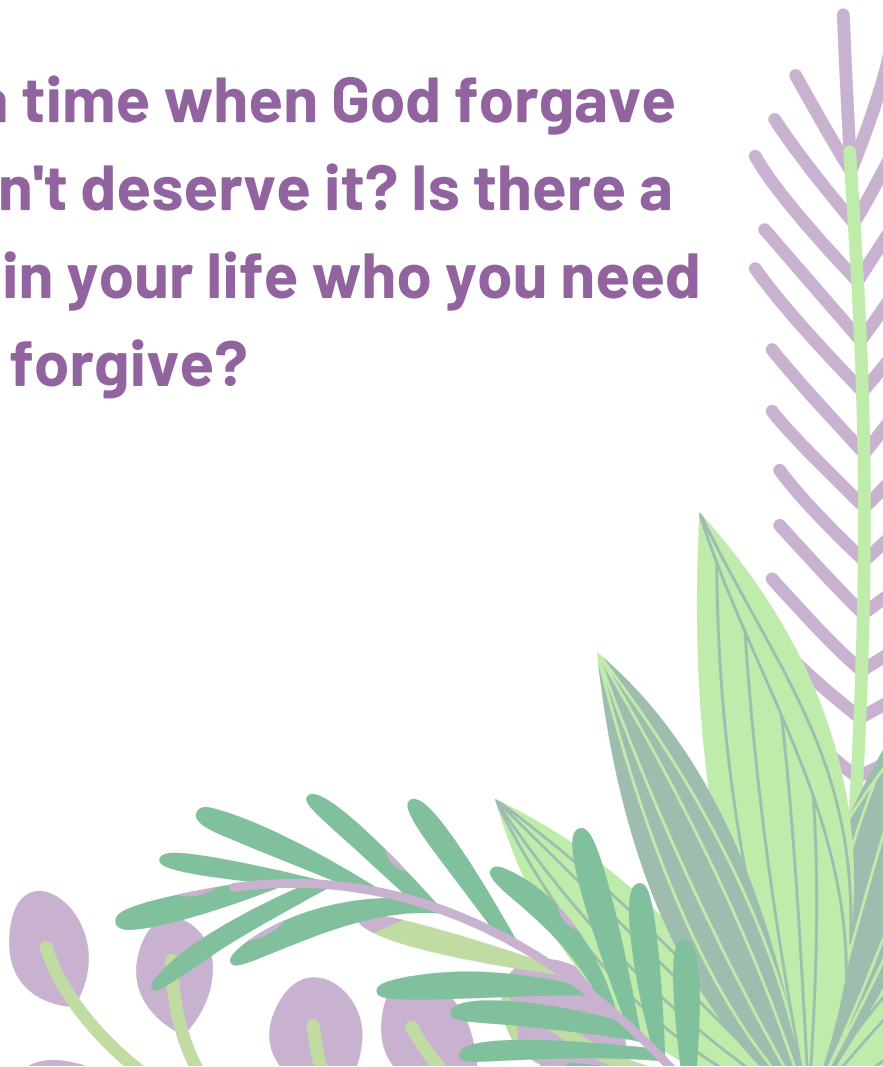
Towards his eldest son, he displays generosity in his endless patience with him despite the eldest son's refusal to learn to live generously from the father's example. The Father also shows impressive grace and mercy in responding to anger and jealousy from his eldest son. The Father never stopped hoping and believing in his eldest son. He even takes time out from the party to tell him that everything he (the father) has belongs to him (the son). What a good dad!

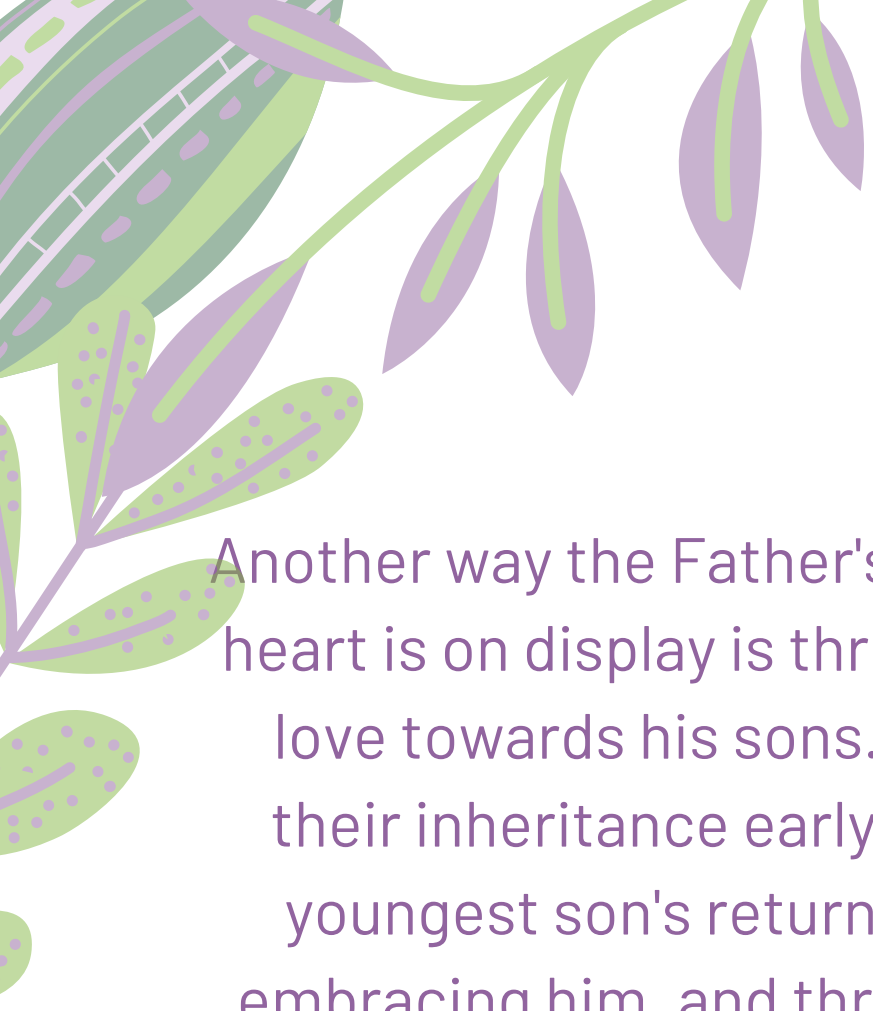
This father shows each of his sons the generous love God shows us. God loves each of us equally, showers us with blessings and acts with grace we don't deserve, and invites us into an abundant life where we look to share, give and celebrate with others.

How might we respond?

The father acts with mercy and grace towards both of his sons and displays his loving and generous heart. Despite betrayal and belittling, the father responded with a kind heart and a tenderness that neither deserved. As a merciful father, God longs to speak to us with compassion and lavish his love upon us. If only we could see everything he has belongs to us too.

Can you think of a time when God forgave you when you didn't deserve it? Is there a "younger brother" in your life who you need to forgive?





Another way the Father's loving and generous heart is on display is through his extravagant love towards his sons. He gifts both sons their inheritance early. He celebrates the youngest son's return by running to him, embracing him, and throwing a lavish party.

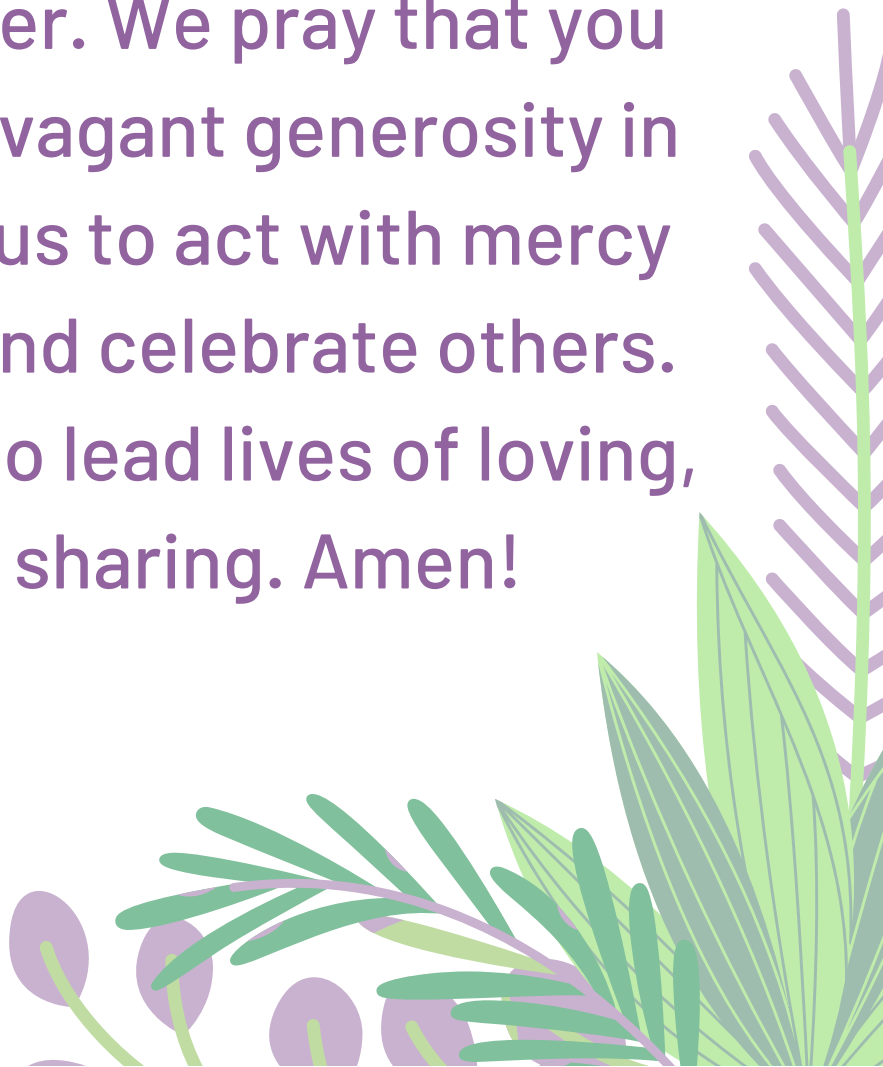
He returns the eldest son's anger with compassion and grace. God also longs to lavish this extravagant love upon his as our generous and loving Father.

Can you think of a time when God has lavished his extravagant love upon you? Is there anything you could do today to celebrate others? (e.g. encouraging someone with words, buying them a gift)

Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord God, thank you that you are a loving, merciful and extravagantly generous Father. We pray that you form this extravagant generosity in us by allowing us to act with mercy and kindness and celebrate others. Please help us to lead lives of loving, giving and sharing. Amen!





THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL



**THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD**
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated



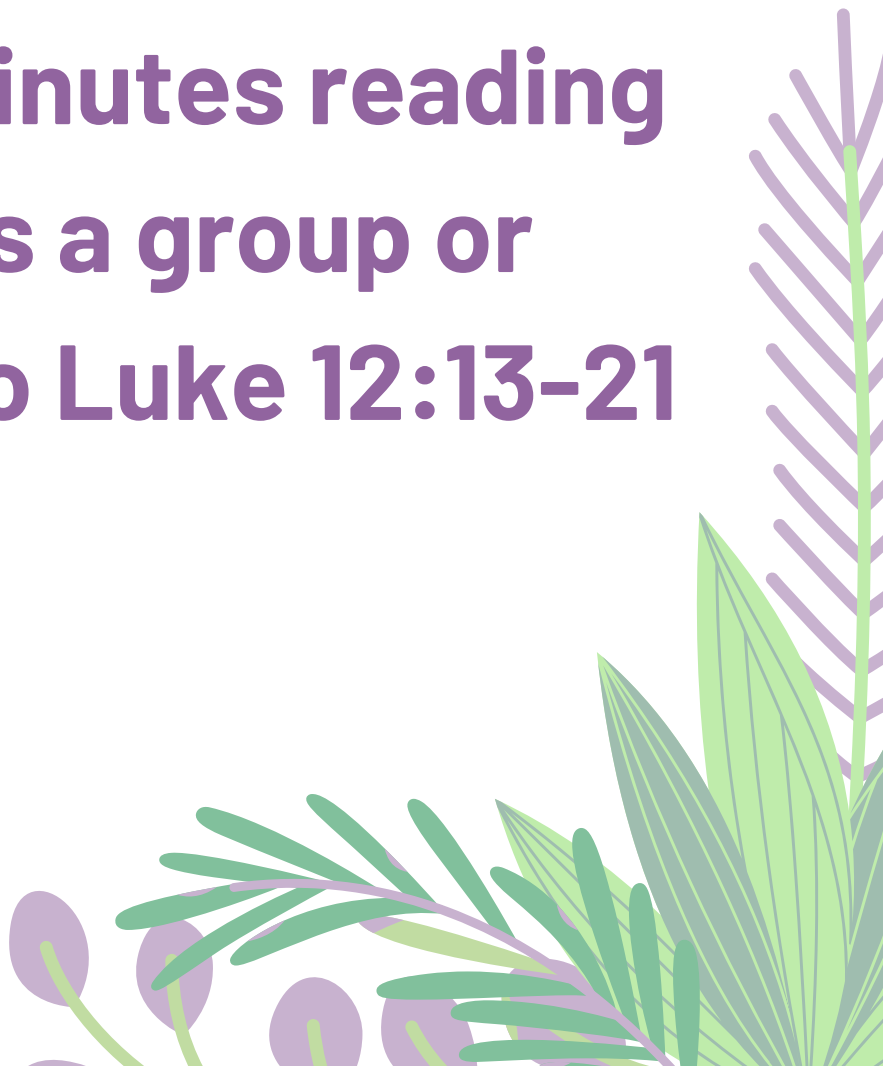
Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

Before you discuss the questions on the next page as a group, spend 5 minutes reading aloud as a group or listening to Luke 12:13–21



LET'S *Talk*



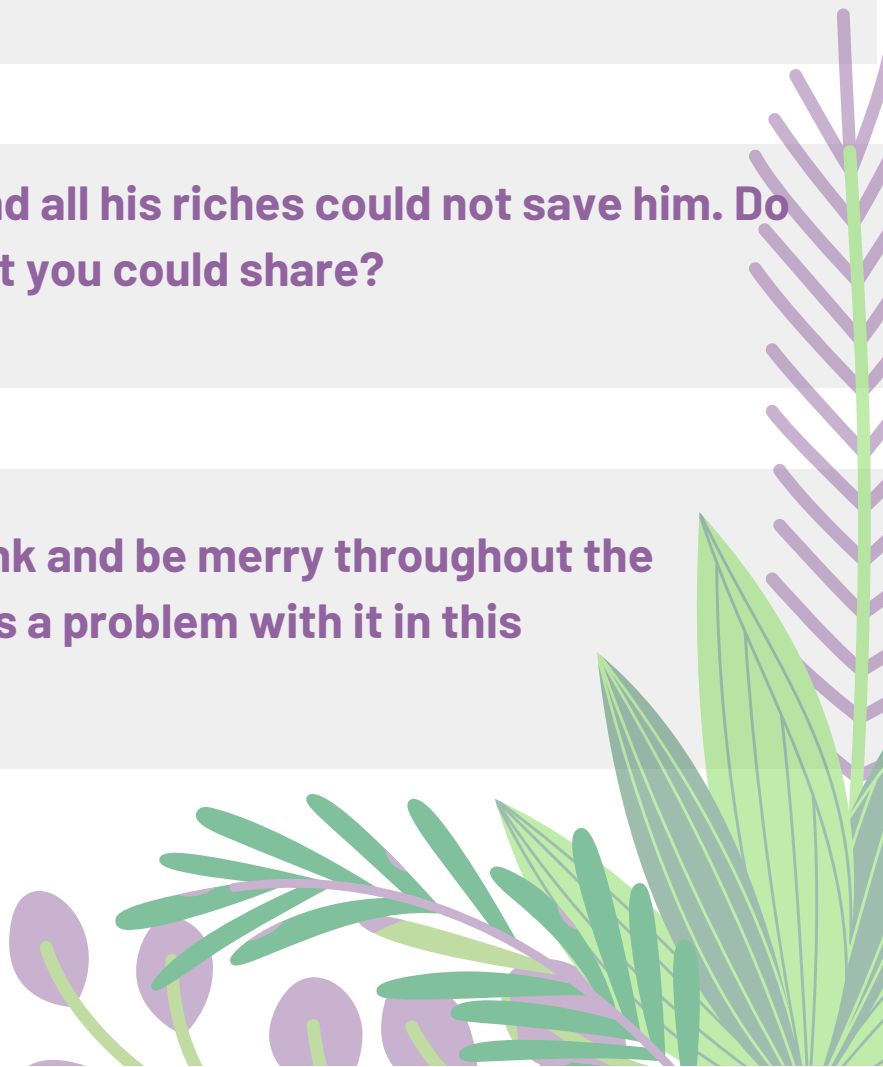
Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

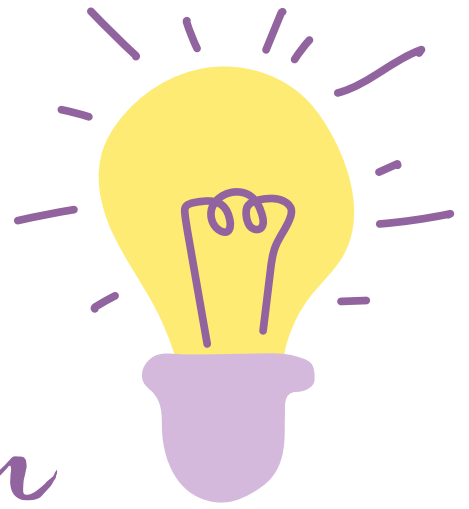
The title for this parable is the Rich Fool. What title would you give to this parable?

Before the man built bigger barns for all his riches - what would you have counselled the man to do?

This man's life ended quickly, and all his riches could not save him. Do you have anything stored up that you could share?

Jesus encourages us to eat, drink and be merry throughout the gospels. Why do you think he has a problem with it in this parable?





Reflection

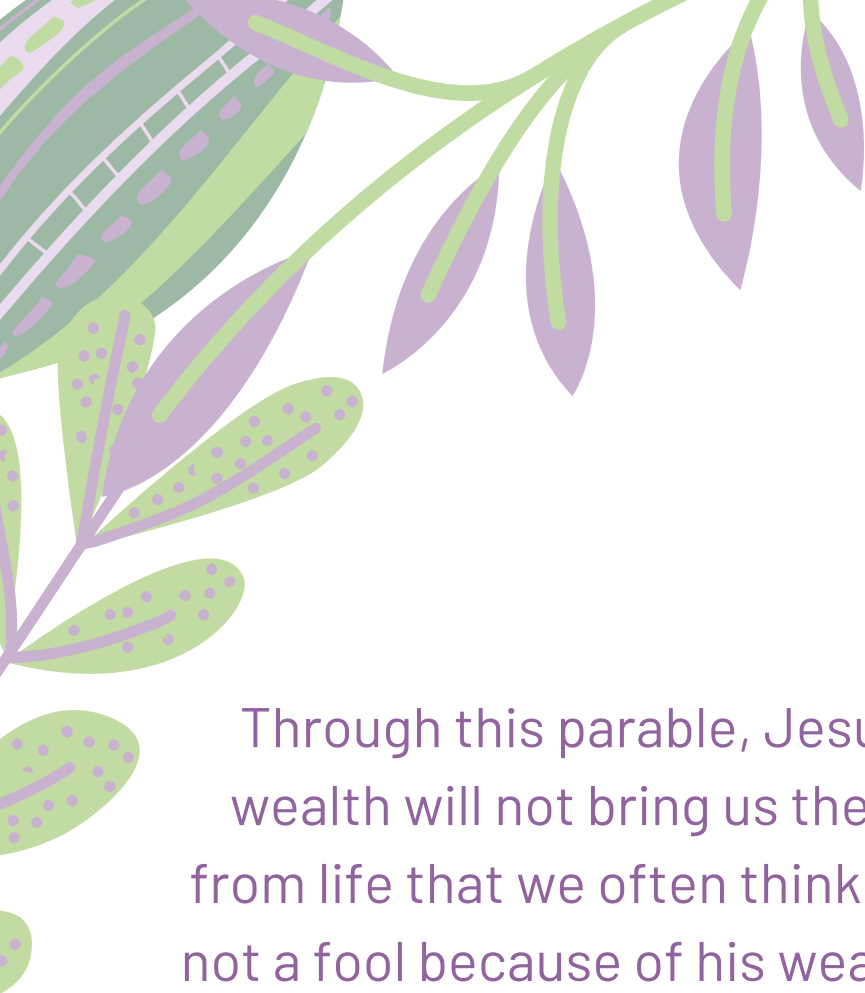
Spend 15 minutes in reflection as a group. As part of this time please read the reflection below and/or listen to the sermon from Javaid Iqbal (Archdeacon of Doncaster)

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

The man in Jesus' parable had fertile ground for farming, resulting in significant material and financial success. He was so successful that he had trouble managing his resources. This man designated the "rich fool", took our typical approach. To take control, plan our steps and build bigger to put more away, so we don't need to rely on God. An abundant life is something we can make for ourselves – why do we need Jesus?

But God said to him, "Fool! This night your life will be required of you": He made plans for life and business but could not control the day of his death – in one night, all the man's accomplishments and goals were up in flames.



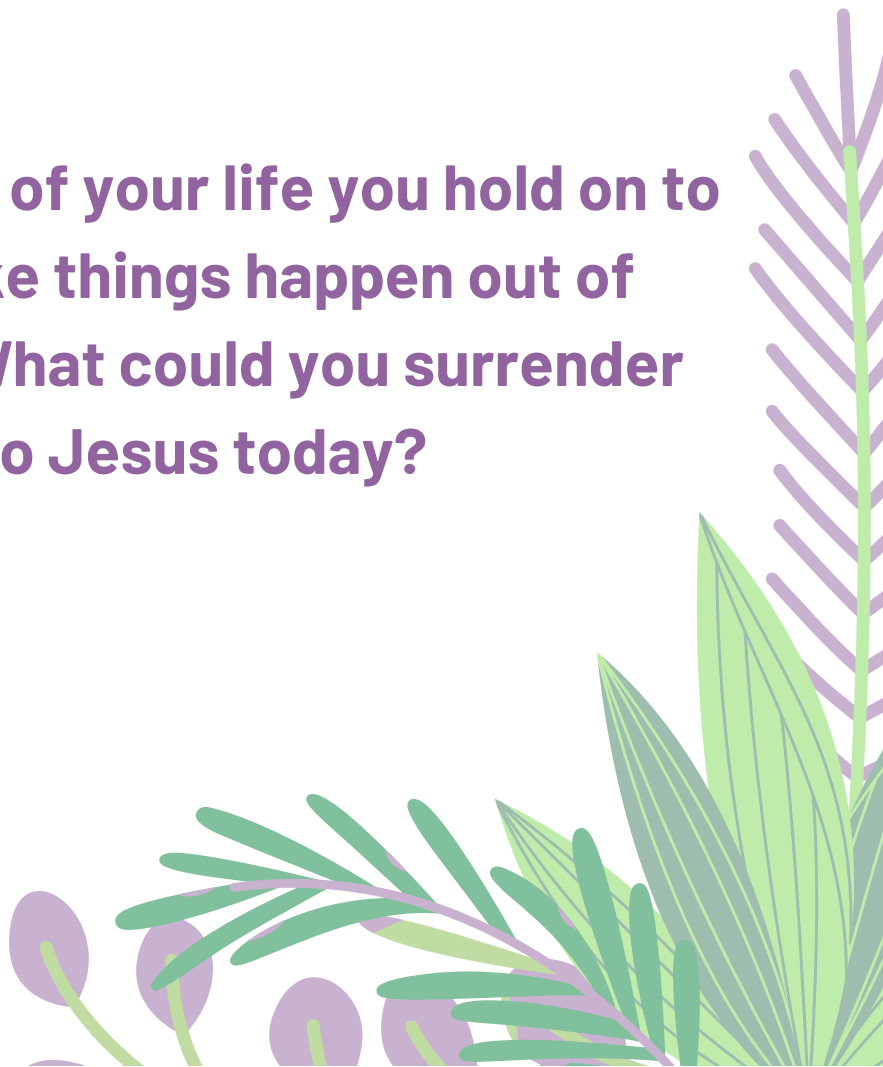


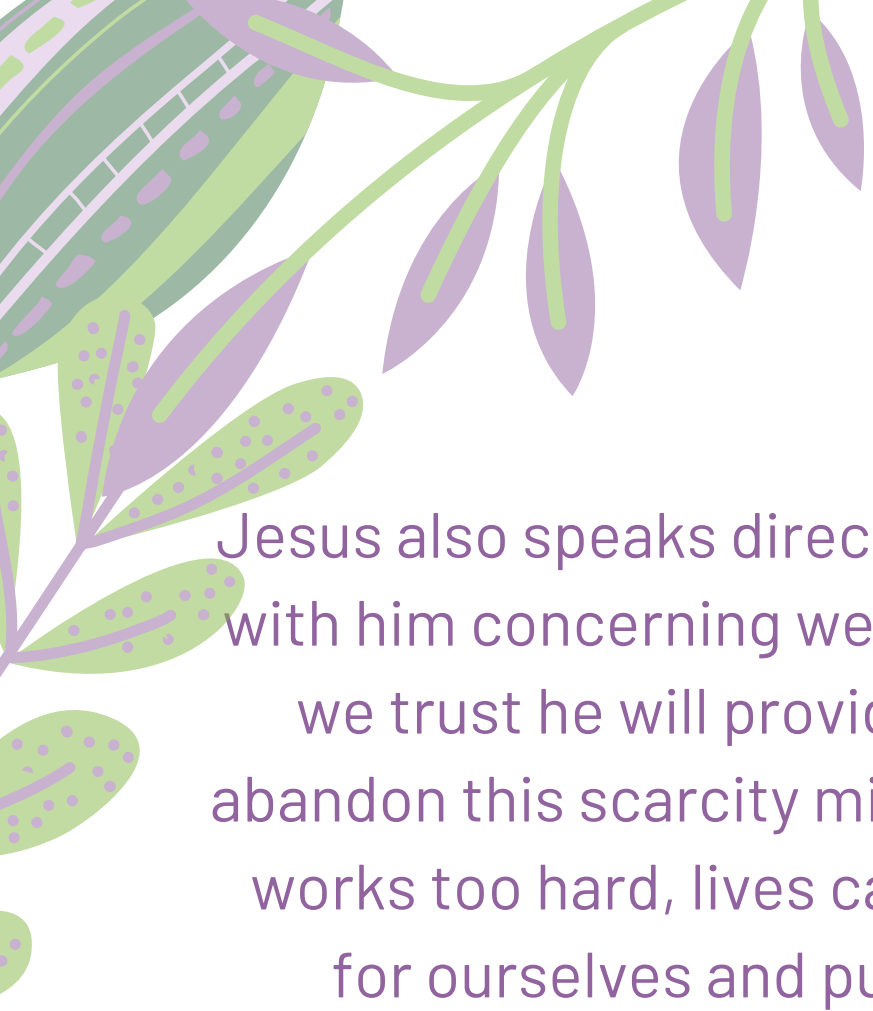
Through this parable, Jesus is showing us that wealth will not bring us the security and control from life that we often think it will. The Rich Fool is not a fool because of his wealth but because he felt he was in control and that his success was down to him and him alone. The very things he took for granted – his ground, his success, his life – was because Jesus wanted to bless him and not because of his hard work or prowess. The rich Fool possessed a short-term focus based on what he possessed on earth but Jesus wants us to cast our gaze and our resources wider and to others – to build his eternal kingdom.

How might we respond?

Through this parable, Jesus is calling us to move from a life determined by scarcity to a life of abundance. To live this abundant life is to live a life of surrender to Jesus. In giving up control and accepting our position as sons and daughters, we can learn to trust in God's sovereignty, that he is in control and not us. He is God, the Father, and we are his children.

What are the areas of your life you hold on to control and make things happen out of Jesus's timing? What could you surrender control to Jesus today?





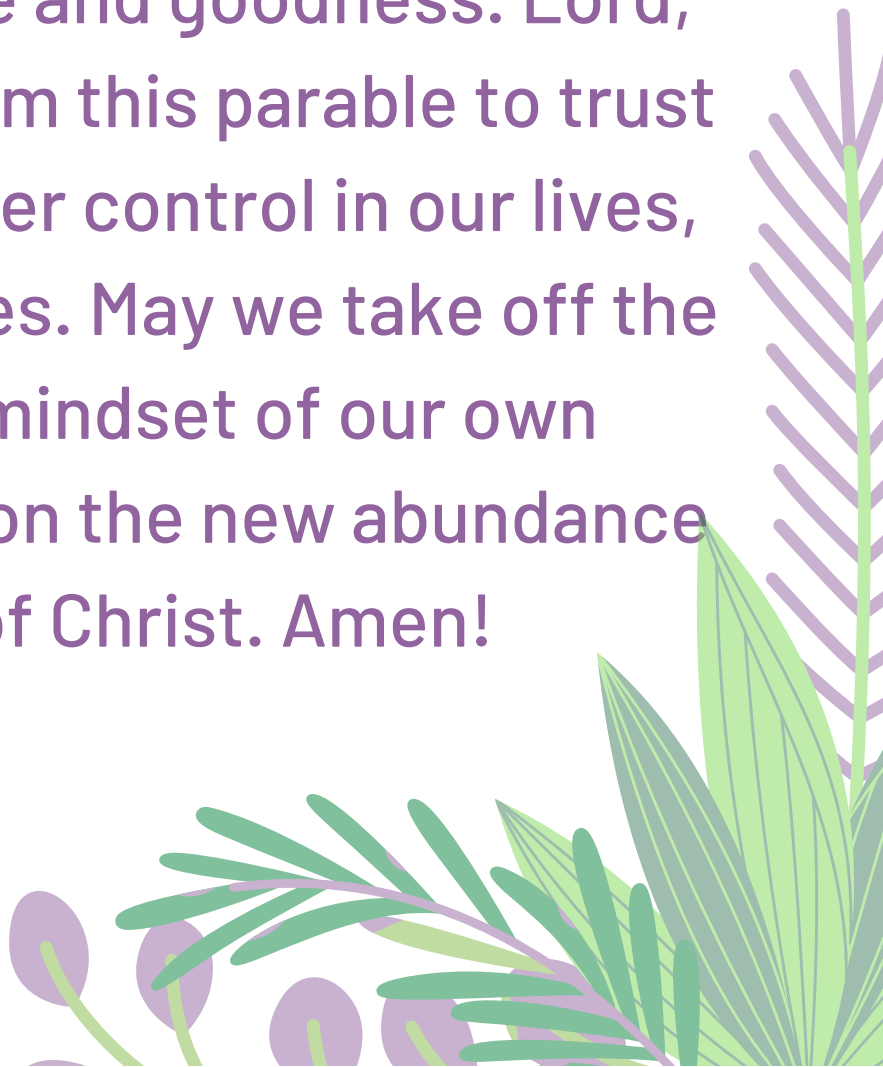
Jesus also speaks directly to our relationship with him concerning wealth and finances. Do we trust he will provide? He wants us to abandon this scarcity mindset that gives less, works too hard, lives cautiously, and keeps for ourselves and put on a Christ-like abundance mindset. This mindset results in a more generous person who extravagantly gives from the heart, leans into God's rest, takes God-sized risks, and lavishes gifts on others.

Where in your finances could you start to live abundantly? Could you make a change today to help yourself and help others?

Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Jesus, thank you for being wildly generous to us and that you are abundant in love and goodness. Lord, may we learn from this parable to trust you and surrender control in our lives, work and finances. May we take off the old scarcity mindset of our own making and put on the new abundance mindset of Christ. Amen!





THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER



**THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD**
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated



Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

**Before you discuss the
questions on the next page
as a group,
spend 5 minutes reading
aloud as a group or listening
to Luke 13:1-9 & 18-23**



LET'S *Talk*



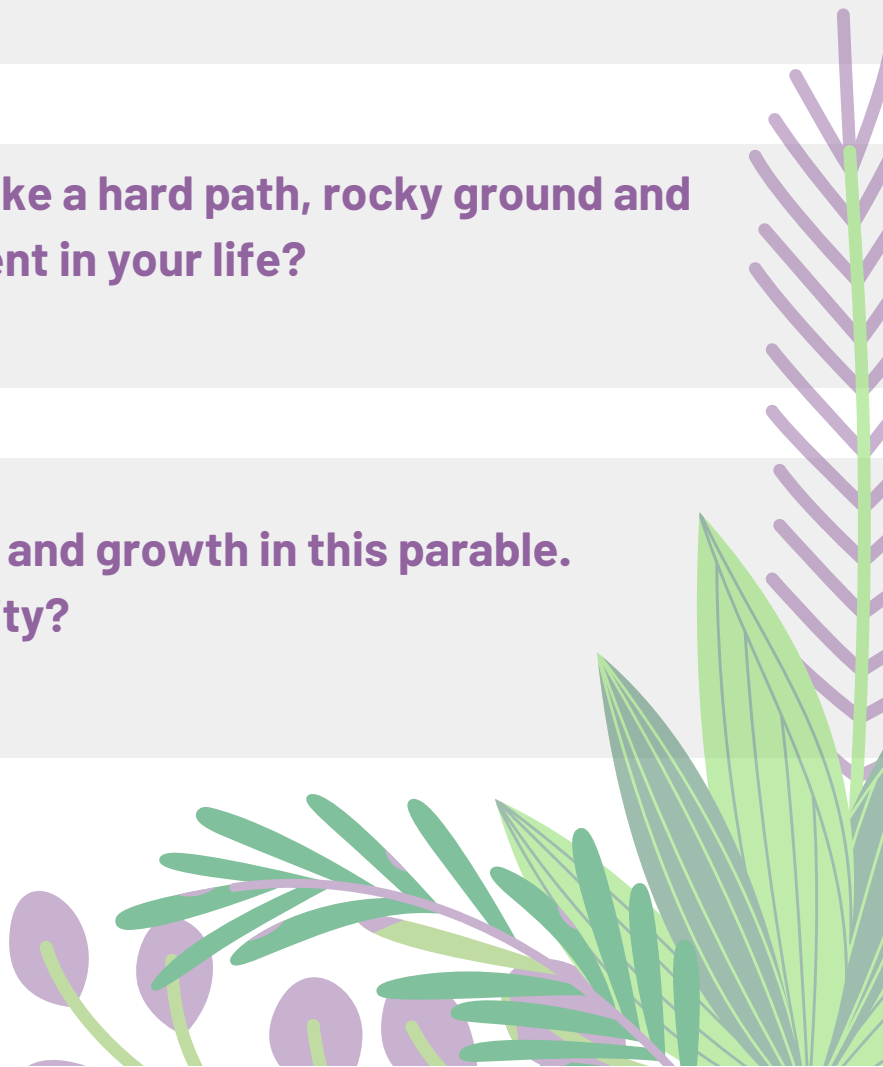
Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

What do the four soils represent? How might they apply to your context?

Jesus talks of a farmer knowingly spreading seeds over poor soil. What do you make of this?

This parable talks of obstacles like a hard path, rocky ground and thorns. What might they represent in your life?

There are themes of fruitfulness and growth in this parable. How might these link to generosity?





Reflection

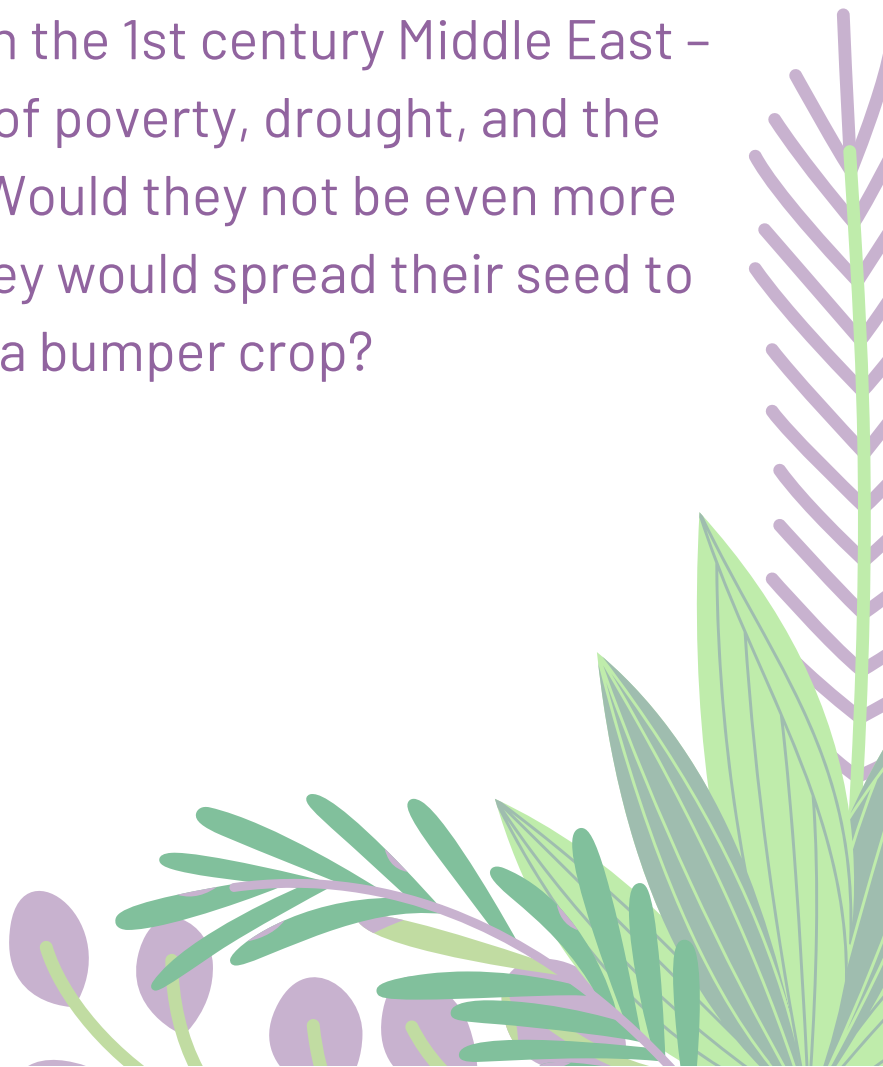


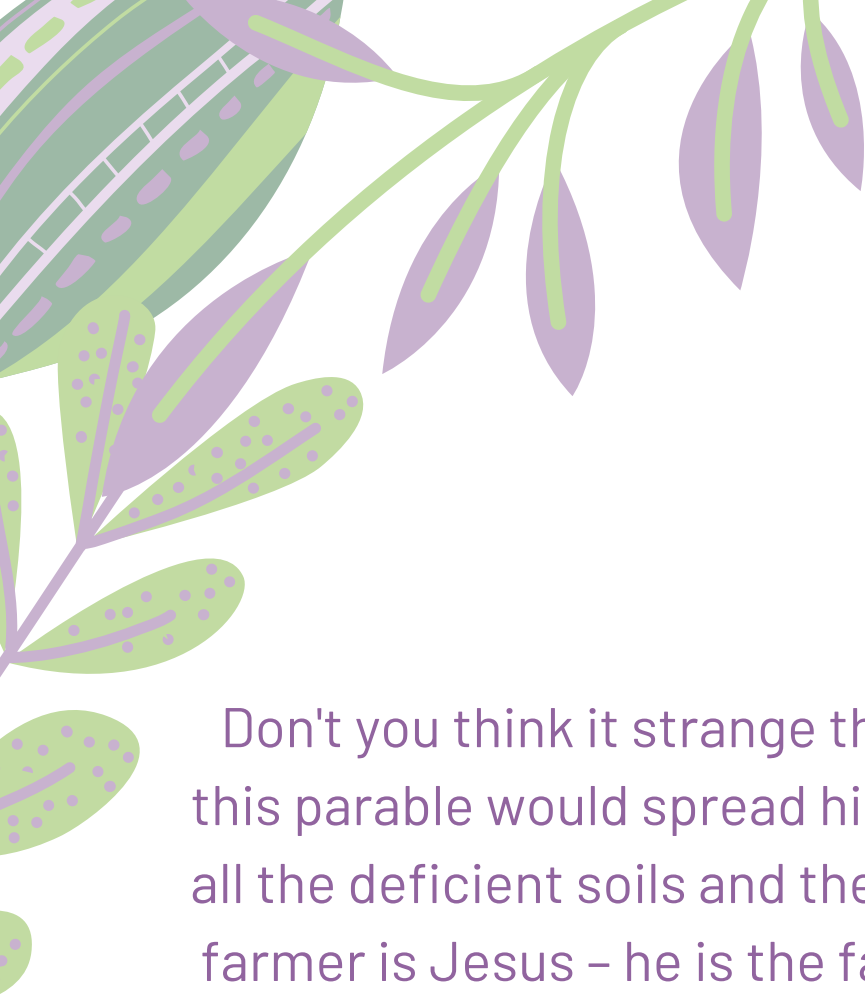
Spend 15 minutes in reflection as a group. As part of this time please read the reflection below and/or listen to the sermon from Malcolm Chamberlain (Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham)

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

Take a minute and think of any situation where you have to decide where to invest your resources. Whether this is at work, in relationships or even in choosing where to live, I would bet that you would take the time to find the best and most fruitful use of these resources.

Think about a farmer in the 1st century Middle East – with the challenges of poverty, drought, and the harsh environment. Would they not be even more careful with where they would spread their seed to achieve a bumper crop?





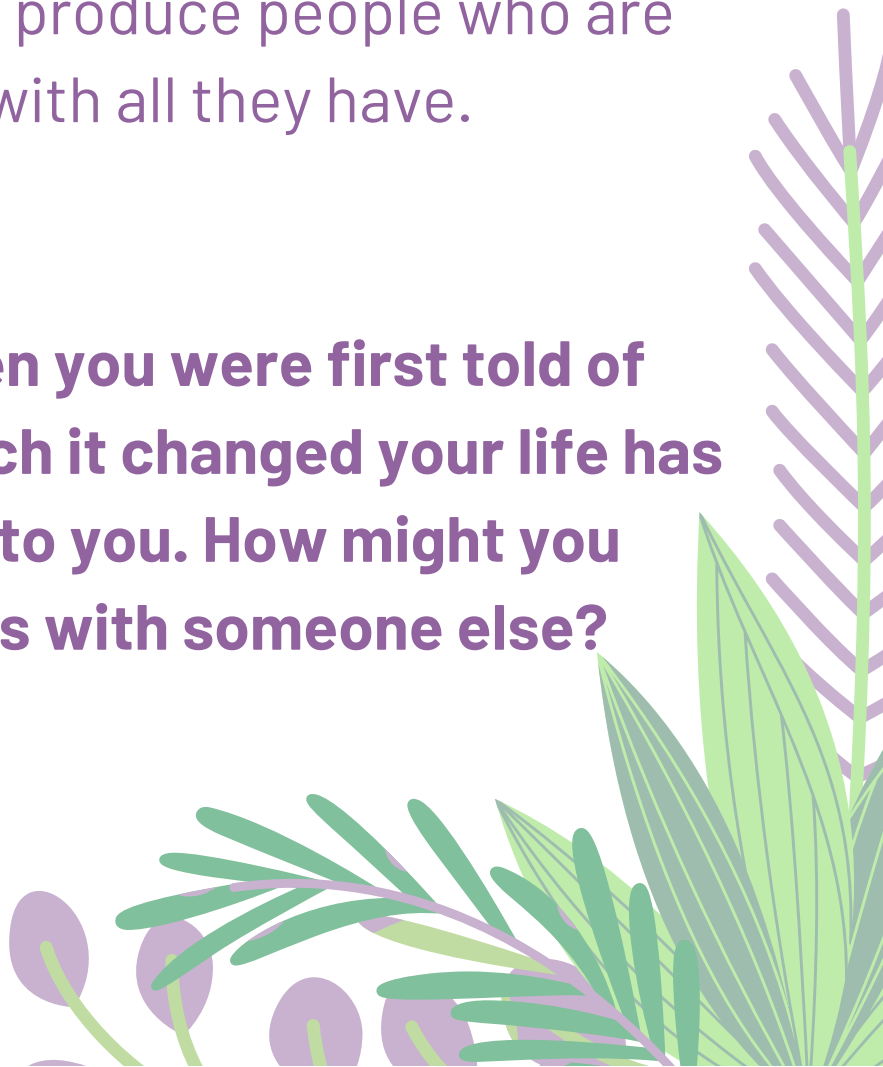
Don't you think it strange then that the farmer in this parable would spread his seed on the path and all the deficient soils and the infertile ground? This farmer is Jesus – he is the farmer who generously spreads seeds on all types of soil to give every seed a chance to bear fruit. In his infinite grace, Jesus has given himself, and his words have fallen on all kinds of people from all backgrounds and have a chance to bear fruit.

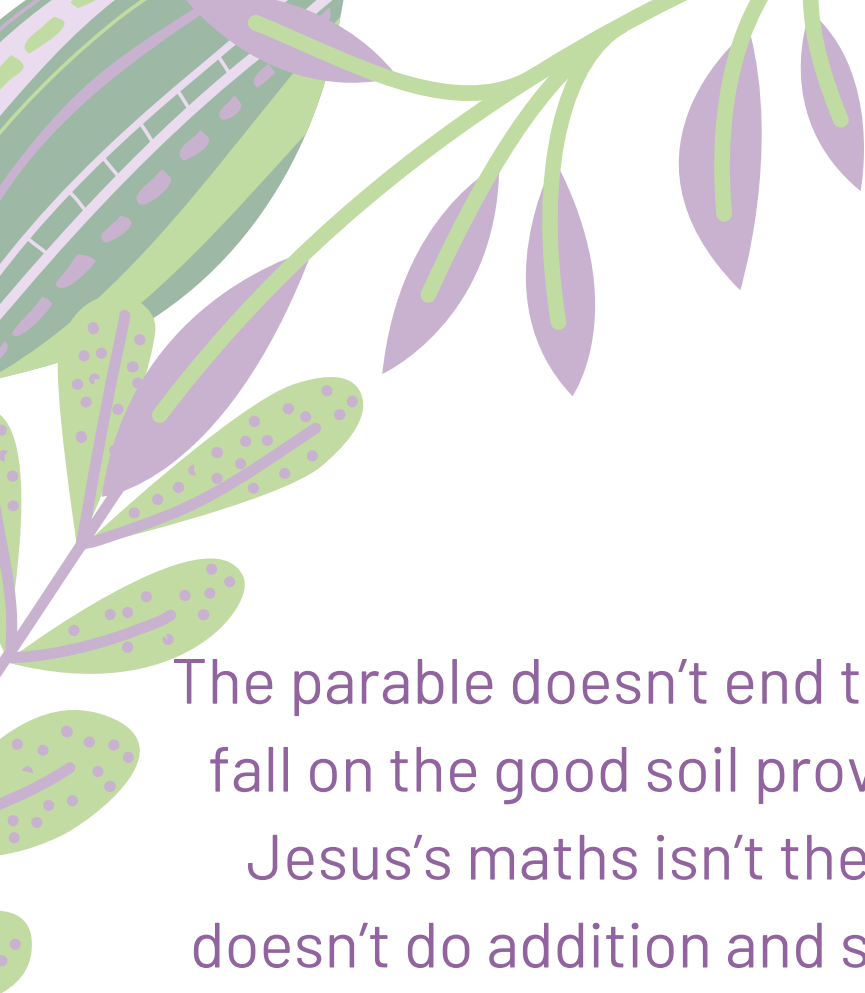
He has made no distinction between us despite our appearance, our environment, or where we are at in life. God is a good God, and God's generosity knows no limit.

How might we respond?

A farmer does not sow his seed without expecting a return on his efforts. Through Jesus giving of himself to us, there is an expectation that we might bear fruit and be generous in broadcasting the word of God. Jesus offers an invitation to share the good news of God's kingdom with those around you to change lives— knowing that lives changed by that gospel will produce people who are generous with all they have.

Think about when you were first told of Jesus and how much it changed your life has been generous to you. How might you reciprocate this with someone else?





The parable doesn't end there. The seeds that fall on the good soil provide a bumper crop.

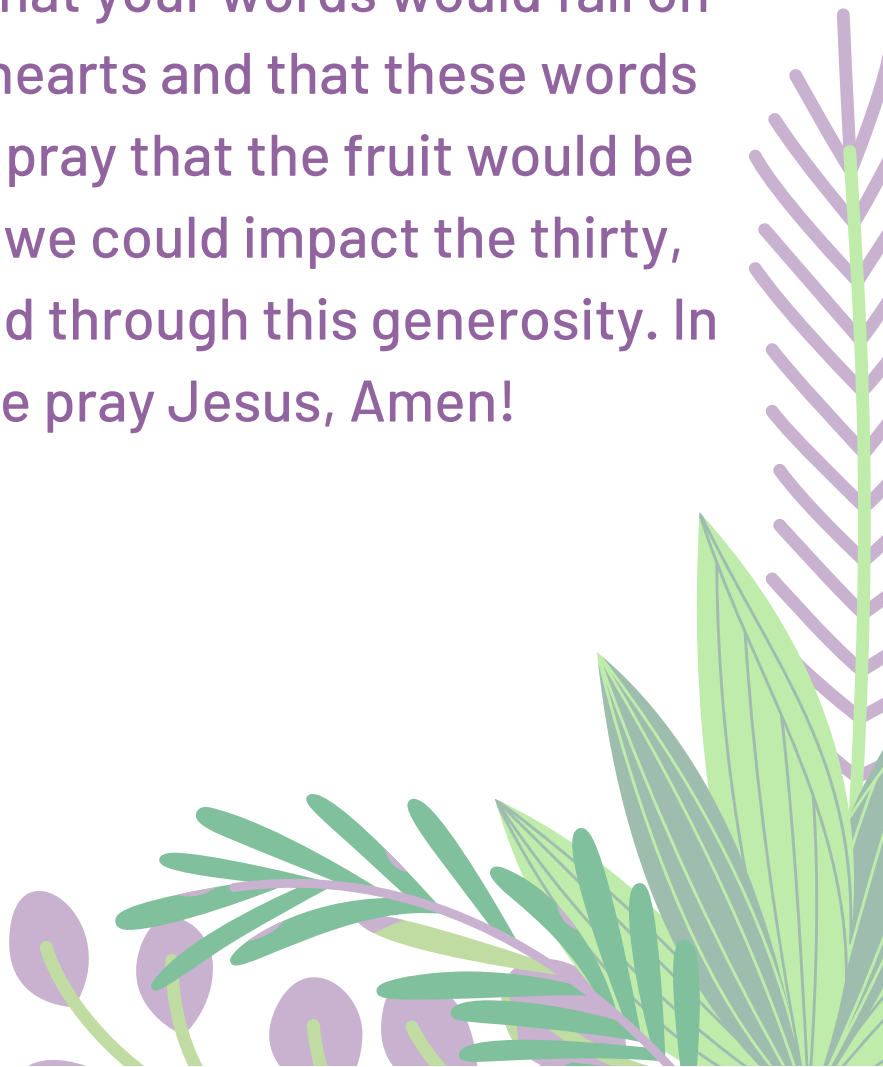
Jesus's maths isn't the same as ours. He doesn't do addition and subtraction; he does multiplication to the thirty, sixty and hundred-fold. Generosity isn't a zero-sum game. If we dedicate our lives to generosity, we can impact many lives outside of our own and encourage others to do the same.

Where can you in your job, your community or a relationship can you make a lasting impact to the thirty, sixty, or hundred-fold?

Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Jesus, we thank you that you are the farmer in this parable. Despite plenty of better choices or opportunities, you chose to reveal yourself to each of us. We pray that your words would fall on the good soil of our hearts and that these words would take root. We pray that the fruit would be generosity and that we could impact the thirty, sixty and hundred-fold through this generosity. In your name, we pray Jesus, Amen!





THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS



**THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD**
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated



Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

**Before you discuss the
questions on the next page
as a group,
spend 5 minutes reading
aloud as a group or listening
to Matthew 25:14-30**



LET'S *Talk*



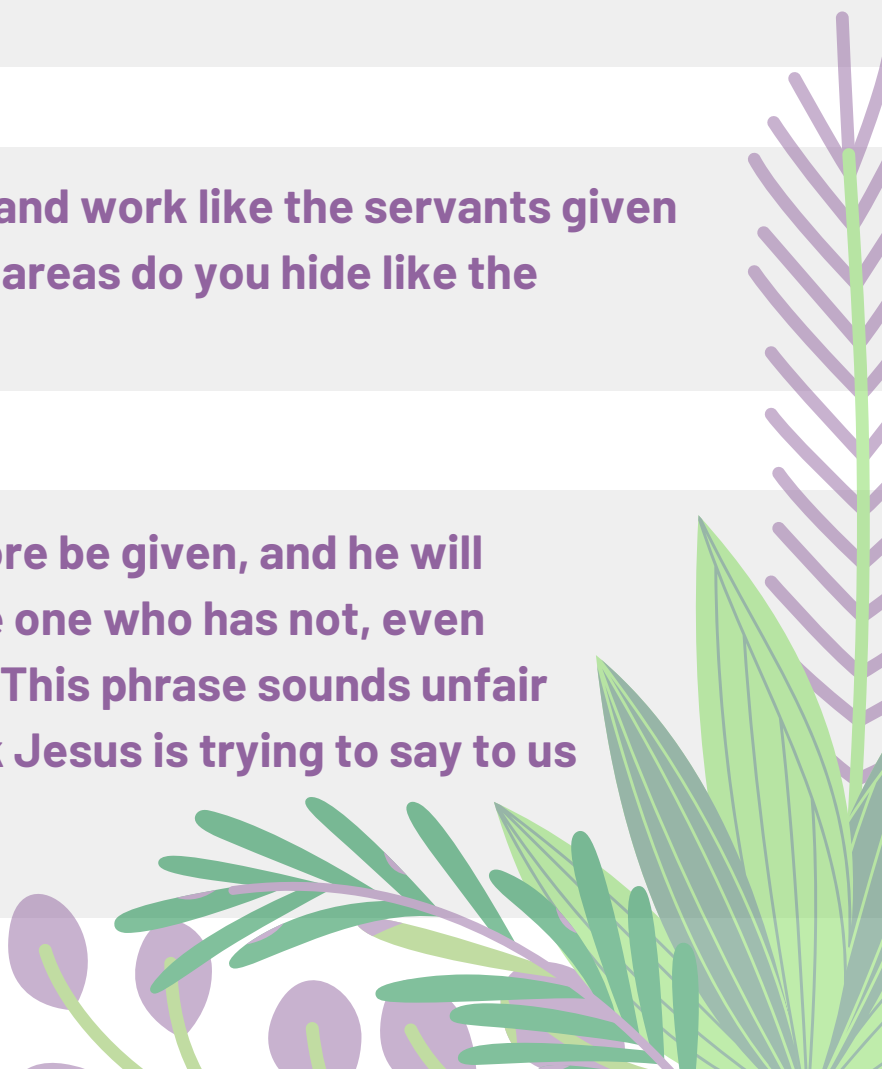
Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

The servants were given an amount each according to their ability. What do you make of this? Which servant would you be?

The priest and the Levite found it difficult to love this man by passing him on the street. Who do you find it difficult to love?

What areas of life do you invest and work like the servants given two and five talents and in what areas do you hide like the servant with one talent?

"For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away". This phrase sounds unfair at first glance. What do you think Jesus is trying to say to us through the Master's words?





Reflection

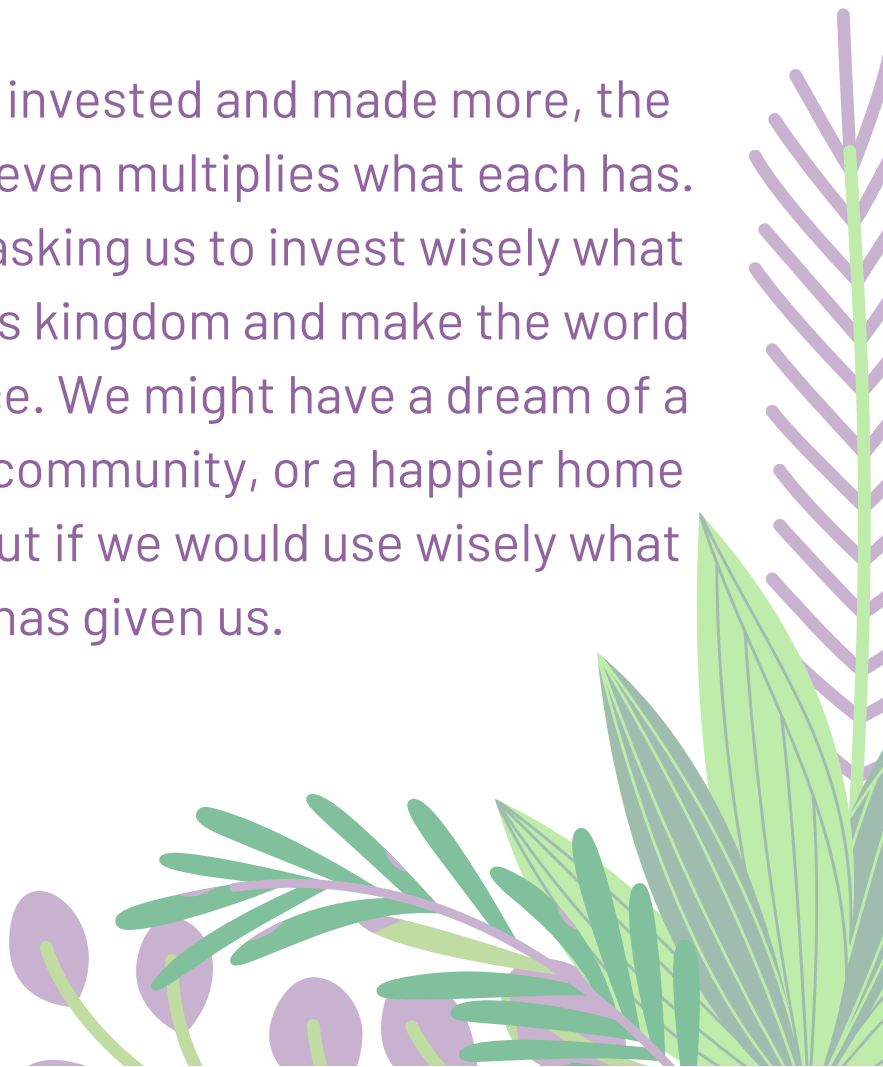


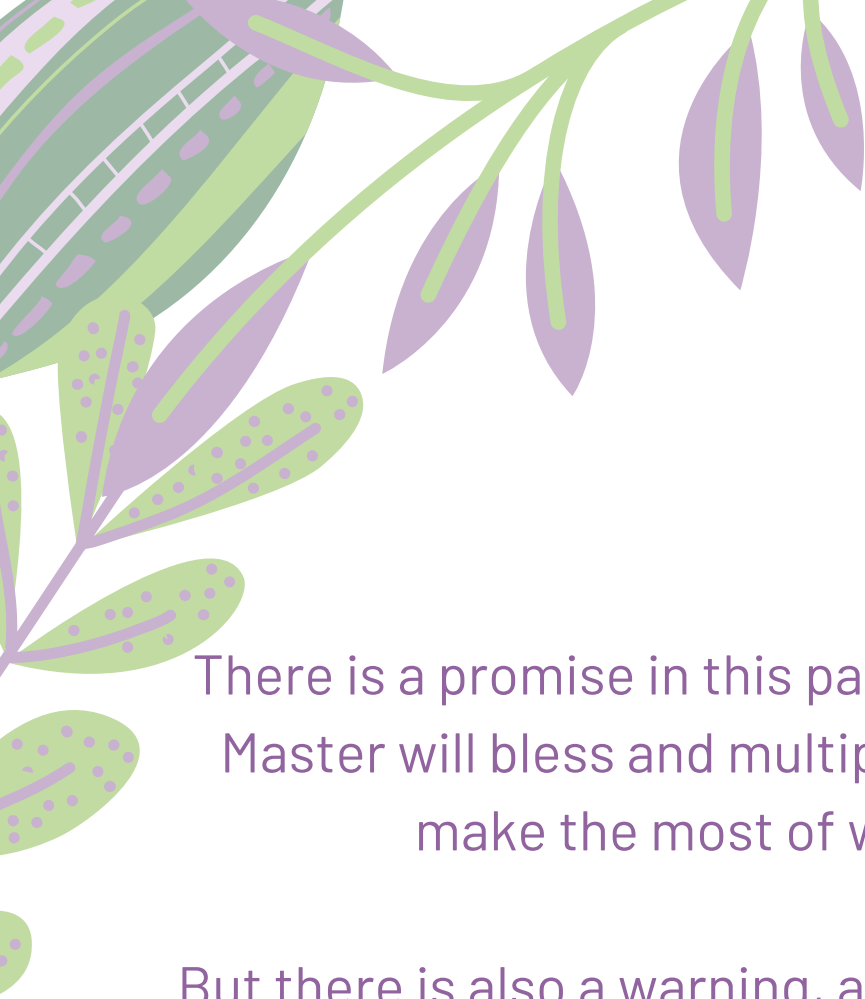
Spend 15 minutes in reflection as a group. As part of this time please read the reflection below and/or listen to the sermon from Libby Culmer (Church Operations and Generosity Development Team Leader)

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

Through this parable, Jesus is displaying a core tenet of living generously – how we steward the blessings we receive from God. Although the parable talks about money and how to invest it, the underlying message is how to use what God has blessed you with in terms of money, time, skills, possessions and potential. The Master provides each servant with an opportunity to do something with the "talents" they have received.

For the servants who invested and made more, the Master is pleased and even multiplies what each has. Jesus, the Master, is asking us to invest wisely what we have to advance his kingdom and make the world we live in a better place. We might have a dream of a business, a friendlier community, or a happier home life waiting to break out if we would use wisely what God has given us.





There is a promise in this parable that Jesus as the Master will bless and multiply what we have if we make the most of what we have.

But there is also a warning, as the master scolds the one who does nothing with the money, taking the talent from him and giving it to him who has the ten talents. The Master was not angry with the servant for the outcome but because he lacked faith and didn't try. The servant could have invested and lost all the Master's money. Still, he hid his resources and potential and wasted his one shot at pleasing the Master, and it was gone forever. Jesus has given us this one shot at life; let's not waste it!

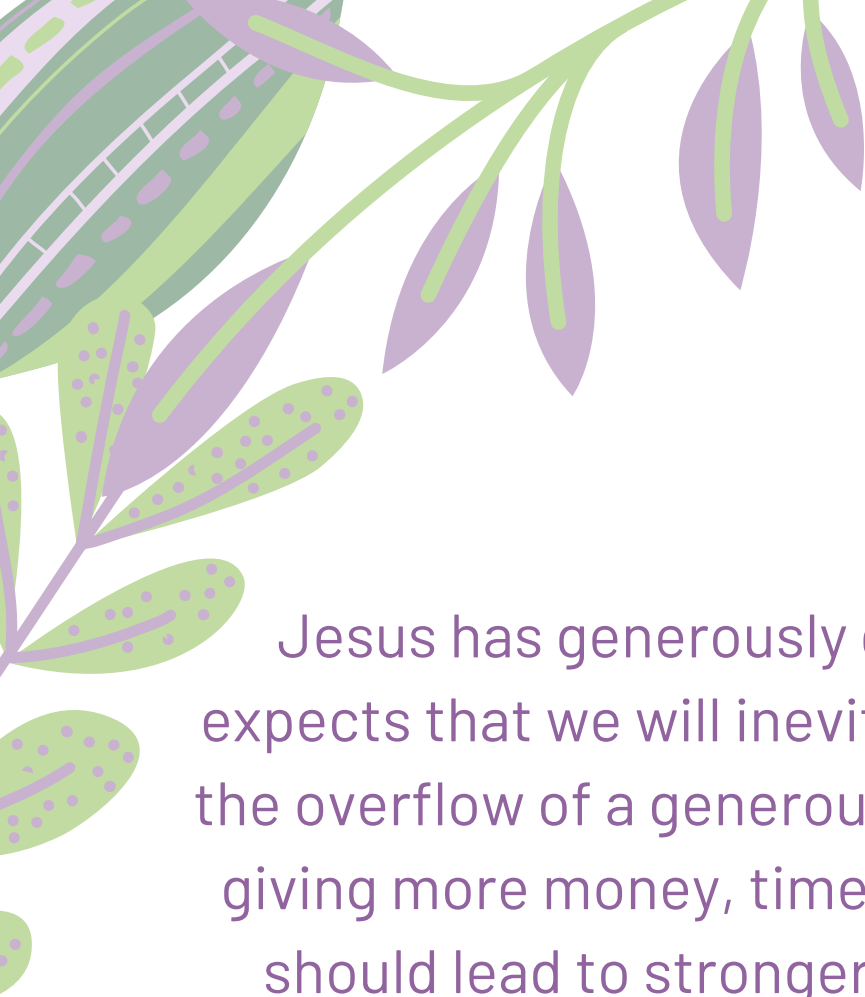
How might we respond?

A life stewarded as Jesus teaches in the parable is one intended to bless our lives and to bless the lives of others. Jesus has given each of us resources of time, treasure (money and wealth) and talents (skills and knowledge) with the responsibility to do something with them and increase the blessings we have.

We should aim to use the money we have to generate financial or social return; we should use our time to add value and use our skills to love and serve others effectively. In doing this, we will make the most of opportunities that come our way.

**What areas (time, treasure, talents) do you think Jesus is challenging you to steward better?
Where could you make one change today?**





Jesus has generously given us to us. He expects that we will inevitably bless others as the overflow of a generous heart. More people giving more money, time and skills to others should lead to stronger families, growing churches, and healthier and more prosperous communities. As we as God's people aim to build God's kingdom here on earth, as in heaven.

Who is Jesus calling you to bless? Can you think of one way you could help them this week?

Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Jesus, thank you for all the blessings you provide for us. Lord, we pray that you can teach and encourage us to use all you have given us wisely and not waste our gifts and opportunities. Thank you for being so generous that you promise us even more blessings if we steward well the blessings we have. Help us use these blessings, our time, talents and treasures to bless others and build your kingdom here. Amen!

