

SELFLESS AMBITION

Ezra 1:4 And whoever remains in any place where he resides, let the men of his place help him with silver and with gold and with goods and with animals, besides the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. 5 And the chiefs of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, and all whose spirit God had raised, rose up to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem.

This is our 5th week going through a series titled **FROM RUBBLE TO RADIANCE PRT 5**. I want to emphasize again that it is a series of hope and restoration. God will not allow injustice to continue forever; He will always have the last say – someone must believe that today.

What I am about to share with you is somewhat aligned with what I taught last week, where we talked about going beyond redemption. Today's teaching is very specific regarding going beyond redemption.

There is something about a person with an ambition (a strong desire, drive, or determination to achieve success, power, wealth, or a specific goal) to achieve something worthwhile for themselves. Ambition is a powerful force that drives people to achieve great success. Pitied is a man or woman who has lost ambition for life. It transforms vision into reality by providing the necessary motivation to overcome challenges. It fosters a sense of purpose and direction, leading to personal growth and increased self-confidence.

This morning, I want to talk to you about **SELFLESS AMBITION**. The kingdom of God is one driven by an attitude of selflessness.

- Completely opposed to selfish ambition, when your life is driven by selfless ambition, you are drawn to mission and impact and not personal gain – purpose trumps platform.
- Again, the story in the book of Ezra foreshadows how God intended to build His kingdom.
- Let me start off by saying this: The kingdom of God is built on the shoulders of selfless individuals who are personally invested in it.
- When Cyrus gazetted the release of prisoners, he was releasing them into a season that placed a personal demand on them. Those of you who have been involved in any construction project will agree with me that it costs a lot of money.
- Resources are needed to start and to finish any construction project and this is very applicable to the kingdom of God.
- It will take meaningful resources to build the kingdom of God, as well as to build anything worthwhile in your life.
- In other words, there will always be a demand on your resources both for personal and kingdom needs.
- The big question that needs an answer is this: what do you do when there is a demand on your resources?

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- The story of Ezra tells us of what needs to happen in the face of competing needs. I want to take you through 2 appropriate responses in the face of competing demands.

Ezra 1: 4 And whoever remains in any place where he resides...5 And the chiefs of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, and all whose spirit God had raised, rose up to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem.

1. Give of yourself selflessly.

- When the decree was issued, it found people who were busy with their own lives.
- They were looking after their businesses; they had families to look after.
- The decree by Cyrus was too compelling for them that it was something to be ambitious about.
- God uses busy people to expand His kingdom and reign on earth.
- Peter was busy fishing, Matthew was a tax collector, Paul was a religious individual, Moses was a shepherd, and David was a shepherd boy.
- In other words, to serve God requires you to be selfless with your time. It was the leaders and fathers who committed themselves to building the temple.
- Get me, there has to be a balance to these things, but you cannot serve God without being physically present.

Isaiah 6:8 And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me! 9 And He said, Go, and tell this people, You hear indeed, but do not understand; and seeing you see, but do not know.

- God is still asking the same question: who shall go for us? Who will visit the sick for us, who will reach the sinners for us, who will visit the prisoners for us, who will provide counselling for the addicted, who will mentor the next generation, who will raise the horn of righteousness?
- Many times, we hear and see needs around us, but we think someone else will do it, and if you are like that, you won't be the first one.

Exodus 4:10 Moses said to the Lord, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."11 The Lord said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."13 But Moses said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else."

- Those who did not respond might have had good reasons for not responding. We might have reasons that seem plausible, but heaven is still looking at you.
- Moses gave God reasons why he could not go – he was afraid of rejection; he was unsure about his abilities.

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- Don't allow heaven's demand to bypass you because there is something special about serving God.
- That special thing is the presence of God that accompanies those who say yes to building the temple. God promised to be with Moses and will take care of his inadequacies.
- People who are available to serve God will experience the presence of God in a special way. God is close to those who serve Him, empowering, guiding, and strengthening them in service.
- God does not use capable people but rather those who are available. All He wants is a body that is available.
- When God called Mary to carry Jesus in her womb, she had very good reasons for not participating in the mission.

Luke 1:30 And the angel said to her, Do not fear, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold! You shall conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name JESUS.

- When God calls you to serve Him, it is an indication of His favour on your life. In other words, refusing to serve God is a rejection of God's favour over your life. If you don't know, favour is unfair, and when favour is on your side, nothing is impossible for you.
- God does not call the capable, and therefore, when God calls you to do some work, it is unmerited grace that is at work.
- No one is good enough to serve God, and therefore serving God is a privilege and honour.
- The reality of God's call is that it places a demand on you, it will lead you into uncomfortable paths.
- There is both a price and a reward in serving God. He calls His people into sacrificial service, which usually involves bearing a cross. That is why I am talking about a selfless ambition.
- No one can say yes to a kingdom's selfless ambition unless God Himself works in them to say yes.

Ezra 1: 5 Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem.

- There is a stirring of God's spirit that needs to happen in your heart if you are to say yes
- Well, you might say God has not stirred up my spirit – if you are here today, the Lord is already stirring up your heart by His spirit.
- It is the Lord who works in us both to will and to do according to His purpose – Philippians 2:13.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

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- Mary was assured of the working of the Holy Spirit:

Luke 1:34 Then Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I do not know a man? 35 And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come on you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you. Therefore also that Holy One which will be born of you shall be called Son of God.

- It was not going to be about Mary's physical ability but rather the one who was on her and in her – the Holy Spirit. It is amazing what the Holy Spirit can do in you and through you.
- When we say no to God's call, we are saying God is not powerful enough to use you.
- When Mary heard this, it prompted the appropriate response:

Luke 1:38 And Mary said, Behold the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.

- She opened herself up to God's will and made this profound response – when you say yes to God's word, the word jumps into action, enabling you to perform the improbable.
- Let me repeat my initial statement as we close: The kingdom of God is built on the shoulders of selfless individuals who are personally invested in it.
- Who among you is ready to go to Jerusalem and build the temple? This house needs an individual who is selflessly ambitious.
- The nobles, the priests, and the Levites abandoned their personal comforts for the sake of Jerusalem.