

## SELFLESS AMBITION PRT 2

This morning, I would like to continue from where I left off last week. Last week, I began a message titled **SELFLESS AMBITION**, and this morning I want to do Part 2 of it. We discovered that God created us with a drive to achieve great things, which we call ambition. We then said that, at some point, we are called upon to embark on a journey of selfless ambition where purpose trumps platform.

- We acknowledge that we all have limited resources and that there will always be competing demands for those resources.
- Faced with competing demands, it is easier to commit your resources to something that has a direct and physical bearing on you, but not so easy to do the same when it comes to spiritual matters.
- We have been camped in the Book of Ezra, whose theme is about the faithfulness of God. The Book was written by Ezra after 80 years of the Jews' return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and restore true worship.
- In exploring the faithfulness of God, we discovered that God involves man in the fulfillment of His purpose on earth.
- To be involved in matters of the kingdom requires selflessness because the kingdom of God is built on the shoulders of selfless individuals who are personally invested in it.
- In other words, it is called upon every kingdom citizen to respond selflessly in the face of a kingdom demand.
- The story of Ezra gives us an indication of how we should respond when God places a demand on our resources.
- God's people in Babylon responded in a specific and selfless manner in the following 2 ways:
  - 1. Give of yourself selflessly.**
    - The leaders of God's people availed themselves to go and build God's house. When it comes to building God's kingdom, availability is more valuable than competency.
    - The rebuilding of the temple required volunteers to leave behind their own responsibilities to go and rebuild the temple.
    - As we are seated here this morning, where has your presence been felt in this church and by extension in God's kingdom?
    - Lets now explore the 2<sup>nd</sup> way in which they selflessly responded to the call.

*Ezra 1:6 And all those who were around them made their hands strong with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with animals, and with precious things, besides all being willingly offered.*

*Ezra 2:68 And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in its place. 69 They gave according*

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*to their ability to the treasure of the work, sixty one thousand drachmas of gold, and five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priest's garments.*

### **2. Sacrificial giving**

- The people who were around the leaders of Judah, the Levites and Priests, dug into their pockets and gave resources towards the rebuilding of the temple.
- They gave whilst they were still in Babylon, and when they got back to Jerusalem, they continued giving – the financial requirement to build God's kingdom is huge.
- Look at the words that were used by Ezra: they made their hands strong, they assisted them, they aided them, they strengthened them.
- These are statements that indicate the impact the giving had on those who volunteered to go and build.
- Never underestimate the impact your giving has in establishing the kingdom of God. Yes, there has been abuse of finances, but it does not mean giving towards the work of the ministry is not a God idea.
- It is called upon us to be generous with our finances.
- The spirit of generosity is not determined by how much you have but is determined by the condition of your heart.
- The devil has made us believe that the day we start earning large sums of money will be the day we will start giving. If you cannot give from a salary of R500, you will not give when you start earning R50 000.
- We have a New Testament example of how we should give.

*2 Corinthians 8:1 And, brothers, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given among the churches of Macedonia; 2 that in much testing of trouble, the overflowing of their joy, and the depth of their poverty, abounded to the riches of their generosity. 3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability; they gave willingly; 4 with much beseeching, begging us that they might receive of us the grace and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints.*

- The church in Jerusalem was going through a challenging season, which prompted other churches to send financial support.
- Here we have the Macedonian churches, which were financially poor but rich in generosity.
  - They begged to be part of the blessing, despite being deep in poverty – they were eager to give.
  - They gave with joy – let your giving be done joyously, for the Lord loves a cheerful giver.

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- They gave according to their ability and even beyond their ability – that is sacrificial giving at play here.
  - Your resources can impact the kingdom of God beyond your physical location. There were some who could not go back to Jerusalem, but their generosity went for them.
  - You might not be able to attend an outreach, but your generosity can minister on your behalf.
  - If you have noticed, I did not just say respond to God’s call by just giving, but I added the word “sacrificial”.
  - There is nothing selfless about giving that which costs you nothing. That type of giving is simply an appeasement of one's conscience. Don't be in the habit of giving God your leftovers.
  - God is looking for those who will offer Him a sacrifice, something that will cost you something. If your giving does not make a difference in your lifestyle, then it is not a selfless act yet.
  - David, a king in the Bible, was not ok with giving God that which cost him nothing – 2 Samuel 24:24. It was after God had punished God’s people because David has counted his armies to check how strong he was. God sent an angel which had a sword drawn out whilst standing at threshing floor of Araunah. David then decides to build an altar in that place and Araunah wanted to give it to the king for free. David refused because he was not prepared to give to the Lord that which costed him nothing.
  - At the heart of selfless giving is the principle of proportional giving. Your giving must be proportional to what you have received from God.
  - Sometimes, the least generous people in the church are those who have a high earning capacity. In other words, earning a good salary does not equate to generosity.
  - Ezra records that the people supported the builders with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuables. These were items of great value
  - People who have a selfless ambition for the kingdom are guaranteed a harvest, and this harvest is both physical and spiritual.
- Mark 10:28 Peter began to say to Him, “Look, we have left everything and followed You.” 29 “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for My sake and for the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundredfold in the present age - houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, along with persecutions - and in the age to come, eternal life.*
- You serve a faithful God, and no one can outgive God – whatever you do for God, be assured that He will do even better for you.
  - There is a harvest of righteousness that comes with being selfless for God.

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- In closing, I want to give you an insight into what you need to respond to God's call in a selfless manner:

*Ezra 1:1 ... Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom...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*

- The response of Cyrus and the elders of Judah and Benjamin was initiated by the inner working of the Holy Spirit.
- You need your heart to be touched by God in order to be selfless in your outlook to life. When the Holy Spirit touches a man's heart, God can do anything with that person.
- The church needs a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit to overcome the selfish outlook on life.
- It was God who stirred the heart of Cyrus, and it was God who awakened the hearts of the leaders.
- There is a stirring of God's spirit that needs to happen in your heart if you are to be selfless.
- 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.*

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