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Wonderful, Heavenly Father, thank you for a chance to come back together again and to discuss all of the wonderful truths that you have given to us in your word. Thank you for the wonderful transformations that you are doing in our hearts and in our lives. Help us to understand your ways, help us to make good choices. Help us to hear from your Holy Spirit now as we try to learn and apply the truths that you have given us. In the name of Jesus, amen. Okay, so this week, last Sunday we got a call, right as everyone was leaving church, we got a call about a family that was getting kicked out of their home the next day. And so I followed up with these people and the father, is it father and a mother and seven or five kids, seven people total. And they said, you know, we were getting evicted and normally when someone says we're getting evicted then the next thing they say is unless you give us money to pay our rent and that's kind of what I was expecting and instead he said, you know, we need help finding a new place. And I was like, oh okay, well I can do that. So the next day I went downtown, picked him up, picked up the dad and it's weird calling him a dad because he's a lot younger than me, but yeah he's a young guy and we started driving up and down the streets of his neighborhood looking for rent signs to try and find a place for him and his family. And we spent just hours doing that and had no luck so then we started going to different trailer parks in Indianapolis, no luck. Finally it was getting dark so we found a real cheap hotel and put him up there for the night, transported his family and all his stuff and we moved him into the hotel room and I said, okay, we'll pick it up again tomorrow. So the next day we went back out, visited lots more trailer parks, lots more for rent signs, you know, and as I'm driving up down the street looking for the for rent signs, he's on my phone surfing like Craigslist looking for people who posted for rent signs online and I had someone tell me, you know, why didn't you just search online? It's like, well we were, we were doing that in the car while we drove around. Again, second day, no luck. So we go out again the third day and I promise you we visited every trailer park in Indianapolis and we had a couple, we had a couple that were just real near misses and it's like it was right within their price range but he wanted a thousand dollars down and he didn't have any money saved up and he's like, you know, he's like, I've got this job and I get paid Friday but, you know, if you could help me out with like the down payment or something, I was like, well, we'll take care of you, don't worry about that. So finally we found a place and it was a pretty bad part of town but it was really affordable and they were willing to let him move in that day and so we, we drove to the rental company and started filling out all the paperwork and they took this paperwork and they started processing it and they came back into the room and they're like, we have a problem. You, we, we called your job and they said you're not on the payroll there and he's like, oh gosh, what, what, did you, are you sure you called the right one? He's like, yeah, we called the right one and they said, who's your boss? Who's the guy that hired you? And he's like, well, it's Mike and they're like, well, they, they, I said, give me to the person who handles payroll and they gave me to this guy named Grant and Grant says you're not on payroll and Grant also says he doesn't know anyone named Mike and we were like, oh gosh, what is going on here? So he's like, can you at least hold the house for me until the guy's like, I can't make any promises. So, so we leave there and, and I'm thinking to myself, okay, there's one, probably one of three things that's going on here. Either he works next door to the place he thinks he works at and he doesn't realize it or, or someone has hired him like off the books and it's, you know, some under the table shady stuff that they can't report over the phone or he doesn't actually work at this place and I'm like, well, I'm like, we're not gonna be able to get you a place until we get this sorted out. So let's drive down to your job and let's sort this out and, and he's like, look, they're only calling because they want proof of employment and once I get my pay stub Friday then it'll be good and I was like, I was like, buddy, if you're not on the payroll, you may not be getting a pay stub Friday. So we gotta go sort this out and there was a real long pause. He's like, you're gonna be mad at me. No, I knew what was coming now. He's like, I don't actually work there and I was like, alright, okay. He's a, I've got money coming in. It's like from the VA or something and, you know, and he's like, it's, it's, it's money that I comes into me regularly but it's not technically income. It doesn't count as qualified income if we apply for a house and stuff and he's just like, I feel so terrible. I wanted to tell you since the first day but I was like, alright, it's okay. So we, you pulled into McDonald's and the night before I'd been talking with Dick Leib and we put together a big list of different shelters and charities and stuff that might be able to help and I was like, okay, we have to completely change track here. We have to go from, you know, finding a house because that's just not gonna happen without, without income and we need to find you a shelter and a job. So I start calling shelters and everyone's like, we're full, we're full, we're full and they're like, we're first come, first serve. So what you need to do is you need to call back at like seven in the morning and, and that's when we open and start answering the phone and that's when we can find you a place. So I said, okay, so I made this guy a list of like, here is all the shelters that possibly can take you in but, and here is the time you need to call them tomorrow morning to try and get your place there and I'm like, you know, this one here, you know, they'll separate you from your wife and kids so I know that's kind of your last resort but, you know, it may, it may come to that. So call these tomorrow morning and in the meantime, start getting out there and finding a job, start applying and he's like, oh thank you, thank you, I'm so sorry and I'm like, it's okay and he's like, it's not okay and I'm like, well you're right, it's not okay. You know, lying is bad and wrong but, you know, I was like, it's, it's, it's okay, we're gonna take care of it, you're gonna be alright. He kept apologizing and finally I just had to explain to him and I said, look, the reason that I'm doing all this is because God loves a bunch of sinners, he loves a bunch of traitors and I'm like, I'm not loving you, I'm not doing this for you because, because of what you can give me or do for me or because you're a great person. I'm loving you because the love that God has shown me is love to a wicked sinful traitor and it doesn't matter who I am, he loved me anyways and so it doesn't matter who you are, I'm gonna keep loving you and helping you find what you're looking for. So we took him back to the hotel and I said, look, we're, call, call the shelters first thing in the morning, I'll come back over here and if none of the shelters can take you in then, then we'll, we'll pay for a week stay at this hotel while you keep calling shelters and while you look for a job. So he said, thank you, thank you and he, the next day I came there and he, he thought he might have a line on a shelter but it wasn't going to be till later and so I said, okay, we'll, we'll pay for the hotel, we loaded up one of our Kroger cards and gave that to him so he could get food for his family and said, just keep in touch, you know, I mean don't, if you let me know how this works out, he's like, alright, he's like, I got a buddy, I also called my buddy, he's like, when I got home last night I felt so bad about what I'd done, I just started crying and my friend said, alright, you're, you're coming to work with me tomorrow and you're applying at my job. He's like, I'm really nervous about that because it's doing siding and I'm terrified of heights but the job's a job and I'm like, okay, well, it's like you can keep applying for other jobs too, you don't just have to take the first one that comes but remember that you've only got a week here and, you know, money is money so, and plus it's gonna be a week or two until you actually get your first paycheck so. The point of this story is not, is not that I did something great or cool or interesting. What, what I find really interesting about this story is, is that as, as he was confessing his lie to me, I found myself chuckling and then I found myself having this really weird introspective moment where I was like, who am I? I, I spent the last 20 years of my life being a real jerk and having no patience or love for homeless people or, you know, especially for liars. I mean the person I used to be would have just dropped him off at the side of the road and, and, and sped off and, and been so angry and frustrated and maybe tried to find revenge or something. That's the person that I used to be and now, like, that's not, that's not in me at all. I'm just like chuckling and laughing about how he took advantage of me and, and so it's not, hey, look, it's not, hey, look what Matt has done, it's look what God has done to Matt because I promise you my own desires were not to become someone like this. I was, I was happy being the guy I was and, but, but God has been changing me and he's been working in my heart to be someone who's like him, to be someone who shows the kind of love that he shows, which is a love towards people who don't deserve it and who have no way to repay it, who might not even say thank you. That that's God's love for us and that's the kind of people he wants to transform us into. Jesus demonstrated God's sacrificial love and we are called to do likewise. There are some Bible stories that exemplify this and I'm going to read them. Luke 17, 12 through 19. This is the story of the ten lepers. Then as Jesus entered a certain village, there met him ten men who were lepers who stood afar off and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, master, have mercy on us. So when he saw them, he said to them, go, show yourselves to the priests and so it was that as they went they were cleansed and one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned and with a loud voice glorified God and fell down on his face at his feet giving him thanks and he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, were there not ten cleansed but where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? And he said to them, arise, go your way, your faith has made you well. This is a great story that exemplifies the ingratitude in men's hearts towards God. A lot of us have a much higher opinion of ourselves than we should and I think it's by the grace of God that he doesn't really show us the filth and the depth of our sin and how awful we are and because we have this high opinion of ourselves, a lot of times when something good happens to us, we say, oh, we deserve that but really God doesn't owe us anything. We don't deserve anything from God and everything he does is a gift and mercy and grace and blessing. Another story found in Luke 10 is the story of the Good Samaritan starting in verse 30. Jesus answered and said, a certain man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite when he arrived at the place came and looked and passed by on the other side but a certain Samaritan as he journeyed came where he was and when he saw him he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds pouring on oil and wine and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day when he departed he took out two Denari, gave them to the innkeeper and said to him, take care of him and whatever more you spend when I come again I will repay you. What did the Samaritan stand to gain from this? Absolutely nothing. The Samaritan had no idea if this wounded man on the road was in any condition to ever repay him or ever return this kindness. I mean if this had been a Jew on the road then it could very well be that after he was healed he was said, "Ooh Samaritan unclean get away from me." He might have returned that kindness with disdain but that Samaritan demonstrated the kind of love God shows us which is doing the right thing even to people who don't deserve it who can't say things. I thought of this sermon because this is like Thanksgiving time and I thought of you know where should do a message on thankfulness but I was like you know a lot of times you're not gonna hear thank you for the stuff you do and but God still calls us to do it anyways even without a thank you. Romans 5 8 God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Jesus didn't die for awesome great people. He died for sinners and he taught us to do the same which is what he said in Luke 14. "When you give a dinner or a supper do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, your rich neighbors lest they also invite you back and you be repaid. But when you give a feast invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." We do not give in order to gain and unfortunately there's a lot of bad preaching out there that teaches us exactly that. We give, we serve and love God and do the good things we do in order to gain blessings from God and even just at first glance that sounds right but but it's wrong. We do not give in order to gain we give because we have gained. Ephesians 1 3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." We are so blessed we have as Christians we have received so many good things so much wonderful forgiveness and love that we absolutely didn't deserve and and nothing you did earned all of that love and grace and mercy and everything and to now try and live a good life in order to earn that stuff that was just freely poured on us is ridiculous. It's been given to you, you have it and yet so often we see people come into Christianity and the first thing that they start hearing messages is about you know well if you if you want your life and to improve you need to start being better you need to start living a more Christian life then God will bless you. God blesses you because he loves you and he's he's gonna lead you into situations in your life where people lie to you and take advantage of you that doesn't mean he doesn't love you he's just taking you through that experience because it's gonna turn you into the kind of person he wants you to be. We are blessed in Christ not because we are good. Ephesians 1.7 says in him Jesus we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. In Ephesians 2.8 says for by grace you have been saved through faith and even your faith is not of yourselves it is the gift of God. You can please God with your service don't get me wrong it makes God happy when you choose to do the right thing and when you give to your limits and over your limits it pleases God it makes him so happy but you don't you cannot then use that his pleasure to manipulate him into getting something from him. He doesn't you know we see a lot of relationships on on earth that are very manipulative and you know see a husband or a wife withholding from each other in order to gain something and it's very manipulative and that's not how it works with God. Yes you can please him and make him happy with what you do but you need to realize he's already giving you everything. You are wonderfully amazingly blessed and to try and manipulate to get something out of him just throws all the blessings he's already giving you back in his face. He doesn't need anything from us. He is complete and perfect in himself and so we cannot withhold anything from him in order to manipulate him. Nothing that we can withhold is is you know is worth anything to him. Isaiah 64 6 that we are like an unclean thing and our righteousness is like filthy rags. Your righteousness the nicest greatest thing you can do is like filthy rags to God and you try and withhold it and say God I'll give you this if you do something for me and he's like what he's you're holding those filthy rags from me seriously. He's like that's not gonna work. It might make you uncomfortable to hear that because a lot of us our relationships are are based off of this mutual trade. Actually I see this a lot in the youth group because we'll go out to eat or something and I'll buy him a meal or whatever and I'll be very nice and and they don't really have any way to repay me and yet they scramble and try so hard to find ways to repay me because because we in our human nature just have this equality thing we have to balance it out. You've done something nice and now I can't have that that extra blessing on my conscience. I have to repay you back. It has to be balanced out and so to hear that with God we can't repay it then that'll make some of us uncomfortable. But it's okay just accept that you can't you can't ever repay the blessing that God gave you. Accept that you can't ever make up for Jesus on the cross. Nothing you do will ever will ever equal out what God has given us. Just accept the imbalance. Accept that you're the poor person in this relationship. Well what I want you to take away today I want you to think about during our quiet time during our open worship is that there will be thanklessness as you go out and do God's work in this world. But unlike the thinkless jobs of this world that you may have to work at at nine to five our thankless service isn't going to weigh you down because you're not working for the thanks anymore. You're doing you're working because you've been blessed and you just want to glorify God by passing his love and his blessing on to others. God pours all this love and blessing into our lives and we can't give it back to him so he says give it on out to those people out there and don't worry if they can't pay you back. He's like I'm just gonna keep blessing you and blessing you you just keep passing it on out into this world okay. And if you think that you're lacking blessings and that's because that your poor performance you don't read your Bible enough or pray enough or whatever then during this quiet time say a pair of thanks to God that his blessings aren't based on your performance. Repent of trying to earn all of the wonderful free things that he wants to give you that you could never afford anyways and just believe and accept that you are blessed beyond major in Christ. Just say thanks God I love you and just commit from this day forward to accepting and believing that you have those blessings and that you can't pay them back and so you're going to pay them forward. Let's spend some time with God now. The moments in our lives where it seems like someone is taking advantage of us or being wrong to us those are the purest moments to demonstrate the love of God. The love that you show to your friends and loved ones is is nice but the love that you show to the people who can't repay the love that you show in the face of hate and anger and betrayal that's when the love of God shines so brightly that's when you have your moment of ministry. Heavenly Father thank you for this love and these blessings that you have poured out on us. Thank you for all the things that we forget about we are so grateful and thankful for all that you have done and we repent of thinking that we have to earn that and we repent of trying to win that and earn that from you and we just accept that you love us and that you bless us. We take that love and those blessings now and we commit them out into this world into this dark dying world God. Put that put that in our hearts that confidence of your love and your blessing and help us carry it out with little lights into this dark world. I pray in Jesus name Amen.