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Three Weeks – One Big Sermon

‘A Generous God’, ‘A Jealous God’, ‘A Responsive People’

Challenge – talk about some ‘touchy’ areas

Hear my Heart

- Handle the Word of Truth carefully.**
- Desire to make disciples teaching them to obey all.....**
- Goal – God would expose lies, set free to respond**
- Understand – important in your walk with Jesus**

Not a Plea for Funds to Meet Needs

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Week One – A Generous God

- God initiates in offering to us without earning or deserving his:

Love & Affection

Protection & Provision

Position & Inheritance

Gifts & Empowerment

Abundant Joy, Perfect Peace, Eternal Hope

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Week Two – A Jealous God

This Sermon clearly For.....

- redeemed, alive, family, covenant relationship
- Themes of a Covenant
 - prescribed benefits, terms, consequences for failure
- Images of This Covenant
 - betrothed, husband wife, exclusive and consecrated

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God is Jealous towards his redeemed

- **First Commandment – No Other God’s**
 - many things that compete for our hearts & worship
 - clear expectation – I come first
- **Greatest Commandment (Matt. 22:37-38)**
 - “And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.”
 - worship the creator – not created things

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Knowing Our World is Broken by Sin

- while God is accomplishing His will and work

Principles and Practices for His Children

- No hidden agenda – been clear with us
- Unchanging – the same yesterday, today, forever
- Creator knows his creation – understands us
- Knows we face an enemy who seeks to destroy us
- Gave his people principles and practices to keep perspective and exercise trust and faith

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Principle – 1st Fruits

– off the top, first fruits offered to God

a) Establishing His People – cost, sacrifice

- Ex. 13:1, see Nehemiah 10:35ff, Deut. 26

b) Example of Jericho – 1st City – story of Achan

c) What this declares

- Who provided, Who it belongs to, Faith for More

d) Design – Keep God in Right Perspective

- where my worship & heart belong

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Practice 1 of First Fruits – Our Treasure

What I do with resources reveals my Heart

- 1. Exposes what I treasure - Matt. 6:21*
- 2. Exposes what I trust - Luke 12:32-34*
- 3. Exposes my conviction & faith - Luke 16:13*

Faithful with what God pours through my hands

- not about God not having enough
- ditches of percentages – what is the least I can do?
- difficulty of practice – poor habits, commitments
- dealing with our hearts – whose is it

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Practice 2 of First Fruits – Our Time

1. Sabbath

- Gen. 2:2-3 “And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”

- practice of God, intention for us in creation

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a) Fourth Commandment

- Deut. 5:12-15 “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

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b) Look at God's Heart in this Practice

- Isaiah 58:13-14 "If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

- for you to participate in and be blessed by

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c) Issue is Rhythm and Relationship

- Made for Man – Mark 2:27
- Witness to World – Exodus 31:12-18
- Regular in Practice - Heb. 4:9-11 “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.”
- Time with God & His family ‘off the top’

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d) Importance of the Time

- worship – sacrifice of praise, giving, Word of God
- building up the body – Heb. 10:24-25 - “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

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Practice 3 of First Fruits – Our Talents

1. Given Talents and Gifts by God

a) **Natural Abilities** – fearfully and wonderfully made

- work as worship – important

- consider – giving back from your skills ‘off the top’

b) **Spiritual Gifts by Holy Spirit** – 1 Cor. 12:4-7 “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

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- given the gifts for use in the body of Christ
- imagery – body needing all parts functioning
- takes serving, giving of time with intention

c) Fulfilling My Role – works prepared (Eph. 2:10)

- Eph. 4:15-16 “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”
- what does first fruits in talents look like?

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So What?

- 1. God's place in our hearts not up for debate**
 - initiated, provided, covenanted, clear
- 2. God has graciously given principles and practices**
 - knowing how difficult this would be for us
- 3. First Fruits – clear principle to apply in our season**
 - unchanging God – how do we keep Him in the right place
 - with treasure, time and talents – practices

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So What?

4. Obedience & Love tied in Scripture

- hearing and not doing - James

5. Scarcity vs Generosity

- Luke 12:32-34 - Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."