

Stewardship Sunday – blessed to be a blessing

Intro: Who are the blessed? When you hear of some celebrity jetting off to Austria for a weekend of skiing, quaffing fine wine and popping caviar down their gullets... do you think of them as blessed? They don't have to worry about bills, about their kid's college tuition, or about keeping their car on the road. Are they blessed?

Maybe. But only if they are believers in Jesus and have put him first in their lives. THAT is the definition of "blessed." [Read Ephesians 1:3]

I. Jesus Shows the Way

A. The shortest biography of Jesus is found in Acts where it takes up only sentence: "he went about doing good." Yes, he did, and he told us to follow.

B. In His opening lesson – the Sermon on the Mount – he stood our world and its presumptions on its head. Compare what Jesus treasured and who he honored with who our award shows or news shows honor.

1. The poor in spirit... those who mourn... the meek... those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (as opposed to?)... the merciful... the pure in heart... the peacemakers... the persecuted.
2. Jesus put a different value on things than we do. Someone rearranged the price tags on this planet and we fall for it far too often.
3. Jesus wanted us to be unattached to things. (5:40-42) He wanted us to be marked as givers and sharers rather than consumers and keepers.

II. Chosen For Service

A. God has chosen you for service (manifest by your presence today). [Ephesians 1:4-5]

B. You might wonder why God would pick you and then not equip you with money, power, and possessions.

1. Of course, to some extent, He did... but I know what you mean.
2. Look at the equipment God gave you: [Eph. 1:7-10]

3. God has chosen you to be examples of His grace, reflections of Christ, and those who will continue the purpose of Christ.
- C.** Back to the Sermon on the Mount and we see Jesus assuming that his peoples' lifestyle would be doing good works. It is just what we do. [Matt.6:1-4]
- D.** Later, he warned us that we are not here to gain power over others. [Matt.20:25-28; Luke 22:24-27]
1. So why are we here? To do good works in the name of Jesus.
 2. This will require that we adjust our attitude and step away from everything that this world holds dear. [Romans 2:6-10]
 3. It will require turning our eyes from the world and towards Jesus. [Ephesians 1:18-21]

III. Chosen To Give

- A.** [2 Peter 3:10-13] What if you read this passage before every shopping expedition? Before every business move? What changes in your behavior might you expect?
1. Less worry about losing or damaging your stuff.
 2. More willing to share what you have.
 3. Life is ephemeral and full of ephemera. Our bank accounts might say they have a certain amount in them until someone raises taxes, or flies airplanes into buildings, or someone gets sick, or sued.
 4. Besides, things change. Everything is coming or going, but it isn't standing still.
- B.** Ephesians 1 tells us that we were chosen for something greater than trying to keep up with the world. We were chosen to be reflections of Jesus, to give as he gave, and live as he lived – going about doing good.
- C.** He told a rich young man that he had to get rid of his things before he could follow him. (Matthew 19:21) He told us not to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth. He told us that he didn't even have a place to lay down to call his own.
- D.** Giving of our time, money, power, and influence, is a sign that we believe the world is God's and that everything we own will be burned up.

- E.** [Ephesians 4:28] We have what we have so that we can give to others. All spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 are active, serving gifts; nothing passive or judgmental.
- F.** A minor story [soldier in the airport]. I couldn't outgive him... and my gift was paltry... so why did giving to him make me feel so wonderful? Because I was doing what God created me to do. [sharing, showing appreciation, care, spreading joy, peace and grace]
- G.** We are called on by God to live in this world in a way that demonstrates our understanding that it is a temporary place and that acquiring and possessing are not what we were created to do. We are created to be so like Christ that we are cities on the hill, lights in the darkness.
- H.** [Ephesians 1:11,12]