

1/21/07

Close Encounters

Opening Quips ... Great Truths about Life:

Text: [Genesis Chapters 28 & 32](#)

I was going to name this morning's message ***Blessed are the Selfish*** ...

Does God want us to be selfish? Of course the immediate response is **NO**

Selfish defined is : *Having too much concern for one's own welfare having little or no concern for others*

The Sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke of blessed are: the Poor in Spirit, the meek, merciful, pure in heart who hunger and thirst for righteousness ... but the selfish?

The very idea goes directly against the essence of Christianity *or does it?*

I know this sounds ridiculous and it's ok to think he has finally lost it! but please stay with me for at least for a little while longer.

Lets look at the prayer of Jabez from [1Chronicles 4:9,10](#)

*Oh that you would bless me indeed,
and enlarge my territory,
that your hand would be with me,
and that you would keep me from evil.*

Doesn't that prayer sound just a little selfish?

Dr. Bruce Wilkinson pointed out how that portion of scripture just jumps out from the long genealogy as if the Holy Spirit was trying to get our attention! Even more interesting is the similarity of the Prayer of Jabez to the Lord's prayer [Luke 11](#)

Would God honor ... even encourage a "selfish prayer?"

If we want to know what God wants from us, we must examine the nature and personality of God Himself.

We need to consider two parts to this puzzle:

First ... What is God like?

Second ... What does God expect, require, desire from us?

We cannot understand the second part, until we answer and understand the first part of the question

It's impossible to know what God expects and desires from us if we do not know who God is.

So Lets take a closer look at what we know and believe.

- A. The Bible is God's revealed word which teaches us about Him about His character.
- B. Let's study at one of the people recorded to have received God's rich blessings.

A man called Jacob

Jacob would have to be considered an ambitious, selfish, a self centered opportunist
The opposite of the kind of person **Jesus called blessed** in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jacob's very name is not too encouraging ... meaning the Heel Grabber or one who supplants, undermines or grabs

We read in Genesis of his early escapades, how he bargained away his older brother Esau's inherited Birthright. Then deliberately lied and deceived his aging father Isaac to steal away his brother's rightful blessing.

Sounds just like the kind of guy God wants to bless, right???

Read [Genesis 28: 10 - 22](#)

We start to understand something about the nature of the Lord God Almighty as we study the way he operates in the life of Jacob.

God doesn't bless us because of who we are ... He blesses because of who he is!

Genesis 28 reveals that Jacob had no real relationship with God previous to this encounter.

Jacob's scheme resulted in him having to run for his life.

►It's after this and during a moment of crisis that God meets with him.

Look carefully: God introduces Himself to the Heel ... I Am ... the God of Abraham and Isaac >Making Him the God of the Living not the Dead!

1. God want s us to know Him! God confirms a earlier promise He made to Abraham, and Isaac
2. **We can conclude** that God is not only a promise giver but a promise keeper!
The Lord remembers and honors His promises!
3. Then He gives Jacob his own new and personal promise.

We understand that we are recipients of the blessings of God from those who have gone before us ...

But also that God wants to give us our own special relationship with Him Blessings especially designed for just us.

Radio host Willie Jolley has said - ***"The past is a place of reference, not a place of residency."***

God blesses **because of** those who have gone before us and we should look back at our past situations with Him but he does not want us to live in the past. There are new horizons waiting ... we must all move on or become stagnant.

- **After this encounter** Jacob acknowledges his ignorance of God ... “God was in this place and I didn’t even know it!” His eyes were opened. But His heart was still closed to understanding who God is and God’s desire to trust Him.

We see this in Jacob’s conditional response to God ... *If God will do this ... then I will do this.*

Personal Illustration: My frustration with Phillips, a 7th grade student this year that has continued destructive behavior. God’s gentle reminder

As the Jacob’s story continues to unfold in Genesis God absolutely blesses, but not without continual struggles.

Our struggles draw us closer to the Lord because in those moments of crisis we need and find Him.

God produces the backbone of moral and spiritual fiber from our struggles.

Read Genesis 32: 22 – 28

Another pivotal moment in Jacob’s life.

Jacob was facing the possible annihilation of everything he loved from a brother that he had taken everything from years ago.

- ✱ It’s in the moment of crisis that Jacob has a close encounter with God.

He finally sends everyone away from the camp ... and ultimately must face God alone pressing in on God or wrestling with God (Theophony) refusing to let *the man* go until he blessed him (Jacob).

Is this selfish behavior? If it is, it’s just what God wants from us!

It is here that God awards a new name to Jacob ... calling him Israel ... one who wrestles with God.

Listen to this writing England’s most famous 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon

Does God want us to be selfish asking for a blessing for ourselves?

The blessings of God are not one dimensional ... God’s promises are personal and understand that he if he has made a promise to you he not only intends to keep it but wants you to actively seek and lobby him for him to honor it. God’s greatness is that the work He accomplishes in our lives are ment for others and the greater the promise the greater the impact upon others,

As he said to Jacob all people of the Earth shall be blessed because of you.

What does God want from us?

To seek Him with all of our hearts with all of our being! Is that because He is selfish??

Never!

God wants to richly bless us shower his great love upon us.

Have you received a promise or been given called to do something for the Lord?

Think about it isn't there something you know God has asked of you? But you have turned away from it because you were afraid or because it just doesn't seem possible?

Do you know why what God asks us to do always seem so far beyond our ability power, and resources?

Because He never intends it to be something we must believe Him for, something that can only happen by His amazing power at work through us.

Lets Pray

"There is no moment, ever, that does not either hold and opportunity or a lesson that God is offering." psychologist Lee Jampolksy