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Sermon Notes

Stewardship Series: Dress It and Keep It (Part II)

Good morning church! This time last week I told you that I was attempting to prepare the field to receive the seeds you'd be sowing as we build God's temple. My hope was to put you in a position to be ready to reap the harvest when that season comes. Well today I want to continue on in that course of action by giving you the second half of that message. Last week I gave you three principals that you need to apply to your life so that you can become a better steward over the garden that God has given you to dress and keep. I told you that you needed to focus your attention on all of the goodness, blessings, grace, and mercies of God so that you might be encouraged on this path of stewardship. I told you that we needed to spend more time grinding and less time standing around glaring at other people who are being blessed for their hard work. Finally, I told you that if you're expecting increase from God, you're going to need to increase your performance first. Well, today as we look forward on this path of stewardship I want to talk about what's holding us back as stewards even though we've gotten all the practical information about it. So as we begin I'm going to ask that you all turn with me to Genesis 17 we’ll look at what separates us from the truly great stewards in history.

Genesis 17:1-10 reads  
"And when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am the Almighty God. Walk before me and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee and I will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face and God talked with him saying, as for me, see that my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name be Abram any more, but thy name shall be Abraham because I have made thee the father of many nations. And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou are strangers, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised."

So here's what God is revealing to me in this passage of scripture. And this is our only principle for today.

1.) We've become accustomed to operating under contract as opposed to operating under covenant.

This is so important because we confuse these two words so often that we no longer know the difference. So let me break down the difference between contract and covenant. A contract is a piece of paper. More accurately, a contract is a document that governs the terms of an agreement between two people. A contract spells out what falls under and what nullifies the terms of that agreement as well; and most of us have become so accustomed to operating this way that it spills over into our walk with God. We're doing nothing more than fulfilling our end of some bargain so that we can continue to enjoy the benefits. The issue with that is, this hallow approach to stewardship leaves some to be desired. We simply keep performing empty rituals with hopes that it will appease God long enough to get us blessed. The biggest problem with operating under contract is that if at any point you feel like things aren't going your way you can tear up the contract and walk away. You can quit. How many of you have ever felt that way about your finances, say I? Things get tough, money gets tight, the math stops adding up and God is still expecting you to bless the church out of a place of love and gratitude not obligation or religious ceremony. And for most of us this is the point where we close up shop and fold. We compromise. Then we have the nerve to act shocked when the grace stops flowing. But you remember the book of Malachi. He says to the people, "will a man rob God?"(Malachi 3:8) Truth be told we steal from God on the regular basis. We offer up what we feel we can instead of what was asked of us. We offer up what's left of our time when we're done entertaining ourselves with things that we value more than God. That's how people behave under contract.

But when you're operating under a covenant things are different. A covenant is a divine promise from God that he enters into with those whom he loves. He doesn't ask you to put a deposit down on it or print up some form to sign. He writes that promise on your heart so that at any given time you can stop and self-assess whether or not you're living up to your end of this promise. When things aren't going well and you're operating under covenant you still uphold your end of the deal. Job said, "though he slay me, yet will I trust Him."(Job 13:15) So the next time things get rough, the next time it feels like all hope is lost, the next time it feels like the world is closing in all around you, I need you to dig deep and find your yet praise for God because that's what great stewards do. I know that things aren't always going to be ideal, but covenant says that in spite of all of that I still won't bend, I still won't break, I still won't quit on God. I know it feels like you don't have but two pennies to rub together, still write that check because it's at that point that you'll get the opportunity to see our matchless king rise to the occasion. He said, "prove me now here with."(Malachi 3:10) So stop holding back. Stop short changing God. Stop making excuses as to why you can't do what you've been called to do. Because if you continue operating under contract instead of operating under covenant you're going to miss out on your blessing. God said that he would open the windows of heaven and you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive, but that part comes after your willingness to commit to the covenant has been demonstrated. Covenant!

You got to catch this part. In verse 5 of Genesis 17 God said, if you'll commit yourself to this covenant with me I'm going to promote you in front of your peers. He changed his name to Abraham so that everyone could identify that change in his life. He wanted to ensure that you and everybody around you would mark the moment of your breakthrough. Does anybody in here need a breakthrough today, say I? A breakthrough is a moment in time where the impossible becomes possible. I’m here today to tell you that if you’d be willing to commit yourself to this covenant commitment lifestyle with God, your breakthrough will be marked too. God’s not just blessing you in private. If you'll bring glory to His name, he'll bless you publicly too. God's only requirement for you in this covenant was to hold fast to his principles and past them down to generation after generation so that we might fill this earth with people who are willing to enter into a relationship with God that is bound by a covenant commitment. So ask you today, are you willing to stop operating under contract and make a covenant commit to the father? Are you willing to step out on faith far enough to go all in with God? Are you willing to tight rope this fine line with God with no net? If you are I need you to stand on your feet and give God some praise. Amen, amen, and amen.