

The Promises of God, Part 4:

I Will Make You Prosper

October 4-10, 2020

Texts: Isaiah 61:4-11 / Jeremiah 29:10-14 / Psalm 122 / 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 /
Matthew 6:19-24 / Luke 15:11-32

1. Discuss the idea of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) as an example of Biblical prosperity (wealth given/wealth squandered). Describe a time when you have ever given (or loaned) something of high value (your time, patience, love, very nice possessions) to another only to have them take it for granted. How did it make you feel? How did you react? Was forgiveness asked? Was it granted? Did you demand compensation?
2. The “Prosperity Gospel” is a false teaching that has captivated millions of people around the world. It claims that the more faith you have, the more you’ll be blessed. If you can work hard, pray more, have “better” faith then you’ll be rewarded with great things: better health, financial gain, safety, security, etc. How does this differ from what we know about Jesus when he tells us that we are to deny ourselves, pick up our own cross daily, and follow Him (Luke 9:23)? How do you feel about the idea of struggling/striving rather than comfort as a calling?
3. Prosperity and peace are closely associated. Eugene Peterson contends, “*Shalom*, peace, is one of the richest words in the Bible. You can no more define it by looking up its meaning in the dictionary that you can define a person by his or her social security number. It gathers all aspects of wholeness that result from God’s will being completed in us. It is the work of God that, when complete, releases streams of living water in us and pulsates with eternal life. Every time Jesus healed, forgave, or called someone, we have a demonstration of *shalom*. And...“prosperity....” It has nothing to do with insurance policies or large bank accounts or stockpiles of weapons. The root meaning is leisure — the relaxed stance of one who knows that everything is all right because God is over us, with us, and for us in Jesus Christ. It is the security of being at home in a history that has a cross at its center. It is the leisure of the person who knows that every moment of our existence is at the disposal of God, lived under the mercy of God. Worship initiates an extended, daily participation in peace and prosperity so that we share in our daily rounds what God initiates and continues in Jesus Christ.”

Prosperity, peace, and worship all work together. How does this affect your thoughts of security? Considering this, what does worship look like when we see God as truly sovereign over everything (including our prosperity and knowing what is actually best for us)?

4. Take some time to discuss:
 - a. Our basic human needs (food, water, shelter, transportation, etc.).
 - b. What basic human needs looks like in places outside of our immediate circles (i.e.: impoverished areas of Africa, Asia, South America).
 - c. Why does it feel good for us to be prepared (i.e.: stockpiles of toilet paper, canned goods, water, cash, etc.)
 - d. The last charity/mission organization to which you've given your time (not just money). What did that look like? How did it make you feel? Why did it make you feel that way?
5. St. John's Parish Church as a long legacy of faithful givers. When we think of the seeds which have been sown by previous generations, what are some ways to encourage faithful giving to continue for many more generations?