

Last week, we talked about identity. We looked first of all at how immensely valuable we are. It doesn't matter if you are the world's biggest. It doesn't even matter if you are a Muslim or a Buddhist or an atheist. We are ALL each and everyone of us IMMENSELY valuable...because we ALL bear the divine IMAGE. Second, we looked at how we are SUCKERS... LOSERS. MORONS... the Bible goes as far as to call us whores.. BECAUSE OF SIN... BUT THIRDLY... DESPITE ALL THAT, God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Jesus DIED FOR OUR SINS... brought us into His family as sons and daughters.. AND HAS LAVISHED upon us ALL the riches that are found in the eternal Godhead.\.... So not only are we more sinful than we will ever know, we are more loved than we can ever imagine

And we ended with this piece of application... When you wake up in the morning... LOOK in the mirror and remind yourself... I AM AN CHILD OF GOD! I am an heir of the universe so I have it GOING GOOD. I start each day - not with my cup half empty, but in the immortal words of Psalm 23 - my CUP OVERFLOWS...

And when you begin to live life out of that REALITY... everything else starts falling into place... the things of this world along with all its troubles begin to grow strangely DIM... they are not as big ANYMORE in the face of ETERNAL GLORY...

Whats more... ALL the blessings of this life... meh.. Its just like the cherry on top... Sure I like cherries.. But i don't NEED IT. You can have the cherries, cause I've got the CAKE!

So thats a quick recap of last weeks sermon... This week, we are going look at HOW knowing our identity IN CHRIST... RADICALLY changes the way we REACT to.... MONEY.

I'm pretty sure that a lot of you have read the news coming out of Panama this past week...

On April 4, 2016... The front page story of USA TODAY read, "Massive data leak in Panama reveals money rings of global leaders."

Panama is a small country located in Central America and it has long been considered one of the tax havens of the world...

Greg Toppo, (pronounced tappo), a world renowned journalist writing for the USA Today reports...

“A massive, anonymous leak of financial documents from a Panamanian law firm has revealed an extensive worldwide network of offshore ‘shell’ companies that allow the wealthy to hide their assets from taxes and, in some cases, to launder billions in cash.”

Now... this isn't talking about corporate corruption merely. The Panama files brought to light over 210 thousand companies that were tied to corporate corruption - including global leaders in the banking industry such as HSBC. But that's something EVERYONE more or less knew about.

What sent a TIDAL wave of SHOCK throughout the world was just how far reaching the corruption was...

“The documents, that is, 2.6 TERABYTES of data... in the form of over 15 MILLION pages of documentation as well as 4.8 million emails... were combed through in the past year by hundreds of journalists worldwide, and... they have just now begun publishing their findings - 140 politicians from more than 50 countries...including heads of state, ministers and elected officials... all intricately linked to what is perhaps the greatest corruption scandal in human history.

We are talking here about PRESIDENTS... prime ministers, kings and princes, that ARE HIDING CORRUPT MONEY and in some cases LAUNDERING money... Now, just because money laundering sounds like LAUNDRY... doesn't make this a laughing matter. You see, MONEY LAUNDERING is the process whereby money or wealth that is gained through corruption is cleansed into another form of wealth, then often reverted back into cash or other very liquid assets...When done right, money laundering makes it almost impossible for the money to be traced back to the corruption...

And the sheer magnitude of all this is something that even Hollywood has yet to dream off... We aren't talking here about MILLIONS of dollars... NOT EVEN BILLIONS.... BUT TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS! Back in 2012... the Tax Justice Network estimated some 21 trillion to 32 TRILLION dollars is hidden away by the elite... AND THIS WAS BEFORE PANAMA HAPPENED...

As Albert Mohler, the president of our denomination put it, "this is a scale of corruption that defies the imagination... We are talking here about ENOUGH MONEY to pay off MULTIPLE national DEBTS and BUY OFF ENTIRE COUNTRIES!!

It would not be an exaggeration to say that this is the greatest corruption scandal in human history to date. And at the heart of the corruption.. lies the LOVE OF MONEY...

And so this morning.. I'm going to walk you through 2 stories... John Piper did something similar with the youth group at his church once.... And I'm building off from where he was going with that... two stories... The story of Naaman and the story of Mephibosheth... And these stories, whether you like it or not, its going to change your attitude toward money FOREVER.

So, if you have brought your Bibles, would you turn with me to 2 Kings 5. For the sake of time, we aren't going to be reading through every verse but do follow along in your Bibles or on the overhead as I walk you through these stories...

The opening verses introduces us to a man called Naaman. He was a GREAT MAN ... a commander of the army of the king of Syria... and was highly favoured because - get this... the LORD had given Syria victory over Israel through NAAMAN... It continues to say that he was a MIGHTY man of valour... BUT he was a leper...HOW COULD that be?

By now, we know that lepers were considered to be the scum of the earth in ancient times...So HOW can a leper be MIGHTY and favoured by THE KING and LEAD people into war? When I read this story.. I think...of the movie "Kingdom of Heaven" starring Orlando Bloom and Liam Neeson... I highly recommend you all to watch it someday... its actually a pretty

accurate historical construction of the Crusades... And in that movie... the king of Jerusalem - that fellow over there... HAS LEPROSY... that's probably what Naaman looked like as well... Although its EXTREMELY RARE, lepers did at times win the hearts and respect of people...

So here is this high ranking Syrian general... with leprosy... And one of his Hebrew servant girls tells him about Elisha... and how he has the power to heal...

SO Naaman goes on his way.. bringing with him 10 TALENTS of silver, 6 thousand shekels of gold... and ten changes of clothing ... that's the rough equivalent of 340 kilograms of SILVER and 66 kilograms of GOLD - as well as DESIGNER BRAND CLOTHING worth a fortune in itself.

That's quite the entourage... WITH ALL THAT behind him... he approaches Elisha and says... So, I've heard you can heal me. And Elisha responds.. Go dip yourself in the Jordan river 7 times.... Naaman is FURIOUS... WHAT is this guy telling me to do? Dip in the river 7 times? I'm a WAR HERO... Don't you know who I am. I am a MAN OF VALOUR AND HONOUR. WHERE IS THE GLORY IN THAT??? Obviously I've wasted my time with this so called prophet... verse 12. So he turned and went away in a rage...

but one of his servants says to him... COME ON MASTER... If it had been something harder you would have done it without hesitation... Its only dipping yourself in the river 7 times.. that's not to bad... so swallow your pride and go!

And surprisingly, Naaman relents... He dipped himself 7 times in the Jordan... And after he comes out... his skin is healed! The Bible literally says it became soft like baby skin... And he is so thrilled that he GOES BACK and THIS GENERAL FALLS ON HIS FACE BEFORE ELISHA! YOU SEE, GRACE HAD NOT ONLY HEALED HIM OF LEPROSY! IT HAD HEALED HIM OF PRIDE...

GRACE had made him humble... he didn't just lose leprosy.. he lost pride... AND he lost FALSE religion.. From that day onward, Naaman worshipped the God of Israel... And he said to Elisha.. WHAT CAN I GIVE

YOU??? As you can see, I've brought lots of money with me...Ask of me ANYTHING you want and I'll get it for you..

Listen carefully to how Elisha responds.v. 16 - As surely as the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing." Take your money and go....

BUT BUT.... Naaman continued to URGE Elisha to take THE MONEY but HE REFUSED... And Naaman eventually went on his way.

ENTER Gehazi, Elisha's servant. I want you all to remember this name. GEHAZI. He is listening to this... AND he thinks... WHAT! MY master is turning down MONEY??? And so he runs to catch up with Naaman and lies through his teeth saying - MY MASTER HAS CHANGED HIS MIND.. because TWO guests have just arrived and we want to provide them with changes of clothing as well as some money for the road..

AND Namaan is eager.. yes yes here it is! and he hands over 60 kg OF SILVER ...as well as two very expensive sets of clothes fit for a king..

Gehazi, rather pleased with himself... hides these gifts at his house and makes his way back to Elisha.. pretending as if nothing happened...

And this is really stupid.. ELISHA is a prophet! He asks his servant.. where did you go?

I didn't go anywhere..

Elisha says.. yes you did. vs. 26. Was it a time to accept money and garments?? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman will cling to you and your descendants forever.

The lesson I want to draw out from this story is simple. The love of money is like leprosy... its not only ugly.. but it will kill you...

We are all very fortunate here to HAVE WORK. Baristas, electricians, managers, teachers, businessmen. And compared to the rest of the world, we are making some really good money. But ask yourself... has your GREED for money made you a leper? Are you as the prophet Malachi said - ROBBING from God by not being honest with your tithing? But BUT... I'm a student.. I'm just SETTLING DOWN.. I'm saving up to get married

and buy a HOUSE... The prophet HAGGAI had a message for the people of GOD returning from exile and who were beginning to SETTLE down... Basically what he said was this: "DO NOT expect GOD to bless you when you are busy investing in your home while neglecting to first invest in God's HOUSE!"

And that... is the SAME message that God is telling His people now.

Don't BE LIKE GEHAZI. Don't let YOUR GREED to keep a few extra thousand dollars in your bank accounts at the end of the year... DON'T LET THAT ROB you of God's blessing.

Rather, be like Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan.. David's best friend... And the GRANDSON of SAUL... And in those days.. it wasn't uncommon to have the rival family to the throne WIPED off the face of the earth in order to eliminate any competition. That sounds bloody, but by doing so, you drastically lessened the chance of civil war and more bloodshed. ...

On top of being a potential challenger to the throne, he was cripple because when he was young.. his nanny had dropped him while running away... permanently damaging his legs...

Well, one day... as King David was thinking about his dear friend Jonathan.. he asked his servants . . IS there not a member of Jonathan's household left alive to whom I may show kindness? And his servants told him... well, theres this fellow called Mephibosheth... but he is a cripple... WHO CARES! Find him for me immediately!

So Mephibosheth is summoned to the king's palace.. and he expects to be EXECUTED ...With great fear he approached David and fell on his face...likening himself to a DEAD DOG...

BUT KING DAVID does something SO OUTRAGEOUS! He gives him the land that belonged to Saul and invites HIM TO LIVE in his palace and eat at his table. BASICALLY, Mephibosheth went from being an exile to a PRINCE! David ADOPTED him into the family and treated him like one of

his sons! See the connection there? THATS NOT JUST Mephibosheth's story, that's OUR STORY! THAT's OUR IDENTITY..

FAST forward to the time of Absalom... He was the son of David who betrayed the King... He was good looking and had a way with people... to the point where his following grew and he was able to kick his father off the throne... see the irony there.. So David and his faithful followers had to FLEE the city!

Mephibosheth, of course, wanted to follow, but he was a cripple, and his manager Ziba had betrayed him! ZIBA was blinded by GREED MUCH like how GEHAZI WAS BLINDED BY GREED... he saw this as an opportunity to acquire GREAT WEALTH... so he leaves his master in Jerusalem and follows DAVID, bringing with him LOTS OF food and supplies...and when David notices that Mephibosheth isn't with him... Ziba lies through his teeth saying.... Mephibosheth stayed in Jerusalem because he reasons that you and your sons will kill each other in war and sees this all as just an opportunity for the throne to return to the family of Saul....

David responds by transferring everything he had given Mephibosheth to Ziba.

Fast forward to chapter 19... David has won the war against his own son... And he returns to Jerusalem and FINDS that... Mephibosheth has been waiting EAGERLY for the return of the KING! HOW DO WE KNOW THIS? Verse 24 writes... that he had neither taken care of his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes from the day the king departed until the day he came back safely...

You see.. Mephibosheth's heart was loyal to true king, and his lifestyle reflected it.

I want to draw out a lesson for us here... The story of Mephibosheth is really our story as well.. JUST LIKE BACK THEN, there is a false KING... on the throne of this world. The Bible calls him the ruler of this world... But the day is coming when our King will return and the devil will be cast down In the meantime.. during His absence... WE must LIVE WITH A WAR TIME MENTALITY.. Jesus SAID so Himself... MY DISCIPLES WILL FAST ONCE I AM GONE! TRUE CHRISTIANS EAGERLY AWAIT THE RETURN OF THE KING and their lifestyle choices WILL reflect a proper sense of THAT

WAITING and MOURNING.... Blessed are those who MOURN for they will be comforted... Now, I'm not saying we have to be like Mephibosheth and not trim our beards or take showers... THE POINT HERE IS THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE EAGERLY WAITING the return of the KING DO NOT DREAM of LIVING IT UP in this life.

When David sees Mephibosheth and realizes his mistake in giving Ziba the land, he says, "You and Ziba shall divide the land" (19:29). Scholars are not sure whether this means that David wasn't sure who was right and so he divided it half and half; or whether this is a Hebrew way of saying David restored the original agreement, with Mephibosheth owning the land and Ziba managing the land.. I for one think that the literary context supports the LATTER view.. that is, David restored everything to Mephibosheth.... But that's not important... WHAT IS important is how Mephibosheth responds. I want everyone's full attention now. The sermon is going to be over in less than two minutes... That got your attention didn't it? Ready?

v. 29. And the king said to Mephibosheth... "Why speak any more of your affairs? I CAN SEE from THE LIFESTYLE CHOICES YOU'VE MADE that you HAVE BEEN EAGERLY WAITING MY RETURN. I have decided: You and Ziba shall divide the land.

Verse 30 "Oh, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home.""

Let that hit you. Mephibosheth didn't want the land.. he didn't WANT THE BELLS AND WHISTLES OF LIVING IN the KING'S PALACE... HE DIDN'T WANT THE WEALTH! WHAT MEPHIBOSHETH wanted was the PERSON who had GIVEN HIM GRACE! ZIBA CAN HAVE THE CHERRIES CAUSE I'VE GOT THE CAKE!

Grace does that to you! It changes you from a worthless sinner headed to HELL to a child of God and a co-heir with CHRIST.. THAT CHANGES YOU! Whats MORE. GRACE KILLS GREED. Grace KILLS GREED. GREEDY people are simply people that have not experienced God's grace... So don't hate them. Pity them. Greed in your life is evidence of a heart that has not been transformed by the gospel. BUT when grace comes... when you have TASTED the gospel of Christ... you will be like Mephibosheth. Oh, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home
Lets pray.