

Joanna and the God Who Uses Pharaoh's Gold

Key Verse: Luke 8:3 – "And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance."

Whether you are joining from a bustling city, a quiet village, or somewhere in between—across this globe we are gathered as one body in Christ through this digital platform—I greet you in the name above every name. My heart is overflowing with the goodness of a God who writes straight with crooked lines, and I bring you a testimony from the field. Just days ago, in a place called Kapiri here in Zambia, we witnessed the miraculous power of the Lord. Five precious souls were baptized in the name of Jesus. As I preached on the necessity of baptism in His name, the heavens opened—not in judgment, but in a mighty downpour of blessing. The rain was so loud that at times the congregation could barely hear my voice. Yet in the Spirit, I declared that the moment I finish the message, the rain would cease; and it did, precisely. What was the Lord doing? He was filling a pond with gallons of water so there would be enough to baptize. Glory to Jesus! This miracle is a living parable for our message today, a testament to the fact that when God receives your giving, He multiplies it and sends the rain just in time.

We turn our eyes today to a woman tucked away in the Gospel of Luke, a woman whose name is recorded in Heaven's ledger but whose story is often overlooked in our hurried reading of Scripture. I am speaking of Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. Luke writes, "And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance" (Luke 8:3). Notice carefully: both names are given. We know the husband and we know the wife. Heaven is meticulous in its record-keeping. But it is Joanna who is named as the ministering servant, Joanna who took her substance and laid it at the Master's feet. To understand the profound scandal and beauty of this verse, we must understand the man whose household Chuza managed. This was Herod Antipas, the son of that Herod the Great who, when the Lord Jesus was born, ordered the massacre of all the male children in Bethlehem. Matthew records the horror: "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under" (Matthew 2:16). This was the house of Herod—a dynasty soaked in the blood of innocents, a dynasty that sought to extinguish the light of the world before it could even speak. Herod the Great

tried to kill the infant King. His son, Herod Antipas, would later behead John the Baptist and mock Jesus before His crucifixion. This was a family that declared war on God.

Yet look at the providence of the Almighty. We serve a God who cannot be thwarted by thrones or principalities. As Paul writes, "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8). The house of Herod thought they could destroy the purposes of God, but God simply infiltrated their house. Think of it: God appears to mock the house of Herod. Herod the Great took up the sword against the Messiah. Herod Antipas, his son, took up the sword against the Messiah's forerunner. Yet now, Herod Antipas—unaware and unwilling—is financing the very ministry he seeks to destroy. How? Through his own household. Through his own steward, Chuza, and Chuza's wife, Joanna. The gold that came from the pockets of Herod went straight into the work of the Galilean carpenter he despised. God always infiltrates the house of His enemies, and they end up, unwittingly, serving His purposes.

Remember Joseph in Egypt, ruling in the house of Pharaoh? Remember Daniel in Babylon, advising the king who destroyed the Temple? God places His people in the lion's den not to be eaten, but to shut the lions' mouths. He places a Joanna in Herod's court not to be corrupted, but to redirect the treasury of the wicked toward the kingdom of the righteous. The Psalmist declares, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10). Even the rage of Herod becomes an instrument of praise when Joanna walks through the palace doors with her offering. Now, let us be clear about the nature of this money. The business of Herod was not a virtuous one. His court was a den of corruption, incest, and political maneuvering. The money Chuza earned came from a system that opposed God. And yet, the Lord Jesus Christ—the King of Kings—accepted those coins from Joanna's hands. He allowed her to minister unto Him of her substance. This is a deep mystery. Does God condone the way that money was earned? Absolutely not. The eighth commandment is clear: "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15). God does not bless ill-gotten gain. But here is the miracle of redemption: Once money comes into the hands of a cheerful giver, God sanctifies it. He takes what was meant for evil and uses it for salvation. He takes the proceeds of a worldly system and transforms them into seed for the Kingdom.

The Prophet Haggai delivers a stunning promise: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2:8). Ultimately, all wealth belongs to God. And when a

redeemed heart like Joanna's takes those resources and lays them at the Master's feet, the taint of the world is washed away by the tears of devotion. Paul asks the Corinthians, "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). The answer is: none. But when light enters a dark place, the darkness is overcome. Joanna was that light in Herod's dark palace. She took the gold of the enemy and turned it into a weapon for the Kingdom.

This brings us to a beautiful detail in the text. Luke tells us she was "Joanna the wife of Chuza." We know the husband's name, and we know hers. Both are recorded. But in the narrative of the Gospel, it is Joanna who is active in ministry, Joanna who follows Jesus, Joanna who is listed among the women who ministered unto Him of their substance. Heaven records the name of every cheerful giver. We do not know if Chuza was a believer or not. Perhaps he was the nobleman whose son Jesus healed, as some suggest. Perhaps he was just a man who didn't mind his wife using her inheritance for a traveling rabbi. But the Word of God immortalizes *her* name because of her giving. She is listed among the faithful women who, out of gratitude for their healing, bankrolled the gospel.

The Scriptures are replete with promises for such cheerful givers. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10). And again, "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor" (Proverbs 22:9). But the greatest promise is not about our barns being filled, but about our names being known and our reward being certain. Our Lord Jesus Himself declared, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). This is not the prosperity gospel; this is the law of the harvest. When you sow generously, you reap generously—not always in money, but always in kingdom fruit.

Paul reminds us, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:6-8). God loves the cheerful giver. He loves the Joanna who gives because she has been healed. He loves the heart that says, "Lord, I was sick, and You touched me. I was bound, and You set me free.

Take my substance. Take my gold. Take it from the house of Herod and use it for the house of Israel."

And because God loves the cheerful giver, He never forgets their name. Hebrews 6:10 assures us, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." God is not unrighteous. He keeps a perfect book of remembrance. Malachi records it: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16). My brothers and sisters scattered across the globe on this Zoom platform, I bring you a testimony from the field. Many cheerful givers made this ministry possible. There are men and women in congregations around the world whose names you do not know, whose faces you have never seen. They gave of their substance so that the gospel could be preached here in Zambia and beyond. They sowed into soil they would never till. They are modern-day Joannas. Some of them are on this call right now. You gave, and you wondered if it made a difference. Let me tell you what the Lord did with your offering.

Just days ago, at a place called Kapiri, as I began to preach on the necessity of baptism in the name of Jesus, the sky grew dark. The clouds gathered. And then, the rain came. It was not a gentle mist; it was a powerful downpour—sheets of water falling from heaven. The congregation could hardly hear my voice for the sound of rain on the roof. In that moment, the Spirit of the Lord moved upon me, and I declared, "When I finish this message, the rain will stop." And it did. Precisely. Why? Because the Lord was filling the pond. He was providing the water. He was vouching for the message. We took those five precious souls—their faces shining with anticipation—down to the water that God Himself had provided. As they went down into the watery grave of baptism, buried with Christ in the likeness of His death, and raised up to walk in newness of life, the heavens were silent. The angels rejoiced. And the names of those who gave, those who sowed into this ministry, were written even deeper into the heart of God. Jesus knows your names.

He knows the name of the widow who gave her mite in some distant city. He knows the name of the businessman who supports the mission from his office. He knows the name of the child who puts a coin in the offering plate during a children's church program. He knows the name of every Joanna who enables the preaching of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

And He knows the name of every Chuza whose household makes it possible. Both names are recorded. Both are precious to Him.

What the Lord did in Kapiri is what He always does with our giving: He multiplies it. He adds the rain. He fills the font. He opens the hearts of the hearers. Your giving is not in vain. It is not lost in some ecclesiastical budget or swallowed by administrative costs. It is seed planted in the fertile soil of eternity. Paul puts it this way: "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness" (2 Corinthians 9:10). You are sowing seed, and God Himself is multiplying it. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians, who supported him again and again: "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:17-19). When you give, it abounds to your account. It is a sweet smell to God. And He promises to supply your need in return.

So, what is the lesson of Joanna for us today? First, never underestimate God's power to subvert the kingdoms of this world. If He can turn the treasury of Herod into a mission fund for the gospel, He can turn your workplace, your family, your circumstances into a channel for His blessing. You may work in a place that does not honor God, but like Joanna, you can be the representative of the Kingdom in that place. You can take the resources of the world and sanctify them for the work of the Lord. Second, give with a cheerful heart. Whether you have much or little, give as Joanna gave—of your substance. Give until it means something. Give until it requires faith. And do not worry about the origin of your circumstances; worry about the destination of your heart. If you give it to Jesus, He will cleanse it and use it for glory. The Psalmist declares, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). But also, the sacrifices of God are a cheerful giver. He accepts the gift when the heart is right.

Finally, rest assured that your labor of love is recorded in Heaven. The five souls baptized in Kapiri are part of your harvest. The churches being planted around the world are part of your reward. The souls being saved through online ministries funded by your giving are part your crown of rejoicing. The Lord honors the name of every cheerful giver. He honored Joanna by

placing her name in the eternal scroll of Scripture. He will honor you by placing your name in the Lamb's Book of Life, and He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

There is a beautiful promise in Malachi regarding those who bring their tithes and offerings into the storehouse: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). We saw the windows of heaven opened in Kapiri—not with money, but with rain. God proved Himself faithful. He always does.

As we close, I want you to see Joanna standing there among the women. She had been healed. Luke tells us earlier in the chapter that these women had been "healed of evil spirits and infirmities" (Luke 8:2). Joanna knew what it was to be bound and set free. Her giving was not about duty; it was about gratitude. She had received everything from Jesus, and so she gave everything back to Him. That is the heart of the cheerful giver. That is the heart God loves. So, whether you are in Zambia or Zimbabwe, in America or Asia, in Europe or the islands of the sea, let Joanna's example inspire you. Give, and give generously. Give, and give cheerfully. Give, and know that your name is recorded in Heaven. The God who stopped the rain in Kapiri and then sent it again for the baptism is the same God who sees your offering and multiplies it for His glory. Your giving is not in vain. The Lord will honor the name of every Joanna who gives.

Let us pray. Father, we thank You for Joanna, the wife of Chuza. We thank You that You see the hidden givers, the quiet supporters, the ones who make the ministry possible. Lord, bless every person on this call who has given of their substance. Multiply their seed sown. Let them see fruit, even if they never see it until glory. Open the windows of heaven over their lives. And Lord, just as You sent the rain in Kapiri, send the rain of Your Spirit upon each one of us today. Baptize us afresh with fire. Write our names in Your book of remembrance. In the name of Jesus, who gave His all for us. Amen.