Series: The Blessed Life

October 13, 2019

Message 4:

**Am I Generous?**

John 12:1-8

**Intro:** The Blessed Life has to do with every area of our lives – but we see a focus on the financial part of our lives because Jesus said,

Matthew 6:21 - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I believe this truth is sinking in. I know if you put it into practice it will bless you – and it will bless the Kingdom of God – but most of all, it will bless God, which is why we were created.

If I were preaching on prayer – it might not be as touchy – everyone knows we should pray – and you would hear the messages, put them into practice and you would be blessed, God would be blessed, the Kingdom would be blessed – because you put Biblical principles into practice – it is the same here – put these principles into practice – God will be blessed, YOU will be blessed – the Kingdom of God will be blessed- and together we will be living the Blessed Life!

Today we ask this question:

**Big Idea: Am I Generous?**

I say, “Am I Generous” because this question is for me as well – and if someone asks you this week what the message was about – I don’t want you to say to them – “Are YOU generous?” It’s about me – and when you ask the question, it’s about you!

I want us to think about this not just for the next 35 minutes – but for the rest of this week.

John 12:1-8 - Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

 “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

About 2 months since Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. What we see here are two hearts – a generous heart and a selfish heart – and both hearts are on display for us.

What displays a heart here? Anything to do with giving. She came and gave an extravagant gift – that displayed her heart. Then the person who despised her for doing that – his heart was displayed as well.

2 questions – Why did she give such an extravagant gift – and why did it bother Judas so much?

We’re going to find the answers to our questions with three truths:

> The Enemy of Generosity

The enemy of generosity is selfishness and all of us are born selfish…

Remember – “Mine!” … Some of us never grow out of that!

This causes all kinds of problems in marriage – the source of many of the problems in our homes today is “Mine” – selfishness.

Selfishness promotes the self – protects self – and provides for self.

Here’s the problem – God is the One who is supposed to promote us, protect us and provide for us. When selfishness is trying to promote, protect and provide, it is taking the place of God. That is exactly what selfishness is.

This is a STRONGHOLD of selfishness. The enemy has a fortified place in our lives – it starts as children and he tries to fortify that place more and more as we get older.

Judas uses an excuse here – “Why wasn’t this sold and given to the poor!”

Have you ever had that thought?

Someone drives by a house and it is very nice, they comment on how nice the house is. Another person in the car says, “Yes, I know that person. The person who owns that house is a strong believer. They really love the Lord!” The first person, who was a pastor said, “He ought to sell that and give it to the poor!”

If that person truly cared about the poor, they would sell their house and give it to the poor!

We had better be careful when we have this attitude – this is the attitude of Judas – the betrayer of the Lord!

We’ve all had this attitude at some point. The enemy sneaks that thought in our minds – we envy those who have more than us – and we think they must not be generous people because of what they have. Maybe they have what they have because they are generous and God has blessed them for it!

Judas is trying to cover up his own motives and selfishness by pointing the finger at someone else who is extravagantly generous.

Judas was looking for a Kingdom … he was looking for a place in that Kingdom – all of the disciples were looking for Jesus to set up an earthly Kingdom – they kept asking Him about it … when, where, how… – when He wasn’t around but walked up one time they were arguing about who was going to be the greatest in the Kingdom. Even after the resurrection – is it now?

His answer – “Don’t worry! That’s not your business!”

This is a brand of Christianity that is being preached today. There are those who are preaching that we serve God not for what we can do for God, but for what God can do for us! Serving God is not about what God can do for us. It’s about what we can do for Him! It’s about laying down our lives for the Kingdom of God. Judas was upset because he was taking money out and wanted more money for himself.

This says he was a thief – and he had the money box. Who gave him the money box? Who was the leader of the group? Do you think Jesus knew he was a thief when he gave him the money box? Jesus knew all about him! He knew Judas would betray Him!

Why did He do it? Not to set him up to fail – but to set him up to succeed! He gave him responsibility in the area of his weakness so that he could overcome it.

1st Corinthians 10:13 - No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

You may be tempted in the area of your weakness, but God will never allow you to be tempted above that which you are able to overcome! He evens provides a way of escape!

Do you think this has anything to do with tithing? He was taking money out of the offering! I don’t believe any here would take money out of our offerings – I don’t think you would take money that belonged to God – Would we keep God’s money? That would make us a thief …

Wait a minute … what did Malachi say? “You are robbing me…”

What is the difference between keeping money that belongs to God and taking money that belongs to God?

There is an enemy of generosity – it is selfishness – and we ALL have to deal with that!

> The Extravagance of Generosity

What she poured on him here was the equivalent of one year’s wages.

We can all relate to this! She gave an offering of one year’s salary to the Lord!

I don’t know if you make $20,000 or $100,000 – or more or less or somewhere in between – but I think for all of us, if we gave one year’s pay to the Lord that would be an extravagant gift!

Would it be extravagant to take one year’s salary, buy perfume with it, and pour it on someone’s feet? That seems even more extravagant than just writing the check, doesn’t it?

This is an extravagant gift. What gift could you give to God that would be extravagant? How much money will impress God?

$1 million? $100 million? $100 billion? Just remember what God owns. He owns it all! Let’s remember His house – the streets are paved with gold – that’s pretty extravagant! He didn’t do that to show off – He just did it because He has so much of it He had to do something with it! No potholes in the gold!

The foundations of the walls are diamonds! His gates are huge pearls!

How much money could we give God to impress Him? Nothing! No amount will impress God!

But, all of us can give something to God that will impress Him -

2nd Corinthians 8:3-5 - For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will.

What can we give to God that will impress Him? We give ourselves. It is the most extravagant gift we have.

(ILL) - The boy who stepped in the offering plate …

But – remember this – our wallet is a part of us. If we say to God that He can have all of us except our money – that is not all of us – in fact, we are leaving a most important part out – because –

Matthew 6:21 - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

3 levels of giving in the Bible –

Tithe

Offerings

Extravagant Offerings

Robert Morris tells of when he found this out - he called a pastor friend -

* Did you know there were 3 levels of giving in the Bible?
* Friend - yes - “Tithes, Offerings, and Painful Offerings”

Most believers never get to the first level - a minority of Christians give 10% of their income to the local church. Most people never get to the first level.

* 10% of your gross income - to the church - undesignated -
* You can’t designate it - it’s not yours - you can designate offerings - but not the tithe - it’s God’s - belongs in his house -

But every person who get to the first level gets to the second level - the curse is removed - the devourer is destroyed - and the windows of heaven are opened over them! God pours out that blessing they can’t contain - so they give even more away!

When you don’t get to the first level it’s so sad - you never have the devourer rebuked - you never know the joy of the windows of heaven open over your and having more than enough!

But everyone who gets to the first - gets to the second -

And a few get to the third - where God speaks to them to give something extravagant - and they experience extravagant generosity!

It’s wonderful!

Think of this – this woman did not know what she was giving her gift for!

Jesus said, “Leave her alone – she did this for my burial.”

This was the anointing for His burial. When He died, they had to get His body off the cross quick and into the ground because of Passover … that’s why the women were coming back …

She poured the whole thing out – not knowing what she was doing.

One couple, the first year they were married, had very little. At the end of the year they received a very large bonus. As soon as they received it they had a sense that it wasn’t for them. Think of all the things they could have done – you might have done – but they sensed it was not for them. So they went to the church, told the pastor, told him they believed they were supposed to give it not knowing where it was supposed to go. They gave him the check and he told them, “Yesterday I met with a widow in our church that can’t pay her mortgage. The company is getting ready to foreclose on her. I wrote the amount down.” The amounts were the same.

This is fun! This is the Blessed Life!

> The Reward of Generosity

Mark 14:3-9 - While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

 “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

This is what we are doing!

She came not expecting a reward. She wasn’t doing this to become famous – to get her gift recognized by others. She was just doing this for the Lord! Why would she do this? In Luke’s passage it tells us she was the sister of a man who had been raised from the dead 2 months before!

Do you think when her brother died – then was raised from the dead, her perspective of the value of worldly possessions was changed?

Can I remind you – if you are a believer in Christ, you have been raised from the dead!

Ephesians 2:1-6 - As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

That should change your perspective. You should not look at worldly possessions like a mere mortal! Worried about money and finances to the point where God is not first in your life!

Generosity comes out of gratitude. That is why Mary gave this offering – and she didn’t expect to be rewarded but she was!

Because God is a rewarder!

Hebrews 11:6 - And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

There is a word here that is used only once in the Bible – a combination of 2 Greek words –

1 is very common and is in the NT hundreds of times – means to hire or pay wages due to a person – 2nd word is not as common – means to give extravagantly over and above what is normally due the person.

These two words are put together to say that God is person who will give you what is due and then extravagantly give your more than you deserve!

He doesn’t say God does this – He says God IS this. This is part of His character!

God cannot not reward you! If you give with a pure heart generously, you will be rewarded! I’m sorry, but you’re going to be rewarded, and there is nothing I can do about it!

(ILL) - An elder at Gateway Church - Steve Doolin - one year he finished paying his bills - he was so filled with gratitude - he just thanked the Lord - then he went to look at his savings account - put the two figures together - then he wondered how much he had in an investment account - then he looked at his retirement account - he added the numbers up - just to see where he was -

He just thanked the Lord for his blessings - went to sleep - woke up the next day - was having his quiet time - the Lord interrupted - “How much money do you have?”

He thought, “I knew I shouldn’t have added that up?”

What do you mean? - my wallet? My checking?

How much money do you have?

Steve - you know - $ XX

Will you give it to me?

First thought - selfishness - but then - absolute peace - “Lord, I’d love to give it all to you.” They gave it all away -

In the next business year - by the end of the next business year - the Lord told him to go look at his account -

He said, “No - I’m ok!… no need!” - The Lord told him to go look at his account.

Each account had exactly doubled - twice as much in one year -

God blessed him - “What took you 20 years I did in one.”

It’s never happened before - it’s never happened since.

God rewards generosity - this is the age old battle - the battle between selfishness and generosity.

**Invitation -**