

Secret Millionaires

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Date: 08 February 2026

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[0 : 00] Awake, awake, Zion. Clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendor, Jerusalem, the holy city.

! The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again.! Shake off your dust. Rise up, sit enthroned, Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck. Daughter Zion, now a captive. For this is what the Lord says. You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed. For this is what the Sovereign Lord says.

At first, my people went down to Egypt to live. Lately, Assyria has oppressed them. And now what do I have here? declares the Lord. For my people have been taken away for nothing.

And those who rule them mock, declares the Lord. And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed. Therefore my people will know my name. Therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it.

[0 : 58] Yes, it is I. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news. Who proclaim peace. Who bring good tidings.

Who proclaim salvation. Who say to Zion, Your God reigns. Listen. Your watchmen lift up their voices. Together they shout for joy.

When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs of joy together. You ruins of Jerusalem. For the Lord has comforted his people.

He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations. And all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Depart, depart, depart. Go out from there. Touch no unclean thing. Come out from it and be pure. You who carry the articles of the Lord's house. But you will not leave in haste or go in flight.

[1 : 55] For the Lord will go before you. The God of Israel will be your rear guard. Let's pray together. Almighty God, we thank you for your word, the Bible.

And we thank you that this is the way that you've decided, ordained, that you're going to speak to us. And so we pray, living God, that you would speak to us now and that you'd give us ears to hear. You'd open our hearts and you'd reveal yourself to us in a way that we can understand. And that you'd reveal ourselves to us so we get a true picture of what we're like on the inside. And that you'd help us to live as your people.

That you'd build us up and edify us so that we might live for you again more deeply. We ask for this in the name of Christ. Amen.

Now I don't know if you remember the TV show, it was quite a few years back, called The Secret Millionaire. Does everybody remember The Secret Millionaire? If you didn't, this is what happened.

[2 : 55] It was where millionaires, people who had lots of money, loads of money, they would go to a community, a village or a town, and they would dress in normal clothes.

And they'd act like they didn't have lots of money. They'd pretend that they didn't have any. And what they'd do is they went to this local community, they'd blend in, they'd get involved with the village, the community, they'd get involved in local projects.

They'd get to know how lots of local people did lots of nice things in the local area with their time. And then what would happen is they'd stay, these people that looked like ordinary people.

At the end of the show, there would be a big reveal. And the millionaire would reveal that he wasn't just like them. Actually, he was a bit different because he had loads of money, millions and millions of pounds.

And what he would do is he'd, over the week, as he got involved with different things, he'd decide to give some of his millions, his secret millions, away.

[4 : 05] He'd give them to the community projects, the different things that, you know, the things like what we do. He'd give it away to, like, come and help a toddler group and then give them loads of money. And bless all these different projects that he'd gotten to know and the people that he'd seen do them.

In our passage this morning, we're going to, we meet God's people. As I've said before, this happens when they have been kicked out of their land. They're in exile.

But here, the secret is on the other foot. The secret is on them. They are sitting in the dust. Yet they're the ones who have riches.

More than they know. Riches that don't fluctuate with the stock market. Riches that don't change up and down.

What we're talking about is, they don't have a bank, temporary bank balance like a bloke on TV. No, that God's people sat in the dust, in exile, kicked out of there, have the riches of God's kingdom.

[5 : 19] They've got the peace of God. They've got the permanent, his permanent presence and the hope of a resurrection future. Yet they're sat in the dust. They've forgotten it.

They have these riches because they belong to the God who created and owns the whole universe. And they're the only people on earth that are his.

You wonder if perhaps, you wonder why they'd forgotten all this. Perhaps it's because of what had happened to them. Maybe they look back at their history and their family, they had ancestors' family that went way back.

And they were rich. They had all the money and the land and the nice things. But this loss of money and land, that's what they thought true riches were. And so they thought we're not rich anymore.

They don't understand what true riches really are. It's like a kind of spiritual amnesia. True riches.

[6 : 24] The kingdom currency really is never financial but spiritual. It's peace, the presence of God, hope of a future. And what we're going to see this morning is a people who are told by the living God who they really are and what that means for them and how they are to live.

What that means for them, that really they're the secret millionaires, but the secret is on them. I'm going to see that they're secret millionaires on two fronts.

They need to be reminded that they're rich, spiritually rich, but also that they're secret millionaires to the whole world. So first thing we're going to think about is the king's riches.

We actually last week finished with the first three verses that we started with, we finished with last week. Last week was sort of the finale, the culmination of everything that they needed to be woken up about.

They act kind of like a pivot into the next section. And in one sense, God's people at the end of this kind of dark journey they've been on, they've been in exile, kicked out for 70 years, and this is right at the end just before they're going to go back to their home country.

[7 : 42] The long, dark road of exile kicked out. The painful process of everything that's going on, looking over those 70 years of history, is coming to a close.

It's the end of one journey, but in another sense it's the beginning of a new one. Look with me in verses 1 and 2. Listen to this.

It says, Awake, awake, Zion. Clothe yourself with strength. God's speaking to his people. He says to them, Put on your garments of splendor, Jerusalem, the holy city.

He says, verse 2, Shake off your dust. Rise up, sit enthroned. Free yourself from the chains on your neck. Now, in the ancient Near East, which is what we call that time, thousands of years ago, clothes, what you wore, were kind of, it said where you were in the world.

If you had really nice clothes, it'd mean that you were really rich, but if you wore like a bit raggedy clothes, then you didn't have much money. And so garments that were, you know, made with kind of gold and blue and scarlet threads, these were the clothes of kings and priests.

[8 : 57] Those were at the top of the tree in the world. But the only one in the Bible who is ever described as having been clothed with strength, see it says, he says, he's saying God's people clothe your strength, but the only one who actually has those clothes is God.

God's the only one who has clothes of strength. You see what God's telling his people? He's telling them to put on his clothes. He's saying, this isn't a costume to wear.

But it's a new nature. And notice God isn't asking for our opinion on the outfit. He's commanding them to wear it, to awake, put on as an act of doing what you're told, obedience.

It might feel kind of strange for somebody who's messed up to wear the robes of a king. But actually, it's a bit of an insult to God to refuse to wear the clothes that he's given to you. These garments, these clothes, they're not just for looking good in a mirror. They're priestly robes. They're for service. And they're amazing things to wear. This moment mirrors that of maybe what you've heard of before, of the first exodus.

[10:21] But it also mirrors our spiritual journey too. There was a moment, wasn't there, in our past, for those who've become Christians, when we realised that everything that went on before, our past, doesn't define us anymore.

that we didn't need, we could stop looking in the mirror of our feelings, which are often broken, and look at God's promises.

That's where the millions are. And you know, Paul picks up this kind of imagery in his letter to the church in Galatia, about being clothed. He says, this is what he writes to the church, he says, So in Christ Jesus, and you're all children of God through faith, for all of you were baptised into Christ, and have clothed yourself with Christ.

This is who you are, Paul's saying. It's who God's people have always been. It's as if living in Babylon has caused this kind of identity crisis.

Living as paupers when they were truly royal, and the reality is absurd. The question then, is, you know, the reality is, this is who we are.

[11:37] We have riches. The riches have given to us. The king's riches given to his people. And so, why would you ask for anything more when you know you have it all?

The question then, the question really is, how does a millionaire people end up in the dust? How does a millionaire people in the dust?

In the secret millionaire show, it's voluntary, isn't it? But here, the millionaire people end up looking bankrupt. The millionaire people end up looking bankrupt.

Like, all the money's gone. That's where we're going to move to our second point. We said the king's riches. Now we're going to go to the riches of the bankrupt. And it doesn't make sense. The reclaiming of who we are, it comes free of charge.

And it is all because of God's grace. Look with me at verse 3. Do you see, or hear what it says? This is what the Lord says, you were sold for nothing, and without money, you will be redeemed.

[12:53] Selling glory, God's riches, God's riches, that they owned, for nothing. Let's make no bones about it. That is a bad deal, isn't it? God's people sold for nothing.

Trading something of value for nothing is a bad deal. Naomi's not here this morning, but if I were to ask her to trade in a toy, and I said, trade in a toy, and what you'll get in return is nothing, there is no way that I could convince her.

Not a chance. You know, that's the basic rule of, basic economics. At the very least, you'd expect a packet of Harry Potter. It's absurd. You don't trade something in for nothing.

That's what God's people do. They trade the glory of God, his riches, for nothing. And essentially, that's what sin is. It's a transaction that leads to you becoming spiritually bankrupt.

It's thinking that what sin offers will give you more than God's riches. But sin is like a squatter. It has no legal title to your life.

[14:03] Redemption isn't God buying us back from a legitimate owner. It's God evicting a thief. Receiving, but the trade is that we receive glory without cost.

In the midst of that, there is a double transaction here. See what he says? Without money, you will be redeemed. It won't cost you a penny to be reclaimed.

It won't cost you a penny to be redeemed. It won't cost you a penny. Why? Because a bankrupt person can't pay. Sitting in the dust, you can't fund your own rescue.

We have to be careful here. When God says without money, he isn't saying there's no cost. What he's saying is there's no cost to you. Verse 10.

See what he says. He says, the Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all his nations. This is where we see the cost.

[15:14] We see there's kind of a shift here. We move the exchange. We're moving from, you know, this is the kind of simplistic illustration of trading a Haribo for a toy.

We see we're moving it to kind of the trade of the nails of a cross. You know, to bear the arm meant to strip the sleeve back ready for combat.

It's like rolling your, when somebody needs to do something, rolling your arms up and getting your hands dirty before you do something manual. God didn't just, this wasn't just a decree from the, from a distant God from, but God, the living God is rolling up his sleeves and reaching into the rubble of our lives.

Now, historically, if you look back at when this happened, this looked like the army of Cyrus. Cyrus was the hired hand, broke the walls. But what we see is the holy arm here is, comes to Jesus. In John 12, the apostle John tells us who the arm of God is. The arm is Jesus Christ. This is the big reveal. When the God of the universe rolls up his sleeves to save a spiritually bankrupt people, his arm is bare and it is nailed to a cross.

[16 : 40] our redemption costs us nothing because it cost him everything. The debt is, is settled. It's not settled on credit or deferred but it is paid.

Now, this is where we might have questions. All this talk of riches but there, perhaps you feel a disconnect in your life. We're still surrounded, aren't we, by people who don't know God. We're the secret millionaires and yet sometimes we and the world can't see the gold. It's where we're going to move to our third point, the unseen riches. The unseen riches. It's here that we have a problem. You know, in that TV show, The Secret Millionaire, the community, they just treat him like an ordinary bloke when his millions are kept under wraps. They're kind of camouflaged. But look with me what happens in verses 4 and 5. For this is what the Sovereign Lord says.

[17 : 48] He says, At first my people went down to Egypt to live. Lately Syria has oppressed them. It says, verse 5, And now what do I have here? What do I have here?

And then a bit further down, you see what he says? He says, All day long my name is constantly blasphemed. Sorry, just before, he says, My people have been taken away for nothing and those who rule the mark.

All day long my name is blasphemed. This is about the reputation of God's name. This is the reputation of God's name. That they experience the mocking of his name.

They've forgotten their riches and Babylon is mocking them, is blaspheming them because they literally have no clue as to the value that they actually possess.

You know, the enemy changes, doesn't it? It was Egypt, then it was Assyria, now it's Babylon. The enemy changes but the lie is the same.

[18 : 55] But they aren't right about God's people. They're just blind to what he's done. Mockery is the spiritual tactic to keep God's people in the dust. And I think we could probably identify with God's people here.

We, like them, have a royal identity and yet our riches remain unseen. You know, there's a barrage, isn't there? Maybe you've experienced this, or thinking it, thinking the church is small, irrelevant, or you hear it on the news, you know, bigoted, and hearing that or even thinking about receiving those kind of words against you, it takes its toll.

Perhaps you think, maybe they're right. Maybe they're right. And it affects us because we want to be significant in the world and when we feel like we might be insignificant, we kind of, we want the world's significance credit.

We want to go in and not be worried about what that might mean for our lives and how it might affect us, the mocking and the blaspheming.

Make no bones about it. When people mock Christians for what they believe, it's not just you but they're mocking God himself. The truth is, this is the truth, we don't need the world's significance credit.

[20 : 31] We don't need any credit from the world. Why? Because in Christ we own the bank. We own the bank. You know, when we as God's people fully realise that we adorn His clothes, His garments of splendour, the mockery will come but it won't haunt you.

It means we don't need to stand in front of the mirror kind of just admiring things but the clothes in Christ that we wear, they give us more than just a fluffy feeling but it's actually they give us a job to do.

And we move to the fourth point, the sharing of riches. When God's people embrace their riches, what we see in this passage is that they don't stay silent.

They have good news to share and to proclaim. The riches are not for hoarding but for distributing. We do just need to pause here for a bit of history lesson.

When the exile happened, those seen as a kind of a burden, you know, you might think that they all were taken to the exile but actually there was some that were left behind. The ones that were left behind that were seen as that would be of no value in Babylon.

[21 : 50] It would be the poorest of the poor, the ill, the elderly, maybe those who lived up on the outside of Jerusalem, the farmers who just weren't caught up in all of it.

So there was still some people left but they would have to live in the ruins. It wasn't teeming with life, it was sparse. And what would happen is for 70 years as the rest of God's people, the fit and the able that would seem as would benefit Babylon, they were left but they would have watchmen on the broken down walls looking out towards the east, looking to see if anyone was going to attack again or looking to see if God's people were coming back.

They would look towards the east, they would look towards the Mount of Olives waiting for the people to return. You see, this is what, you can picture them, this is what these words are about. Verse 7, see what he says? He says, how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who bring peace, who bring good tidings, who bring salvation, who say to Zion, your God reigns.

Can you picture it? Can you picture the watchman who catches a glimpse? He's on the walls, he's looking to the east, he saw his people leave, carried away 70 years ago and you can picture it, can't you?

[23 : 22] He has to squint his eyes across the rising sun over the Mount of Olives and at first with his eyes he sees just a speck and then he catches maybe, he hears something, faint, but it's getting louder and there's God's people, the beautiful feet, they're coming over the mountain and what's ringing from these people that are coming towards Jerusalem, you see at the end of verse 7 there's this shout getting louder, your God reigns and again louder, your God reigns.

It starts as one messenger but then one voice of news becomes a roar, your God reigns, it's a train of people, they're his people and they're coming home and the response is unbridled joy.

You see, look at 8 and 9, he says, listen, your watchmen, those watching, they see the people coming back to Jerusalem, they lift up their voices together, they shout for joy.

When the Lord returns to Zion, they'll see it with their own eyes bursting into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem for the Lord has comforted his people, he's redeemed Jerusalem, families restored, not knowing what had happened to their people, whether they were dead or alive, people that they hadn't seen for 70 years coming over the mountain, tears and singing fill the air, everyone can see what God has done, this is the moment they return, this is the moment they return as they see them.

And then we jump, we take a jump in the passage, we're at the, from the perspective of the watchmen seeing them come back, then we jump back, verse 11, to as they're leaving, Babylon, look at me, verse 11, it says God speaking to them, depart, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing, you carry, come out from it and be pure, you who carry the articles of the Lord's house, but you will not leave in haste or go in flight for the Lord will go before you and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

[25 : 38] It says there, they carry the articles of the Lord's house. Here's a reminder of what happened when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem.

When Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, they decimated the temple, they looted every gold bowl and censer, there was over the 5,400 items, you read about it in Ezra, of holy vessels, gold, used for worship.

And now, as God's people leave Babylon, they come out from it carrying these articles. It is worship in motion. It's why he tells them, you know, don't leave in haste.

You're not going to leave like you left Egypt years ago when you had to leave in the middle of the night, fleeing quickly. No, no. You're going to go slowly. Don't leave in haste or go in flight. Why? Because I'm going to be before you and I'm going to be your rear guard behind you.

You can walk with steady, calm dignity because you're walking carrying the holy vessels that adorn my temple. Now, we, God's people, we don't carry, do we?

[26 : 46] At least I haven't for a while carried any literal golden bowls. I don't know or anything from, you know, we don't need that.

We don't need a temple in the same way. But, you see, the thing is, we actually carry more important vessels in each of us because the vessel that we have, we carry the gospel.

We carry the Holy Spirit. We carry the presence of Christ and we don't carry them to a physical ruined city but we carry that every time we walk out of our front door.

Every time we wake up and we speak to our own families, we carry it to our communities, to our workplaces where we meet real people who we care about and experience daily how the curse of sin affects their lives.

We carry holy articles, holy vessels. And this is, when we read this here as they go out from Babylon, this is more than just a task.

[27 : 53] It's an act of worship. every step that you make towards a neighbor, every step that you make towards your family, every step that you make towards somebody in your workplace that you care about with the article of the gospel, the vessel of the gospel that you carry with the presence of Christ is an act of carrying his riches towards them because you're the secret millionaire.

They don't know the secret. They don't know the riches and the millions, the spiritual millions that you carry. In Christ, we own the spiritual bank of his riches that have cosmic ramifications.

We keep the spiritual gold, not to hoard, not to keep as a secret, but to be announced, to be announced with the end result being the same.

The end result being the same. Verse 10, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. And so, as we draw into a close, as we come in for landing this morning, verse 2, let's shake the dust from our feet today.

You know, the word shake in verse 2 is kind of a reflex. It's almost like an amen to the robes that he's already given us.

[29 : 25] He's given your robes, now shake off. Shake your dust off your feet. Put on Christ every morning before we get dressed. This is your garment. This is your everyday spiritual garment that we should wear.

We sit today in Christ's finished work while the world runs about on the fumes of unfinished performance. Every morning before you check your phone, check your spiritual bank balance in Christ.

We carry the presence of Christ, the spiritual riches, the spiritual millions. The world's best evidence that your God reigns, it isn't a clever argument.

It's a church that can walk through the ruins and come out the other side. That's the evidence that your God reigns, that our God reigns. Let's pray.

Almighty God, I praise you for what you've done in our lives.

[30 : 41] I thank you that you've clothed us with these riches, spiritual riches that the presence of Christ, you've put, you are the one who put them on us and that is our identity in him and I pray that you'd equip us and help us that we would put on Christ every day and so often we forget that the God of the universe, the one who owns the whole thing, the one who owns the whole lot is the one who gives us everything that he gives to his son he gives to us in Christ and so in him and so I praise you that we go for, that there is nothing that we will need that we will go without and so I pray that as we contemplate that what it means to be clothed with Jesus that we would shake off the dust and we would sit in his finished work and I pray that you'd help us to know what it means to have the beautiful feet, the feet that can proclaim the good news, proclaim the riches to those who don't know who Jesus is.

Lord give us confidence, give us joy, give us joy, continuous joy. Sometimes we, being joyful seems like something that everybody else says apart from us and so give us joy in Jesus and know that you go before us and that you come, you follow us, you bring up the rear guard and so bless as we pray and we ask for this in Christ's name.

Amen.