

## "Love is Kind" 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 4

Approaching Christmas, we all start to think about giving. For those with children or grandchildren, part of the joy of Christmas is seeing children open their presents. Giving can be a delight. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," said Jesus.

But our culture of consumerism has managed to drain some of the joy from giving, even at Christmas. What do you get, for example, for children and grandchildren who already have pretty much everything? You try to be thoughtful, but not too extravagant (because there are often a lot of them), and then your present gets lost among the masses of gifts they have to open, and easily eclipsed by the one big, expensive present they knew they were going to get anyway. There must be a better way.

Nevertheless, it's good to be kind, and the bible has a lot to say about giving. I've heard cynical people say that there's no such thing as real altruism, and that people only give and behave kindly because of what they can get out of it for themselves, even if it's only a good feeling.

I don't deny that there are people who give vast sums of money simply to avoid taxes, or to curry favour, or even to put people in their debt. But even so, the bible is clear that when we give we receive something in return. Jesus promised that we receive back as we give, "a full measure, pressed down and running over".

This is one of the areas in which we are challenged to test God. Through the Old Testament prophet Malachi he challenges his people about their giving; "Test me in this," he says, "see if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure." He promises that, in response to their generous giving, he will bless them with fruitfulness.

When we are kind, God does not look at the quantity of our giving, but the quality of our hearts. Jesus sees an old woman giving two copper coins in humility where the rich give large amounts boastfully to display their wealth, and he declares that she has given more than them because she has given all she had to live on. Paul encapsulates the attitude towards giving that God requires. He says ;"Everyone should give what he has decided to give in his heart, without compulsion, because God loves a cheerful (the original word means 'hilarious') giver.

When we are God's children by faith in Jesus, then we are free to offer others the grace of kindness, because we have a Father whose kindness to us is abundant and unmatched. Never be reticent about being kind, because what we sow, we reap.

Prayer.

Father, thank you for your kindness to me, shown most fully in the gift of Jesus and his death and resurrection for me. Help me to reflect your kindness in my own life, and recognise and respond to the opportunities you give me to give. May I give humbly, generously and cheerfully of my resources of money, possessions, time and energy. In Jesus' name, amen.

*All these devotionals can be found on our website [inghamitechurch.org](http://inghamitechurch.org) on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.*