

Victory of the Lamb – Thanksgiving Eve 2017

Matthew 25:34-40 – Blessed to Give - Bill Limmer

Dr. Renee Lockey is a physician in Austin Texas. She drives to work every day thanking God that her job is actually a ministry. Over the last decade or so her life has really changed. You see she had an idea of what life, freedom, and joy were about. The problem was she had accomplished all those things, her goals, debt free, great practice, etc.,. But there was a problem. There was a hole – something was missing. And God began to work on her heart. Not a plug for running, but a plug for spending alone time with God, she can't wait to get home so she can lace up her shoes and go running. Because when she goes running she says, God places really radical ideas in her mind. As she talked with God on her runs what she was led to do was make an offering of her life to Christ. Romans 12:1 **Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.**

Part of her job took her into third world countries. And if you have ever been to a third world country, you know that it is impossible not to compare and contrast: this is what they have and this is what I have. This is how they live and how I live. Renee realized that it was only by God's grace that she had more than they had and not because she was entitled to it or deserve it. And even if she would say I have earned it, she would hear the truth of God in her other ear," but I gave you the ability, opportunity, the talent, the funding, the resources, the education." And so, she was thinking how could she step into the gap of the marginalized and under resourced people. God put it on her heart to work like a doctor but live like a nurse. She took her salary and sectioned it off. One quarter to live on and three quarters to give away. In her one quarter was her savings and life expenses. She said, "I'm not going to lie to you, it was hard. I hadn't lived on a budget for a long time." She says now when she has an opportunity to save or an opportunity to share often behind the scenes it gives her great joy to share and watch it impact their lives. The hole has been filled to overflowing as God allows her to give joy to others . . . a joy she is able to give because God first gave it to her.

While many of us don't have a doctor's salary because in joy God has placed us in a different place in life, let us acknowledge that we have a personal God who is intimately involved in our lives. We have a generous God who gives and gives and gives. He is generous because it is his nature. It brings him joy to give. He loves to give. In an inventory of your life, can you see the joy God has poured out on you? God has a dump truck of blessings that he delivers to us each and every day. One of the cool things about God is that he doesn't wait for us to earn or a deserve blessing before he gives it. And for me that is a great thing, because if he were waiting for me to earn or deserve a blessing, I would have none. Jesus says, **'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'** " (Acts 20:35)

Matthew 25:35-37 The King will say . . . For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' **'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'** And so, I am confronted with my sin. When was the last time I saw anyone who was truly hungry or thirsty, who was homeless, who needed clothes, who needed to a care taker, who was in prison. Don't we often play life out like the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan? We pass by on the other side. We stay away from that part of town. Kind of out of

site out of mind. And so, we only hear about those things on the news. And when we do, all kinds of judgments come up. Friends, God didn't tell us to criticize but he did tell us to be loving and compassionate. What would it look like if we sought out people with love and understanding to be a blessing to them? Surely some of the people we will run into will not deserve a blessing, just like we haven't.

And you know what that means right? It means we are set free from return on investment thinking, we are set free from giving out of guilt, we are set free from giving out of emotion. We are set free to love. We can be thankful that we get to give. We can give freely because love gives freely. How exciting it is that God has entrusted us with blessings so that we can bless others! And as we bless others this is what is really happening: ⁴⁰ **“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’**

And since everything is God's and God loves to bless us we don't have to worry about the blessings running out. Generosity starts with God. **Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?** God didn't spare his own son but gave him up for you and me so that even though we are by nature spiritual destitute, outcast, undeserving, in fact enemies of God, we might be brought into relationship with the holy, ever loving, mighty God. This is how generous he is, the first verses of our text, that I purposely left out till now, **Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.** Heaven is our home. Nobody is going to break in and steal anything, no floods, or hurricanes, no rust, no wearing out, no faulty products or Christmas toys that you can't figure out how to put together. The best is yet to come!

So, do you think we can give? **Video!** Tonight is going to be a little different: Normally we wait until after the sermon to give generously but I want to invite our ushers up to the front because I want to give you a chance to give. Normally we tell our guests we don't want you to give but on Thanksgiving Eve we want you to give. Tonight, is going to be a little different in another way too. Tonight, you are not going to be giving any of your money to the church. If you brought cash or a check you can keep it in your pocket or your purse for tonight.

Instead, in the newest chapter of the excellent adventures of Ben and Bill and with the blessing of our leadership team here at Victory, we are going to give you an offering. The baskets that the ushers have are already filled with envelopes. And tonight, you are going to get it. Every family is to take one envelope out of the basket. So as the ushers pass the basket every family take one envelope but don't open it. Once the ushers have made their way through our Victory family I will tell you what to do next. As each family takes one envelope I want you to know that inside some envelopes are \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 or \$100. And here is the deal, there are two strings attached. The first string is if you take, you have to give it. And not with the person sitting next to you. Maybe give to a homeless person, buy lunch for someone, buy diapers, get creative, maybe join in with someone else sitting here and go have fun blessing someone. If they look at you kinda funny, just say something like “Jesus loves to bless us and I want to bless you too.” Second string, tell us on social media, FB, twitter or email Pastor Ben or myself (www.facebook.com/victoryofthelamb/), [@victoryfranklin](https://twitter.com/victoryfranklin) with the hashtag #becasueofJesus, Pastor Ben bkuerth@victoryofthelamb.com, Pastor Bill blimmer@victoryofthelamb.com and tell us how what you did with the money and how it felt to give. And I think you will find out, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. That God loves a cheerful giver.

Ok, open you envelopes, raise your hand if you have: \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100. Remember when you are giving away the money everything you have is just like this, whether you worked, got a gift or inheritance, God gave it to you and couldn't wait for you to open it up and experience the joy of giving.

And if you ever wonder if you can give first, remember these three words "**but God gives.**" And remember God didn't just say give, he gave. **God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)** Happy Thanksgiving!

Prayer.