

Fall Series: “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith”

Series Text: Jesus says, “Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” -Luke 12:48

Sermon #10: “The Invincible Iron Man - Being a Good Stewardship”

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-24

Sermon Text: Matthew 25:21,23

“Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your master!”

Source: Drawing from *Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith*.

Theme: Stewardship, using what we have to live heroically, right relationship with our resources

Wednesday Blurb: Tony Stark is a handsome, genius, billionaire, playboy philanthropist. Yet, his life is aimless, until he realizes he needs to stop selfishly squandering all he has been given on his own pleasure and amusement and instead use his resources and his very life to help others. Stark’s change of heart (pun intended, as he has a critical heart condition!) helps us think through our own stewardship of what God has given us. Each of us is rich in our own way. How are we using our money, our mind and talents, our relationships, and our health to glorify God and serve others heroically? (P.S. And, we also have a suit of armor - check out Ephesians 6!)

Hymn Sing: - Janet & Andrew

Welcome - Pastor David

Worship Songs: - Sanctify

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Youth Group Night Out - Andrew Bonsell

Kid’s Invited to Kid’s Church - Andrew

Stewardship Moment - Teresa Gruber

Prayer Time - Andrew

Video Clip: Sermon series opening video (0:30 minutes)

PP#1: “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith”

Jesus says, “Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” -Luke 12:48

For a number of weeks now, we’ve been using Marvel superheros to introduce ways that we, as God’s people, are called biblically to live heroic lives. We are made to help, to fight against all that is wrong, and to spread blessing. God has poured so much into each one of us. We have talents, abilities, passions, and all kinds of resources that we can use to do good and make a difference. The number one rule of superheroes is that you don’t just live for yourself. You live to help others. You give. That’s the number one rule of people who follow Jesus! Jesus doesn’t live for Himself. He gives Himself, and He shares blessings, so that we and others are blessed. And He taught that those who follow Him are love with that love, to give has He gave, from what He has given us.

So I want to go back to the Bible verse that has grounded this whole sermon series, Luke 12:48. Jesus says, “Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” This is the biblical way of calling us to live as superheroes.

PP#2: *Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith.* “The Invincible Iron Man: Being a Good Steward.” Matthew 25:21 & 23 The master said, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your master!”

And that brings us to our superhero today. It’s “The Invincible Iron Man: Being a Good Steward.” Matthew 25:21 & 23 The master said, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your master!” That’s what we all want to hear from God. We want God to look at us, at our lives, and declare about us: “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

PP#3: *Front cover of Tales of Suspense #39*

Tony Stark is Iron Man. He is a genius, billionaire, playboy, philanthropist. He inherited a huge company founded by his genius father, making munitions for the military, and he took it to an all new level. He is handsome, rich, and suave. Girls want to be with him, boys want to be him. He has it all.

Here’s a clip filmed for the second Iron Man movie, 2010, and Tony is again hosting a wild party. And this scene was actually deleted from the movie because there were already too many scenes of his wild and playboy life. But it captures his lifestyle. Take a look.

Movie Clip: “Iron Man 2 (2010) Deleted Scene "Party Time" (1:31 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOIZId6Z9CI>

He has it all, but something is missing. His life seems empty. He’s seeking to fill it with meaning, but it doesn’t come. He’s smug, has all the answers, and is looking for a challenge because he’s bored. Take a look at this clip from the first Iron Man movie, 2008. A reporter challenges him how his company thrives on war. In his mind, it’s all OK. He’s simply bringing peace by making more munitions. And that technology has been used to help people, so it’s all good. Take a look.

Movie Clip: “Iron Man (1/9) Movie CLIP - The Merchant of Death (2008) HD”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvwHppi95K0>

“Did you ever lose an hour of sleep your whole life?” And he responds to the pretty reporter, “I’m prepared to lose a few with you.”

Well, Tony’s life soon changes. He heads over to a war zone to demonstrate his newest weapons. While there, he is ambushed by terrorists, who are using Stark weapons against innocent people, and against him! One of his own bombs explodes, and a piece of shrapnel becomes lodged in his heart. Every so slowly, it is creeping deeper into his heart. Eventually it will kill him.

PP#4: *A few different Iron Man suits from comics and movies.*

He's taken captive and forced to make weapons. Another prisoner, a Professor Yinsen, is assigned to work with him. Together, instead of making weapons, they invent a device for Tony's chest that keeps the shrapnel from going any deeper. Then, they develop a whole suit of armor, connected to the heart device, that gives super strength, weapons, and the ability to fly.

As they break out, things go wrong. And Yinsen sacrifices himself to help Tony go free. Listen to his dying words.

Movie Clip: "Iron Man - Yinsen Changes Tony Forever" (1:12 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0VM1IIMMtY>

Stark says, "Thanks for saving me." Yinsen's dying words are "Don't waste it. Don't waste your life."

PP#5: *Jesus dying on the cross.*

You know, Yinsen is a Christ figure here. Jesus died to save us from certain death, to give us new life. But it comes at a high cost. And Jesus doesn't want us to waste the lives He died to give us. This is our calling to live heroically. Don't waste your life! Jesus gave Himself to give us life: now we give of ourselves to share life with others.

When Tony makes it back to America, he calls a press conference. Take a look.

Movie Clip: "Tony Stark Weapons Press Conference" (0:53 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cbMmUfps6o>

"I have more to offer this world than just making things that blow up." Tony has a new clarity around his life, it's purpose. Before he had it all, but was drifting. Now, Yinsen's death changed him. What he saw changed him. And he commits to living with all of who he is—and all of his resources—for bringing good in the world. Also, he decides to become iron man.

PP#6: *Image of homeless American youth sleeping in tents, in setting like Forest Lake.*

Iron Man can show us the Biblical principle of living for others. Tony has everything, but it is only when he stops living for himself that he finds real purpose. We are not unlike Tony. Now, we may not be billionaires, but most of us have ample resources. God has blessed us with wealth like few others on this earth, or in world history. We have opportunities every day to make all kinds of choices. We have educations, time, talents, relationships, health, all that we can use to serve God in our world.

Our youth group slept outside last night, to raise funds and awareness for homelessness, right in our community. Did you know that every day in the Forest Lake school district, at least 40 homeless kids show up at school? Think about that! This is Forest Lake, suburbia!

PP#7: Being a Good Steward

We have Tony's dilemma. We have so much. The question is, what are we going to do with it? How can we live in a purposeful way?

In the comics, Iron Man's enemies are not always the villains he faces with his suit on. His worst enemies are those he faces in himself. He continues to fight the inner monsters of selfishness, greed, and pride. These are our monster's, too. We struggle with where our priorities are. The more we have, it seems, the tighter we hold on to it.

The biblical answer to our inner monsters is stewardship. It's the idea that all we have isn't ours. Our lives, our second chances in Jesus, our abilities, our resources, they all have been given to us as gifts, and with a purpose. "To whom much is given, much shall be required." Our relationship to our wealth, our stuff, is not ownership, but faithful stewardship. Selfishness is taking what we've been given, and keeping for ourselves. Stewardship is taking what we've been given, doing our part to invest it, and then using it as a blessing. That's how I want to live!

Our stuff has a way of creeping into our hearts. It's like the shrapnel in Tony's heart. It gets deeper and deeper, and it's killing us!

PP#8: Matthew 6:19-24

19 "Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. 20 Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. 21 Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Jesus gives a fantastic lesson on what we treasure. In Matthew 6:19-24, He says, "Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Your treasure and your heart go together. But it starts with how you look at things, what you value, what you spend your time focusing on. Jesus keeps going: talking about how what we put our eyes on, affects the rest of us. Verse 22...

PP#9: Matthew 6:19-24

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. Therefore, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how terrible that darkness will be! 24 No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

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What do we set our eyes on? What do we spend time looking at in our days? Tony saw things so selfishly. And we can be that way, too. Perhaps looking at Jesus can loosen our grip on what we have. Seeing His death, and His calling to not waste our lives, can work stewardship into us.

PP#10: Being a Good Steward

1. Of our monies: Generosity!

"The *love* of money is the root of all kinds of evil." -1 Timothy 6:10

Money. We need to talk about it. And we need to keep talking about it. One third of Jesus' teachings are about money. It's because He knows that money for us is like that shrapnel. Money is not bad. But we have a hard time owning it in a way that it doesn't own us. Money is one of the greatest blessings and tools God entrusts to us. And we need to manage it wisely.

Being a good steward of our monies, biblically, means treating them with generosity. Generosity is the super device that keeps money from creeping too deeply into our hearts. It helps us understand the difference between our needs, and our wants. Generosity helps us give lots away, which is so key to living abundantly. You want to live more abundantly, start giving more. It's God's rule of money, it's God's mysterious math. When you keep more for yourself, hoping to gain happiness from it, you don't become more happy. When you give more away, you buy more happiness. It's crazy how this works! But, as with all of our Christian lives, it's a leap of faith.

You know, I am so glad it's stewardship consecration Sunday. I think this is one of the most important, life-giving services we do as a church. I sit here in worship, and I'm challenged to be more generous than I think I should be. And I'm given cards to write down a faith-amount I will try to give all of next year. And on days like today, I am inspired to write down an amount that is more generous than it is selfish. And then, this church is awesome enough, and helpful enough—because it cares about my spiritual growth—to help hold me accountable for what I commit to give.

And you thought the church needed our money. Well, it doesn't. I've said this how many years now? The church doesn't need our money. God will raise up people to give as this church needs. It doesn't need my money. But I need to give it. I need this church to hold me accountable to keep on giving it, even when it doesn't look like I can afford it.

That's why Reese and I have our offering automatically transferred from our account every month. Some of the ushers may be wondering why I never put anything in the offering plate. That's because I can't trust myself. Come any given Sunday, I'll rationalize how much I think I ought to give, and how much I can afford to give. And I'll end up giving less than I can. So, I need days like today, when I can commit to giving more than I think I can, and that will hold me accountable all next year, come what may.

Reese asked me last night, "What are we going to commit on our estimate of giving card? I've lost my job. I don't have a new one. And if I get one, I can't guarantee I'll get paid as much as I was."

Then, we agreed to increase our giving for 2016. We have to. We need to. We've prayed for God to make us more generous. That means we need to step out in faith. We must be financially smart only to a point. Then we need to call upon the gift of generosity to keep money from worming it's way into our hearts. It's a step of faith.

Today we have the joy of deciding how much we are going to give to God's work through this church next year. We have the joy of deciding to be generous. Generosity is a way we live heroically.

PP#11: Being a Good Steward

1. Of our monies: Generosity!
2. Of our time and talents: Investing!

"Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your master!" -Matthew 25:21,23

As he worked with Tony, Professor Yinsen asked him what he is leaving behind in the world. It's a biblical question for us, too. What is our legacy? What do you want to speak for you after you've died? How do you want to be remembered?

The antidote for selfishness for our time and talents, is investing in a legacy that brings life to others. Jesus told the parable of a master who gave large sums of money, interestingly called “talents” in the Bible, to his servants. Then he went away for quite a while. When he came back, he asked his servants what they did with what he had given to them. Two of them invested the talents. The master tells them, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your master!” Matthew 25:21,23 One, however, did nothing with his talent. The master was angry.

We have been given talents, and time. Even if we don’t have as many talents as we think others have, we still must invest what we have, and use them to further God’s work on earth.

PP#12: Being a Good Steward

1. Of our monies: Generosity!
2. Of our time and talents: Investing!
3. Of our relationships: Love!

“Love does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking....” -1 Corinthians 13:5

Tony Stark has difficulty with healthy relationships. He uses the men around him, and objectifies the women. We also struggle with this. We twist our relationships to have them serve us, to use people, or at least to not let others invade our lives. We sometimes justify this by calling it healthy boundaries, when we are actually just being selfish.

Love is the biblical super power that defeats this ugly monster in us. When we pray asking God to spread love through our hearts, our relationships change. We stop using others for ourselves, and we start giving of ourselves to others. When we live by sharing God’s love with others, we experience that deep sense of inner love ourselves. Again, it’s one of God’s miracles.

PP#13: *Front cover of Iron Man #128 (November 1979)*

One more quickly. Donning the iron suit doesn’t solve all of Tony Stark’s problems. He continues to struggle with his inner demons, one being alcohol. As in the real world, it becomes an ongoing struggle for him. At one point, it costs him everything: his company, his fortune, his fame. Even someone else becomes Iron Man. He has to face it, own it, and continually defeat it. And in that is how we see Tony Stark as a true hero.

PP#14: Being a Good Steward

1. Of our monies: Generosity!
2. Of our time and talents: Investing!
3. Of our relationships: Love!
4. Of our health and well-being: Shalom!

Those of you here today who are dry alcoholics, you are amazing heroes. Thank you for your witness! Not everyone struggles with substance abuse, but we all struggle with monsters of our own health. And these monsters can render us impotent to doing God’s calling.

Whatever our monsters are, the biblical super power we have to fight them is shalom. Shalom is the biblical principle of well-being. It is peace. It means holding all of our lives in wholesome balance. It is something you can do, but—hear me on this—it is also a gift. If you need shalom in your life, pray for it. God gives all good things to His children.

I'm out of time, but I can't resist at least a passing reference to the spiritual suit of armor that we are given in Christ. Tony Stark has a suit of armor made out of metal. We have one that is so much more powerful. Sometime, check out Ephesians 6, and put on the whole armor of God!

In a moment, we'll have that great blessing of an offering time. During the offering, I'm going to ask you to bring your gifts of money to God's work up here to the front and place it in one of the offering plates. But more importantly, bring your estimate of giving cards for how you are called to be generous in 2016. And even more importantly still, bring your thank you cards, filled with offerings of thanksgiving to God for all you enjoy. These are the sweetest offerings to God!

When you have placed your gifts, then you can go out into the world and serve God in your monies, your time and talents, your relationships, and your health and well-being. There's snacks in the lobby, and we will come back in 10 minutes for our Church Conference meeting.

Let us give to the God who first gave to us.

Amen!

Offering - Consecration

Closing Song: Sanctify

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR NOV. 15, 2015

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Series Text: Jesus says, “Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” -Luke 12:48

Sermon #10: “Iron Man - Being a Good Steward”

Opening prayer

Apologies: Our lesson time must be finished by 9:45 due to a SPRT meeting.

Introductions: Introduce yourself & share a time when you pushed yourself to increase how much you gave to something good, and it was a blessing.

Context: Skim Matthew 6:1-18. What is going on in this chapter?

Read: Matthew 6:19-24

1. Verse 19. How do we experience today the loss of what we store up for ourselves on earth?
2. Verse 20. What is the difference between collecting treasures on earth and in heaven? How does each look?
3. Give some examples of heavenly treasures. How is it that they endure?
4. How have you had success in not storing up earthly treasures but instead store up heavenly treasures? What worked for you?
5. Verse 21. Give an example of how your heart is where your treasure is.
6. Verse 22. How does what you look at affect the rest of your life?
7. Verse 23. Give some examples for what it looks like for one's body to be full of darkness.
8. Verse 24. Do you think you can serve God and wealth? How?
9. What is the point of Verse 24? Explain it in your own words.
10. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?