

Glorious Riches

Choosing to be Cheerful and Blessed

September 25, 2022

Today we're talking about giving till it *no longer hurts!*



Who wants to be blessed? Raise your hand. “Don’t do it ... he’s *tricking us.*” Jesus begins His Sermon on the Mount with, “Blessed are the poor ... the hungry ... the heartbroken ... and the hated.” Seems, ***blessed are the broken and the broke.*** So ***now who wants to be blessed?*** Let’s take an *offering!* “I *told* you he was *tricking* us.” I just want you to be *blessed.* And blessed are the *poor ... so give ... till it no longer hurts.*

As you *Philippians* know, [writes Paul] in the *early days* ... when I set out from *Macedonia*, not *one* church shared with me in the matter of *giving* and *receiving*, except you *only*; [What’s up, *Macedonia?*] for even when I was in *Thessalonica*, you sent me aid *again* and *again* when I was in *need.* [Not *greed*] Not that I am looking for a *gift*, but I am looking for *what may be credited to your account.* [Which is what *I’m* doing] I have received full payment and *even more* ... [the *gifts* you sent] are a *fragrant offering*, an *acceptable sacrifice*, *pleasing* to God. And my [true] God will meet all your [true] *needs* [not *greeds*] according to His *glorious riches* in Christ Jesus. – *Philippians 4:15-19 NIV*

The big mistake of the name-it-and-claim-it prosperity doctrine, isn’t in expecting God’s blessing in response to faithful giving; it’s in ***dictating what we’ll accept as a blessing.*** At the top of “His glorious riches” list is ***eternal life***, and ***life-giving light***, and ***fathomless love.*** Then there’s joy and peace and all the fruit of the Spirit, strengthening our relationships. And waaay at the bottom would be worldly wants and wishes. Because, ***our Savior isn’t an investment scheme.***

But we tend to upend the order, like a child ignoring the gift and playing with the box. Two things stand out in today’s passage: ***the Philippians’ generosity toward the Lord;*** and ***God’s gloriosity toward the Philippians*** (that should *totally* be a *word*). That incredible promise, that “God will meet all your needs according to His *glorious riches* in Christ Jesus,” is directed at those who are “***pleasing to God***” with “***fragrant offerings***” and “***acceptable sacrifices***”.

¹ Therefore [writes Paul] be imitators of God as *dear* [pleasing] children. ² And walk in love, as ... *an offering* and a *sacrifice* to God for a [fragrant] *sweet-smelling aroma.* ... ¹⁰ *finding out* what is *acceptable* to the Lord. ... ²⁵ [who] loved the church and gave Himself for her ... ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a *glorious church*, – *Ephesians 5:1-27 NKJ*

... ***fully pleasing Him***, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His ***glorious power*** – *Colossians 1:10-11 NKJ*

... according to ***the glorious Gospel*** of the ***blessed*** [pleased] God – *1 Timothy 1:11 NKJ*

And those *Macedonians* were all *about* “finding out what is *acceptable* [pleasing] to the Lord”.

[So] We want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most *severe* trial, their *overflowing joy* AND their *extreme poverty* welled up in *rich generosity*. [Way to go, Macedonia!] For ... they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. [Sacrificially!] Entirely on their own, [Voluntarily!] they *urgently pleaded with us* [Eagerly!] for the *privilege of sharing* – 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 NIV



Jesus called Peter, Andy, Jim, and John to *leave* their *livelihood*, to be *fishers of men*. And they went out without *money, lunchbox, or suitcase*. And then returned ... to being *fishers of fish*. For *one night*. Not *one bite*. (Lk 5:5) And Jesus waits till All is put away the next day, to say, “We should go fishing!” Cuz **it’s all about who’s in your boat**. And *Peter pouts*, till Jesus *flexes His miracles*, and then he *repents* as **his boat is sinking under the weight of God’s blessing**. (Lk 5:5-8) And then **Jesus has ‘em leave it all on the shore for the poor**, and *hikes ‘em up that hill*, and *prays all night*, and *appoints ‘em* as His *twelve apprentices*. (Lk 6:12-13)



And [that’s the context for when] He came down with *them* [following] and stood on a level place, [with *them* behind, on the hillside] with a great crowd of His [regular] disciples and a great multitude of people ... And **He lifted up His eyes on His [hillside] disciples**, and said: “**Blessed are you who are poor, [on account of Christ; as we’ll see in verse 22] for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, [on My account] for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, [on My account] for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you [on My account] and when they exclude you [on My account] and revile you [on My account] and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers persecuted the prophets who were before you.** – Mt 5:12; Lk 6:17-23 ESV



And one of ‘em *must’ve* said, “Did He just call us *prophets!*” Jesus isn’t *teaching* the crowd that *poverty, hunger, grief, or rejection* are *good*; He’s *reassuring* His *faithful* that, **if troubles come from following Him, you’ll be blessed in ways you can’t imagine**. Literally. Not created with the capacity. And **He often disguises the lead-up to victories as calamities and tragedies**; cuz how else could we *flex* our *faith* and *triumph*? So *take heart!* Cuz *He* was tested as *we*, in every way, (Heb 4:15) and *He* overcame the *cross!* So **don’t define how the Lord should express His love**. Cuz He’s told us how *He will*: **He’ll never forsake us; and He’ll work all things to our eternal best; and:**

“In *Me* you *may* [or may not] have *peace*. [Your choice. But] In *this world* you *will* have *trouble*. [Not your choice; and also translated: *affliction, tribulation, persecution, and suffering*] But take heart! *I* have overcome [also translated: *defeated, conquered, and* (my personal favorite) *won the battle with*] the world.” – John 16:33 NIV

It’s not: “I have OVERCOME the world,” as in: “So don’t worry; I’ve conquered it *for* you,” it’s “I’VE overcome the world,” as in: “So don’t worry; YOU can TOO!” Which is how and why, **we can be truly blessed and truly troubled**. They’re not *mutually exclusive*.



“For the *joy* set before *Him* [He] endured the *cross*”. (Heb 12:2) And He’s saying to His boys: “Due to your *faithfulness*, your *money’s gone*, you’ve *gone hungry*, and you’ve been *harassed* ... *but*, if you could see what *I* can see, you’d be *jumpin’ for joy!*” **That’s no scheme, it’s an eternal sure-thing!**



This rich believer dies, and as Jesus walks him to his mansion, they pass some very impressive heavenly homes. One is reserved for his godly chauffer; another for his saintly maid; another for his devout gardener. Then they come to a ramshackle shed, and Jesus says, “This is all *yours!* And we’re quite proud of it.” The guy says, “That’s *it?* And You’re *proud?*” Jesus glances around and graciously whispers, “With what *you* sent ahead, I’d say we pulled off a minor *miracle!*”



The best example of giving in Schindler's List isn't Schindler. We watched when he *collapses* with *regret*, after being given a *gold ring*. But just before that *scene*, a Jewish man is drinking *vodka*, and everyone’s saying “Thank you, Mr. Jereth.” And we don’t get it, till they pull out his *crowns* to make the *ring*. And **Mr. Jereth, knees buckling, grins, blessed, with a bloody rag to his mouth.** I don’t know if the contrast was intended; but in back-to-back scenes, neither man can stand. One is held up because of a joyful, painful offering. The other can’t stand because of the weight of grief-stricken regret. In Malachi, just before the Lord *accuses* His people of robbing Him, He *promises* ... and *warns*, that:



“The *Messenger* of the covenant, whom you *desire*, will come ... [but] Who can stand when He appears? [For] He will sit as a Refiner and Purifier of ... gold and silver. *Then* the Lord will have *men* who will bring *offerings* in *righteousness* ... Will a *man* rob *God?*” – Malachi 3:1-8 NIV

Not without *robbing himself* of *glorious riches*. Cuz **the golden crowns cast down up there, must be laid up down here.** (Rev 4:10) And **only those who are pleasing will still be standing when regret weighs in.** If *only* we had *specific instructions* about the collection for being God-pleasing. *Oh wait:*

About the collection for God’s people ... On the first day of every week, [oh, **consistency**] each one of you should set aside a sum of money [oh, **intentionally**] in keeping with his income [oh, **proportionally**] – 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 NIV

Add that to the Macedonians: **sacrificially, voluntarily, and eagerly,** and we have the *recipe* for a *fragrant offering*. And yet, **none of that pleases the Lord, unless it pleases us.** Paul writes:

Each of you should give what you have *decided* in your *heart* to give, [Have you **made that decision?**] not *reluctantly* or under *compulsion*, for God loves a *cheerful giver* [Mr. Jereth] [**That’s what pleases our Father!**] – 2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV

It’s a no-win situation for believers who feel guilty when they don’t give and reluctant when they do. But *cheerful generosity* allows God’s *gloriosity*. So *why* are we so *quick* to make that *list*: *big house, better job, good health, and maybe set a new car* in my driveway. Doesn’t my *scheme* seem *reasonable?* **It’s fine to ask for those things; just don’t expect them as wages for your faith.**



So, **are you a cheerful giver?** How do you *feel* when an *offering plate* passes, or you pass a *legitimate, reasonable* need? *Privileged? Eager? Reluctant? Pressured? Unconcerned?*



There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches. – Proverbs 13:7 NKJ



Because, **we can leave it behind in a box of pine, or put it on His account.** Ever been to an *estate sale*? People *pawing through piles, and stacks of the stuff*, that represent someone's brief *stay down here*. And for a few bucks you can get a *whole box* of their *old, leftover stuff*. Well, **Jesus wants us to think outside of that box!** Which means, to ...



Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay [down] here in [righteous] fear; knowing that you were not *redeemed* with corruptible *things*, like *silver* or *gold* ... but with [the "glorious riches" of] the precious blood of Christ, – 1 Peter 1:17-19 NKJ

If you're honest and giving and generous and kind on *His* account, and the result is *less* in *your* account *on His account*, you'll be *jumpin'* for *joy* when you give an account. "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Mk 8:36 NAS) *Nothing!* Know what that dung beetle is singing? "I've got the whole world in my hands!" In one sense it *is* a *blessing* to be *deprived*. Because **deprivation reminds us of our actual dependence on God.** In fact, the more *earthly security* and *comfort* we store up, the more we must remind ourselves of our desperate need. Hence the *flipside*, on that hillside, directed at those having a *ball*, being *seemingly blessed* with *religious authority* and *worldly wealth*.



"But woe to you [false believers] who are rich, [It's coming in verse 26] for you have received your consolation. Woe to you [false believers] who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you [false believers] who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, [false believers] when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets." – Luke 6:24-26 ESV

And one of 'em must've said, "Did He just call us *false prophets*?" **Jesus' load is light, because of joy and purpose and meaning;** whereas this world's *heavy, broken*, "dung-ball" system – in *stark contrast* to Peter's boat *sinking* under the *weight* of God's *glorious riches* – is **like the Titanic listing under the burden of its own overconfident luxury!** And *woe* to those finding *false meaning* in the *ballroom* in the *bowels* of a ship in the *fleeting moments* while still *topside!*

Because **there's only One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life boat.** Cuz it's about who's in your boat. And it's a *troubling journey* down here. **So, who wants to be blessed?** Well then, *reach out, grab hold, hang on*, and *faithfully follow*. And **use whatever's within your grasp to help others survive the voyage.** For what does it profit a man to lose the *whole world* and gain his *soul*? *Everything!* And *then* some! Cuz we can't even imagine.