

"Blessed Beyond Imagination Part 3"

11-21-21

Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has blessed us in the Beloved. In Him, Jesus, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things to Him; things in heaven and things on earth. In Him, Jesus, we obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him were sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit, who is a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.

I hope you still are hanging on to the eight lies and releasing them to the eight truths. I hope there are hanging somewhere in your bathroom, office, or car. There are three questions that we all will eventually ask ourselves. Three questions that we all want answers to. Three questions that will lead us either into hope or despair, meaning and meaningless, deep joy, or unhappiness: three pivotal questions. They will haunt us until we answer them! And the three questions are these:

Question number one: who am I?

Question number two: Why am I here?

Question number three: where am I going?

So, let's explore them. Question number one, who am I? Verse four of Ephesians 1 says, *even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption.* So, here's my answer. You are someone who -before time began - God thought about. You are someone who - before you were created - that God loved. You are someone who - before the foundation of the world - God chose to be His child. God wrote you into a story. I mean, as a screen playwright, I can tell you, every character in a movie has been written in by the screen writer, by the author for some purpose, and you have been written into the story. The author, by name, chose you to play a part in the story.

Now the world will say to you, here's who you are: your image, your bank account, you're the car that you drove here in, you're the size of your home, you are how many people know your name, how famous you are. And it's all superficial. And scripture comes along with this deep truth that your life has deep significance.

I think we never really grasp who we are because once we grasp who we really are in Christ, we are free to live a life that isn't defined by the shape of our nose or the number of friends we have or what part of Medford we live in. Once we understand our true identity, who am I, who are you, at your core. So, here's my best attempt at a parable.

There once was a girl named Les who lived in a poor part of the village, outside the wall of the kingdom, where the dirt road ends, at the end of the walking path, just beyond the trees. Les grew up in a place where not a single kind word was ever spoken. At breakfast her mother told her how ugly she was, at dinner her father told her how dumb she was. And that went on every day of her life. And when no one was looking, she would glance at herself in a broken tinted mirror. And all she could see

was an ugly, poor, worthless, misshapen girl. Her life was cleaning other people's cottages all day and late into the night on her way home she would pass by the castle and dream of a life of a princess. She was drawn to the warmth and the inviting light streaming from the castle windows and listened to the beautiful music coming from the grand hall, wishing with all of her heart, that she was a princess and the castle was her home. But when she reached her small scrappy cottage, where she only existed, her dreams would quickly disappear. As soon as she brought her tired body into the front wooden door, her parents grabbed her money and sent her to her room without dinner. Before she fell asleep, she could hear the cry of the King's herald calling out into the darkness so that all could hear: 'Anyone who knows where the kidnapped princess may be found, the king will pay any ransom for! He longs for her each day and cries for her each night!' And Les would close her eyes wishing she was the princess, the daughter of the king, but her parents were not noble. And she was not a princess.

One day leaving one of the cottages she had just cleaned, her face dirty, her dress wet, and her hands full of dirty clothes, covering her face, she darted out the door and ran into a man on the street, knocking him down. And when she lowered the clothes in her hands, she realized she had knocked down the king. 'I am so sorry, my king!'

'It's fine, my dear.'

'What are you doing out here in the kingdom?'

The King responded, 'Looking for my daughter. Do you think you're my daughter?'

'Oh, no, sir. I'm the daughter of peasants. I'm just a cleaning maiden; poor, ugly, and clumsy.'

'Do you have a birthmark?'

'Yes, in the shape of a cross.'

'Near your ankle?'

'Yes, my Lord, near my ankle!' Les lifted the hem of her dress, revealing the birthmark of a cross.

The king declared, 'You are my beloved daughter! And I've searched for you for so long. You were kidnapped from the castle when you were a baby and I've looked for you every day since then!'

'Do you mean you are really my father and I'm really a princess?' And the king hugged her, his eyes filling with tears.

The girl's life was never the same again, for she now knew who she really was and knew how deeply she really was loved.

I pray deeply that you know you have a birthmark of the cross that's been planted on you and that you are not a maid and you're not just a cleaning lady in a cottage, but that God has made you His child, His daughter, His son.

You and I were created for a reason. You are not here by accident. You were created for the very same reason that parents have children, because God wanted to have a relationship with you. He wanted to smile upon you. He wanted to know you. He wanted you to know Him. You were created for relationship.

Psalm 139, verse 13,

You formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works and my soul knows that well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, and intimately woven into the depths of the world. Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them, the days formed before me when yet there was not one of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, oh God, how vast is the sum of them! If I could count them, they would be more than sand.

God created you. You are not an accident. Life isn't meaningless. You are not some molecules that happened to come together in some kind of random order that has no meaning. God is watching you. And He is smiling. He is engaged in your life. He was thinking about you before you began to think about Him. That's who you are. That is the reason that your identity is found in Him.

And when you understand the depth of your identity, then it doesn't matter as much what people say, because He is the creator of you. He is your designer. He is your artist. There's not one of us who can take credit for how we look. There's not one of you who in your mother's womb said, I think I'm going to be really tall and slender with blue eyes and blonde hair! I think I'm going to be a great athlete with strong muscles. None of us.

He thinks you're a masterpiece. And the moment you stop comparing yourselves with other people, whether it's your ability or your looks, the sooner you will find happiness.

Question number two that we all have to ask ourselves is: why am I here? Some of us work so hard, we've never stopped to ask the question. Why am I here? But it is a question that philosophers ask. A man sent out a letter to 250 of the most famous philosophers in the world, and they responded to the question, what is the purpose of life? And most of them responded, I have no idea. I've tried to figure it out. I got nothing.

God comes along and He tells us why we're alive. And He begins to realize our purpose. And He makes us matter.

The two most important days in your life are the day you were born, and the day you figured out why. ~ Mark Twain.

And some of you are living lives somewhat desperate, somewhat superficial, somewhat insignificant, because you've been led to believe that you have no purpose or meaning in this world, other than what you can artificially create. And it is a lie from hell. You have been created for this moment.

Westminster's confession of faith is right. **The chief purpose of man and woman is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.** The reason you and I are here is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We're saved for His glory, not ours. And the moment you begin to take your eyes off you and begin to make Him the attention of your life, big things begin to radically change.

Rick Warren says this in *The Purpose Driven Life*,

It is not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment. More important than your peace of mind. Even more important than your happiness. It is far greater than your family, your career, and even your wildest dreams and ambitions.

Wow. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God, because you were born by His purpose and for His purpose. Why are you here? It is a question worth asking. The unexamined life isn't worth living. And so we come along and we discover that we're designed for God's glory, His purpose.

Your life is meaningful. I don't care what you do, where you do it, how much you make, where you live, what you do on the weekends, your life is fully meaningful. And every aspect of your life is fully meaningful. Whether you're fishing or picking up garbage or being a clerk in a store, whatever you're doing, the beauty of the Christian life is your life is meaningful. It is full of purpose. Eric Little in *The Chariots of Fire* said that when he ran, he felt God's pleasure. We are to live a life so in tune with God in this meaningful relationship that we experienced His pleasure in the ordinary, in the insignificant. I've said on occasion, there is a big difference between a vocation and an occupation. An occupation is something you do for money, a vocation is a calling that you have. And as Christians, our lives are a vocation. They're not an occupation. The job that you have is not an occupation. It is a vocation. And when you begin to get a glimpse that God has placed you in that marketplace to do that thing that He has assigned you to do, then your life takes on meaning. And you begin to experience God's pleasure.

Could it be that the God who created the universe has you at Fred Meyers on purpose at this time, to be salt and light there? Because as they say, if God's called you to be a doorkeeper, don't stoop to be a king. Do what God called you to do: live out His calling for you. God's called you to be a carpenter? Be the best carpenter. He's called you to be a plumber? Be the best plumber. He's called you to be a craftsman? Be the best craftsmen. And in that vocation, experience Him in the mundane ordinary Monday, eight to four drudgery. If you believed that you were to be there as salt and light, that He'd called you there before the creation of the world, He had you at Costco, that you're not an accident, you're not just a series of fallen things, you will find joy.

All of us have been dealt different cards. We're all playing a different hand, but we are all called to be faithful to Him. We all are to live out this Christian life with a sense of joy and purpose. Paul knew when confined to a prison cell that God could do something even there, that he could have never done

on the street corner. And yet some of us continue to whine because we do not see the meaning in what we're doing.

DL Moody, who was the Billy Graham of the mid 18 hundreds, was led to Christ by a man who sold shoes in a shoe store. A simple man who loved Jesus, who was a Sunday school teacher, who saw a young boy and led him to Christ. And as a result of being a shoe keeper on a particular day, when a young man walks into his place to buy a pair of shoes, leaves a new Christian. And because of that, DL Moody went on to preach the gospel and lead hundreds of thousands of people to Christ. And I will say to you this, **so did that shoe keeper.**

Third question, where are you going? Where am I going? Jesus said it this way, in John 14:3,

And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will take you to myself. That where I am, you may be also.

We who have put our faith in Jesus Christ believes this isn't home. This isn't our country. The home that we have, that we're going to, is far greater than all of that.

He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose. ~ Jim Elliott.

We have hope. That's the deep truth. Your future longevity is depended upon your hope. Once you lose hope, we're doomed, which is why more and more people are pushing carts filled with crap because they've given up hope. And we have that hope.

Ephesians 1:13 says,

We were sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit, who is a guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.

An inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you. Do you believe that? Because I'll tell you whether you believe it or not. Let me follow you around for a week. That'll tell me if you believe it or not! Let me tell you, let me watch what you buy and where you spend your time and where you go and what you're consumed by and what your thoughts are. Because every day we live out in our choices, every single choice, what we believe about who we are and where we're going and why we're here. Let me try one more parable on you.

Long time ago in another country not very far from here, there was a farmer, a hardworking farmer who had a farm full of rocky soil and sparse water and broken fences and a barn that leaked. What made matters only worse is that the farmer owed the king a lot of money. And I mean, a lot of money. The farmer knew that he'd never be able to pay off the debt, but he would pay a little bit each time hoping that some someday, eventually, he would not be thrown into debtor's prison. One day a young man stopped by the farm and he said he was the king's son. The farmer was frightened at first, afraid the son might come to bring judgment and take him to prison.

'You're not here to bring me bad news, are you?'

'Oh, no,' said the son of the king, 'I've come with good news. I've come to tell you that my father wishes you to inherit his kingdom. Just believe that I am the king's son and that I have paid off your debt. And you owe the king nothing.'

'You paid off my debt?'

'Yes, completely. All of it. And the castle is now yours too!'

'But, but I've done nothing to deserve it! I've never seen it, but I've heard that it's incredibly beautiful. And everyone there spends time with the king and eats at his table!'

'I am the king's son. And I give you my word. Your debt is paid. If you believe me, if you believe me, it is done.'

And the farmer said, 'Yes, yes. A hundred times yes!' And wept at the son's news and the father's loving generosity. 'But what do I do now?'

***'Work the farm until I return.'* The son left with a hug and a promise to return. And from that day forward, the farmers neighbors couldn't get over the fact that the farmer always smiled; storms, droughts, it didn't matter. The farmer worked his field with great faithfulness, looking forward to the return of the son with his inheritance.**

Is Jesus telling us the truth?

When he says, I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go prepare a place for you, I will come again? Are we ever living, never dying people, whereby this brief moment is to be an expression of what we believe? Not for a hundred thousand years, not for a hundred million years, not for a hundred billion years, not for a hundred trillion years, but for forever.

Hebrews 11, 13 through 16,

These - that is, the faithful ones - all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having knowledge that they were strangers and exiles on earth. For people who speak thus, make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. And if they had been thinking of the land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it were, they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called God for He has prepared them a city.

The Bible that says you are an ever living, never dying person. That death isn't a dead end, but a doorway, whereby you will find the creator who created you and you will be embraced by Him. And you will not call him king. You will call him dad. You are the beloved. And when you and I fully grasp who we are, children, beloved children of the creator who made us for this moment to fulfill a calling, that makes life meaningful and purposeful, no matter what we do. And every breath and every decision is for His glory to reveal who He is. And when we discover that in this moment of time, the deep conviction that you are here because God wants you here, makes whatever you do meaningful. And when you discover that whatever you give up in your desire to bring glory to Him, whatever sacrifices you make, He will reward you a hundredfold.