**Questions for Further Reflection**

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.
…Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

What comes to mind when you hear or read the word sin? Do you shut down, assuming you are going to be shamed or “preached at”? Are you afraid, worried that what you hear next might indict you or fill you with shame? Perhaps sin seems a passé word to you, and you give it no thought at all, preferring to see it as an arcane holdover from another moral epoch.

It may come as a surprise that this section of Isaiah, and indeed so many of the prophetic writings, speak to the issue of “social sin”, that is sin that is collective, sin for which all bear some account. And of course some of us may balk at this idea, may consider it unfair. It is virtually impossible, however, to read the Old and New Testaments and not see the clear mandate for social engagement and relationship, not just our personal engagements, but the larger movements of society. The idea of righteousness is two-fold- there are, in fact two words that we translate as “righteous”- one of them refers to doing what is right- i.e. being truthful, humble, generous (and not doing what is wrong—lying, being arrogant, being greedy) … and the other refers to communities living in right relationship with others, g (Forgiving, sharing with the poor and needy, welcoming the outcast, stranger, foreigner). Of course, these virtues overlap, and are part of a larger picture of a godly life, a life lived with God at the center.

Reread the passage. For me, and for many, these directives are challenging. And lest we assume they are hyperbolic, they are repeated throughout the scriptural witness in hundreds of places ( i.e.-Exodus 22:21-25, Luke 4: 16-21, and the books of Amos, Isaiah, and Micah in their entirety).

Do you experience resistance in this Biblical call to generosity, welcome, and true charity? Where in your life have you lived into this principle? Where is God calling you to live it more directly?

The connection between our financial generosity to those who can do **nothing** for us, those who we give to solely for the love of God, and our deepened relationship with God cannot be overstated. And our unwillingness to examine that relationship- between our things and ourselves, between the life God in Jesus Christ is inviting us to lead, and the life we are currently leading is one of the great barriers in a deepened relationship with God.

If we were willing to embrace the call of this passage, we might realize like Lydia- the wealthy patron of one of Paul’s early churches, or Joseph of Arimathea, the prosperous man who generously gave his tomb for Jesus’ burial- the particular gifts our resources provide for the community around us. And on a personal level, we have God’s promise that our willingness to share will be a blessing not only to others- but to us.

What step will you take to explore your own practice of gift and generosity in the name of Christ?