I. INTRODUCTION

A. Illustration - James Harrison - Man with the golden arm.

1. In Australia - **James Harrison - Man with the Golden Arm.**
2. No hero, no athlete, just a guy who wasn't too fond of needles.
3. At age 14, his life was saved because of blood transfusions | Give Back.
4. Then the remarkable entered the ordinary
5. Drs discovered his blood contained a rare combination of antibodies
6. Used to make a medication that protected unborn babies from a potentially deadly condition - mother's body attacking unborn baby's red blood cells.
7. Over 60 years, 2.4 million babies benefited from this man's blood... they probably never even knew this had happened. But blessed by the unknown actions of another.
8. Their ignorance didn't make their protection any less real...
9. That brings us to our story today; we are going to see that God blesses Israel by protecting them from evil forces at work around them.

B. PRAYER

1. Heavenly Father, full of grace and mercy, we pray to you to pour out your blessings on these people here today. We ask that those blessings form us. Let us come to know you as the one who provides, guards the way to our souls, and fights for us beyond the veil of this world. I ask that the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight. We ask these things in the name of the King of the world, Jesus. Amen.

C. TODAY'S THEME

1. Join me in Numbers 22
2. Maybe you've heard of the infamous prophet Balaam. Treat | Legendary
3. We see him outside of the Bible too... Mesopotamia.
4. Merlin to the Middle East, and he was for hire
5. **But our story today will reveal that God is always working for the good of his people.**
6. Can I get an amen? | Comes from Romans 8
7. Balaam was hired to curse Israel, but instead he blesses them.

D. TRANSTION

1. Let's first work through the story, then we will try to make sense of it, and finally apply it. A little bit of a different kind of road map than we usually do, but let's see where this gets us.

II. THE STORY

A. PART 1 - BALAK HIRES BALAAM

1. Introduction
    a) Moab is a kingdom east of the Dead Sea, modern-day Jordan. Israel is north of Moab.
    b) Balaak, King of Moab, sends delegates 300 miles north for Balaam
    c) Balaam has to think about it...

2. READ NUMBERS 22:8-12

B. PART 2 - BALAAM GOES

1. Introduction
    a) Balaam said no | Delegates go home. Balak wasn't accepting a no.
    b) Sends more people and stuff, probably money, to convince Balaam

2. READ NUMBERS 22:18-22

3. God's Anger
    a) Something funny is happening here; did you notice it?
    b) God told Balaam to go, but then in Vs. 22, God is angry... Odd. Hold

C. PART 3 - BALAAM SPEAKS TO A DONKEY

1. From the mouth of a Donkey
    a) Balaam goes | AOTL appears | Donkey sees, Balaam doesn't | Field.
    b) Second time | walled road | AOTL appears | Donkey sees | crushes foot
    c) Third time | Narrow path | AOTL appears | Donkey sees | lays down.
    d) Then God performs one of the greatest miracles, makes the donkey talk.
    e) But then... Balaam answers the donkey | You made me look stupid
    f) Have I steered you wrong before? No - then trust me!
    g) Then God opens Balaam's eyes, and he sees...

2. READ NUMBERS 22:32-35

D. TRANSITION

1. We need to dig deeper to better understand this story.

III. INTERPRETATION

A. FIRST, BALAAM IS A BAD GUY WHO IS ABOUT TO DO A GOOD THING

1. He is a pagan. He is evil. He is greedy.
   a) Uses magic & dark arts to make money | Spiritual guru for hire.
   b) Never explicitly told he is a bad guy in this story. Calls God YHWH
   c) Appears to be obedient to the Lord - only bless.
   d) Appearances show ally. Author subtly hints at ulterior motives.
2. When looking back, the Bible tells us he was evil
   a) READ 2 PETER 2:15
   b) Numbers 22:20-22 is the clue that something is wrong.
   c) Scholarly consensus: he goes w/impure motives.
   d) Vs. 35 - Go, but ONLY speak what I tell you to speak | "Or ELSE!"
3. But he also does the right things...
   a) Checks with Israel's God..
   b) He thinks on it to discern if it is right.
   c) Ulterior motives show he is a wolf... not a sheep.
4. Here's the truth
   a) Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord is with the Lord.
   b) READ MATTHEW 7:21-23
   c) Not everyone is a friend
   d) Wise as serpents, innocent as doves.

B. SECOND, THE BACK HALF OF THIS STORY REVEALS GOD'S SENSE OF HUMOR

1. God could have used any means, and he uses a donkey.
2. This is humbling - not to make crude jokes - the donkey has more spiritual insight than the so-called spiritual man - divination, necromancy.
3. How come he didn't see this coming if he is so great? HE'S NOT!
4. Here's the Truth
   a) Humility can save us from destruction
   b) Balaam didn't have the humility to trust his donkey and kept going until God humbled him by speaking through a bigger donkey than
   c) Then he saw | AOTL = Jesus | On his way to kill him to protect Israel.
   d) READ PROVERBS 11:2
   e) READ PROVERBS 18:12

C. **TRANSITION:** Now, what does the story teach us? Does Balaam bless the people? Does it all end well? Well... yes and no.

IV. APPLICATION

A. GOD IS WORKING FOR OUR GOOD, EVEN WHEN WE CANNOT SEE IT

1. Remarkably easy to overlook - Israel has no idea this is happening.
   a) Meanwhile, a king of darkness is conspiring against them.
   b) On Mt., overlooking them, is Balaam preparing to speak.
   c) They know nothing
2. But God knows
   a) Even when Israel is ignorant, God is working for their good.
   b) I wonder how much of God's work in your life you've never noticed.
   c) How many dangers? How many circumstances? How much pro?
   d) READ ROMANS 8:28
   e) That doesn't mean pie in the sky, easy street, good living. It means God is working toward his good purposes, even in hard times; we may not realize it until years later
3. Remember this
   a) Our inability to see God working does not mean God isn't working
   b) God kept his promises to Israel without showing them how.

B. NOT EVERYTHING THAT LOOKS LIKE A BLESSING COMES FROM GOD

1. Balaak offered Balaam something most consider a blessing.
   a) Money, wealth, recognition, influence... imagine the temptation.
   b) Offering an enormous reward for simply doing what you are good at.
   c) Here's the problem
   d) It wasn't a blessing... it was a temptation.
2. We've become careless with the word blessing.
   a) Sometimes we call something a blessing because it's something we want. For us, usually wealth.
   b) Bigger paycheck, a promotion, relational security, more authority.
   c) Those things can be... but just because they make life easier or seem like the next right step doesn't mean they are.
   d) Success does not always come from God
   e) The enemy can give that too.
3. What does it lead to?
   a) Toward Jesus and his mission or away?
   b) Toward loving others or away?
   c) READ JAMES 1:17
   d) Same chapter also warns that desires lead to temptation and sin.
   e) We cannot determine whether something is a blessing simply by how much we desire it...

C. FOLLOWING THE WRONG VOICE CAN LEAD US AWAY FROM GOD

1. Balaam blesses Israel three times... but that's not the end...
   a) Numbers 25, Israel begins engaging in
      (1) sexual sin with Moabite women
      (2) Sacrifices to foreign gods
      (3) Worshiping Baal.
   b) Then in Numbers 31:16 we learn that all happened because Balaam counseled Balak on how to do that.
   c) Jesus confirms this in Revelation 2:14.

2. Balaam couldn't curse God's people, so he helped lead God's people into sin.
   a) Not everyone who speaks about God is speaking for God.
   b) Not everyone who claims spiritual authority deserves our trust.
   c) Balaam knew the jargon; he spoke God's words; he acknowledged his authority.
   d) Even pronounced his blessings. But his heart wasn't faithful to God.
   e) Just another wolf pretending to be a sheep.

3. Don't just ask whether someone sounds spiritual
   a) Ask whether their teachings lead you toward Jesus or away from him. Toward love or away. Toward peace or away. Toward good or away.
   b) Then ask yourself: do their actions match their words?

4. The voices we follow will shape the people we become.
   a) Political leaders are not our champions.
   b) The wealthy are not our saviors.
   c) Pastors are not gatekeepers to heaven.
   d) People always fail us. | Forgive them when they do...
   e) Sometimes God does work through evil people. But that doesn't mean we should always follow them.
   f) Recognize when God is speaking and recognize when he is not.

V. CONCLUSION

A. RETURN TO THE STORY

1. Return to one moment in the story.
2. We know the story now… Balaam only speaks blessings
3. **READ NUMBERS 24:17**
4. Balaam is speaking beyond the people camped in the valley. Sees a coming King; that promise continues to build until Jesus.

B. THE IRONY

1. A pagan sorcerer, hired by an enemy king to curse God's people, becomes the unexpected messenger announcing the king who will bless the nations.
   a) Balak wanted destruction; curses pronounced
   b) God wanted redemption; blessings proclaimed

C. CENTURIES LATER, THAT PROMISED KING CAME

1. Jesus entered a world filled with suffering, evil, and death. His enemies nailed him to the cross; it appeared that evil had won
2. But what looked like the greatest defeat became the greatest victory
   a) Salvation through Jesus
   b) Formation through the Holy Spirit in us
3. Remember this
   a) Not everything that happens to us is good. Not every opportunity is a blessing, and not every voice deserves our trust.
   b) But the God who turned a curse into a blessing and a cross into a victory is still working for the good of those who love him.
   c) Even when we cannot see it, understand it, or even notice it.

D. HERE'S THE PUNCHLINE

1. **Our God's blessing is bigger than our enemy's curses.**

E. PRAYER

1. Heavenly Father, you take what the enemy meant for evil, and you turn it for good; you turn it for good. We praise you that you have authority over evil. That the darkness flees from your light. I pray that we become people who recognize your blessings and distinguish them from the enemy's temptations. Form us into a church that pursues, above all else, proclaiming your good news: that the grave is empty and your Son is king over all.

Operation Christmas Child - **BOXES ARE DUE TODAY. Thank you for being a blessing to so many children!**

Fall Fellowship Meal - Next Sunday, November 15. Meal provided (chicken & noodles, mashed potatoes, green beans, salad) but we ask that you please bring a dessert to share. (please cut your dessert).

Women's Ministry Treat Swap - Sunday, November 22 after service in the family life center. All ladies are invited! Bring at least 2 dozen of your favorite treat and a container to transport your desserts home. Lunch will be provided. Please sign up if you plan to attend.

2027 Offering Envelopes - If you are a CURRENT offering envelope user, your 2027 envelopes are available at the information center.

Mark Your Calendars

Christmas Service - Sunday, December 20, 10:30 am, Christmas Cafe' in the family life center 9:30-10:10 and photo booth.
Candlelight Christmas Eve Service - December 24, 6 pm. Christmas Cafe' open before and after the service.