

## ***“Where your treasure is...”***

**intro:** We could write a very large book about the stories in scripture that are well known, well loved, and not applied to our lives in any meaningful way at all! Last week, we referenced the story of Jesus washing the apostles’ feet and admitted that we still act like we don’t get that story. But there are others.

### **I. Genesis 13 – the story**

- A.** Abraham tried a sojourn in Egypt but that had left him empty. He left Egypt and returned to the altar he had earlier set up in the land that God said he would one day give to Abram.
  - 1. God made him wait a lifetime to receive it, and Abram had to learn how to wait on the Lord.
  - 2. His tent and altar out in the barren lands would have seemed strange and poor compared to the riches of Egypt, but he had not found God or comfort there.
- B.** Along with Abraham, he had several family members including his nephew, Lot. Lot was not an evil man but he was a thoughtless one. The consequences of evil and thoughtlessness are often the same.
- C.** It seems that Lot and Abraham might have been the two senior members of the family group. They seemed to lead two sections, both under Abraham’s patriarchy.
- D.** When a family dispute arose over grazing rights, Abraham needed to settle the issue quickly. If they fought each other, God would be displeased and the nonbelievers would be encouraged.
  - 1. Abraham takes Lot out and asks him to select land for his family and herds.
  - 2. Lot famously takes the much better land and leaves his older uncle – the man who took him in and cared for him like a son – with the hard scrabble landscape in the hills, far away from the river.

- E.** And here is where we make the obvious application: choose to give others the best. (I have struggled with this at buffets and birthdays ever since!)
1. Who here applies the application to your own life? Maybe here and there... but as a lifestyle?
  2. Even when reminded that Lot's choice put him and his family in danger of being influenced by the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah... we think that won't happen to us.

## **II. Where is your heart?**

- A.** There is an expression used by police when they want to solve a crime. No matter how difficult it is to piece together the elements of the crime, if you "follow the money" you have a good chance of finding the bad guy.
- B.** Our hearts follow the money, too. Jesus knew that and asked us to do something very radical about it: put that treasure into people, not pockets.
1. Matthew 6:19-21, 24b-33. Is there any passage in scripture that is as quickly explained away, waved away, or forgotten than this one?
  2. Some churches even promise that if you have faith enough, God will increase your monetary wealth, physical health, and your children's behavior!
  3. Jesus asks: where is your heart?

## **III. In One Another**

- A.** Let me speak to you as your senior minister – as one who has to talk to you sometimes as a priest and sometimes as a prophet.
1. Things are very bad financially, especially for us here in the Detroit metro area.
  2. The odds are very high that every person in here will have to make serious adjustments in their behavior as their living standard decreases.
  3. What should be the Christian reaction to this? I don't think it should be panic, or marching on Washington to demand more of this or that. I think our reaction should be to apply the lesson of

Abraham and Lot – finally! – and to take seriously Jesus' first sermon.

- B.** Why do businesses buy corporate jets? There is no way to make that make sense monetarily... unless you realize that that money is going away anyway. It will either go to buy a new plane or it will go in taxes. (this is why large corporations are said to pay so few taxes. They know they have to spend it on themselves or it will disappear)
- C.** All money disappears. It goes away when we die or it goes into things that rot, get stolen, or fade away, or it goes to taxes. (death taxes are so high you might not be able to afford to die)
- D.** What would happen if we made some decisions as individuals, as families, and as a congregation this week?
  1. We will choose to lower our standard of living on behalf of our brothers and sisters. By this we mean that, knowing that taxes will have to go up regardless of who is in the White House, we will choose to give first to the family of God. God, not the state or the mall, will get the first fruits.
  2. While we won't buy corporate jets, we can choose to increase our giving here and to special missions and programs here knowing that that money has to go somewhere; and we choose to put it in the hands of God and God's people.
  3. We choose to carry our brothers and sisters who might lose their jobs, benefits, or homes. Yes, it will cost us dearly, but isn't that better than sending off a check to Lansing or Washington?
  4. Let the world see that there exists on this earth a people who believe that we have freely received, therefore we will freely give (Matthew 10:8).

#### **IV. Our Strength for this Journey**

- A.** 1 Cor. 2:12 – we have received the Spirit of God to help us in this journey. We can do this. It is made much, much easier by the economic crisis we now face. Since we are all in this together, let us truly all get in it together and live out the call of God on our lives.

- B.** Remember: Lot's choice put him and his family in danger. Giving up the best and choosing to live a life of kindness and generosity... even at great personal cost... gave the world the family of Christ.
- C.** We do not trace our lineage back through Lot, but through Abram.
- D.** Will future generations trace their lineage back through us? Only if we step up as did Abram and Jesus and put our treasure where our hearts really should be – in those made in the image and likeness of God.