

Wealth & the Fool

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[0 : 0 0] we use money and possessions are at the heart of being a disciple of Jesus. There is a deep spiritual reality to them. Coming into relationship with Jesus changes your relationship to money and possessions. And we're doing this series at a time when we're not seeking to raise funds for anything in particular. It's just all about doing heart work. That's what it is.

And so we're not looking at specific application except to go away and search your hearts and ask yourself, what is it that I truly value in life? And so we're winding up our series in Luke 12 and this parable of the rich fool. Jesus' statement, verse 15. If you've got your Bibles open, come with me on this. You can also get it out on the St. Paul's app. You'll find the sermon outline there in the Bible passage as well. Jesus' statement, verse 15, couldn't be any clearer in terms of perspective on this issue. He says, watch out. Watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

Greed is a spiritual problem. It's a chronic spiritual sickness. It's linked to money, but money doesn't cause it. And you see that because earlier in the Bible, you've got people like Abraham and Job and David who are fabulously wealthy, but do not have money sickness.

It's also possible to have money sickness, but in fact have very little money. Rich people may not have it and poor people may have it. The sickness is money centrality. It's a materialism. So I've got three points that I want to look at today. And the first one is watch out for money blindness.

What sets off this whole teaching on money with Jesus and money and greed is because of this interaction that Jesus has with this bloke in verse 13. It says, It's most likely that the older brother in this case has inherited the entire estate from the parents and he's not wanting to share it. It's probably not the first time that money's caused an issue when it comes to inheritance, all sorts of family feuds. And so he wants Jesus to make his older brother pay up as if Jesus is an estate's lawyer. And Jesus refuses, not because it isn't right that this issue needs to be settled fairly and through the courts if necessary, but because it isn't his mission.

[3 : 0 8] It's not my focus is what he's getting at. But then Jesus launches into what is a much deeper issue to deal with. He sees that there is a heart issue that needs addressing. And you see that because he closes off this section at the end about where your treasure of your heart is. This family is being torn apart by greed.

His statement in verse 15 is him pinpointing the key issue that needs to be addressed. It's greed. And he issues a clear warning. He says, Watch out!

It's like there's an assumption that's behind this warning. And the assumption is you can't see the danger. You can't see it.

If you were about to back your car into someone else's car out here in the car park, and it's in full view, other people are walking by and you see you're just getting closer and closer and closer. At some point, hopefully, someone will call out, look out!

It's because they're working on the assumption that you haven't seen the car.

- [4 : 39] Money dis-eases us. It has a power to fool us. And a great deal of the power that money has over us is it blinds us to the power that it has over us. Blindness to the sickness of money is part of the sickness of money.
- Greed is a sin that blinds you to its presence. Nobody who is greedy thinks they are greedy.
- And nowhere in the New Testament do you have Jesus saying, Watch out! For all kinds of adultery.
- Now, it's not because adultery is any less sinful and destructive. It's because we're blind to greed in a materialism in a way that we're not blind to adultery.
- Greed is more deceptive. Jesus doesn't say, Watch out! You might be committing adultery and not know it. Of course you know you are.
- [5 : 54] Of course you know you are. No one thinks greed is their problem. But if we take the text of the Bible seriously, then the first thing we should do this morning is work on the assumption that we are blind.
- Now, I'm not saying it's necessarily true for you. I'm saying that the only way to give any credence to what the Bible says is always be checking for it.
- Always looking over your shoulder, looking for it. Ask yourself questions about it all the time. Do you really, really, really need more?
- Sex might have slain its thousands, but money has slain its tens of thousands. I've been involved in Christian ministry for over 25 years now, and I cannot seriously think of anyone who has ever come to me in that time to confess they've got a problem with greed and materialism.
- In one of the wealthiest countries of the world, at the time of our greatest wealth, can't think of anyone who has ever come to me and talked to me about that issue.
- [7 : 29] Everything else, virtually, but not that one. That's why we have to watch for it.
- Secondly, how do we diagnose this money sickness? What is it, this money sickness, that we're blind to? Put simply, greed is where money, possessions, wealth, is just too important to us.
- That's basically what it is. Too central to us. The issue is, how do we know when we've crossed the line? There must be a line somewhere.
- So how do we know when we've crossed that line? And it is an issue for us. Well, Jesus gives us, in this text, a number of guideposts to help us diagnose whether we have succumbed to money sickness.
- First guidepost is in verse 19, where the rich fool says, What he's doing in that moment is he's boasting in his wealth and his security and, if you like, his retirement.
- [8 : 51] He's boasting in it. He's boasting in his possessions and what he has and feeling comfortable with his security. Maybe that's you. Another guidepost is worry.
- It's interesting that right after the parable of the rich fool, we have this whole section about worrying. And Jesus makes the issue clear in verse 29.
- Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. If we worry about money, worry about our livelihood and food and clothing and living standards, then we have fixated our heart on material things just like the rich fool.
- Now, it's possible to have money but not to have the sickness. But it's also possible to have the sickness but hardly any money.
- Worry. Boasting worry. Third side post is in verse 15 where Jesus says, Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

[10 : 06] Now, he's helping us see here that greed doesn't look the same for every person. Greed is different. It has different forms and varieties.

For some, their greed is revealed in the spending on clothes and cars and travel and renovations and entertainment. Money itself, as we know, is just simply paper or whatever it is that they make it out of nowadays, some plasticky stuff.

And metal. The value that money has for us is that we take these bits of paper and metal and we exchange it for what we truly value.

That's the value we have. And when we spend and keep on spending on possessions, then we are looking to those things that we truly value to get that sense of desirability and acceptability and lovability and awe and experiences rather than looking to God and the knowledge of God and the love of God for our sense of wealth, worth and significance.

And so the passage says, consider the wildflowers. God is the one who adorns them, not money. And as he adorns them with wonder and awe and beauty, so he is the source of those things for us because we are much more valuable than they.

[11 : 41] But there are those who look at people spending money on clothes and homes and cars and travel and entertainment and they just sneer at those people and go, well, there's the greedy ones. They think these people are just so greedy and so materialistic.

And sometimes these people are proud that they've been wearing and repairing the same pair of underpants for 10 years and they reuse their tea bags and they don't own a mobile phone and they're just so frugal.

I'm not greedy. The ones who are spending money, the greedy ones, instead what they're doing is putting it all away in retirement funds and savings and investments or for a rainy day. Jesus says, that's just a different kind of greed.

Just a different kind. There's all kinds of greeds. If we find it very hard to give money away but very easy to save it, then our bank balance is our source of security.

We are looking to our bank to give us control in a very, very chaotic and unpredictable world rather than God.

[12 : 49] The rich fool here stored up his wealth and stored it up more and more and more for the sake of his security. And the point of this story about the rich fool is it's an illusion.

Money cannot give you security. It can't stop tragedy. It can't stop broken relationships. It can't stop your life and it can't even stop financial ruin. It's an illusion.

Money can't give you security but God can. Consider the ravens. Consider the ravens.

They don't have money to give them security but they are well cared for and fed by God day in and day out. So greed is where we get beauty and acceptance and security and identity from great clothes, houses, experiences, instead of God.

It's where we get control because of great investments instead of God. Just different kinds of greed. And the fourth guidepost is verse 30.

[14 : 11] For the pagan world runs after all such things. What this means is the running after them is a sense of being driven.

I'm driven to get these things. It may result in overworking, driving yourself and others around you into the ground to get it.

Money sickness is where we resent people who've got it, worrying about not having it, running off our feet in order to get it. It's where we look to money to give us what only God can give us.

And when we see these signs, it's obvious, really, that a lot of us have got money sickness.

If you think it's now possible that you've got at least, you know, you're not in your hospital bed, but you've got money sickness, then Jesus is suggesting that your problem and my problem is a lot more than just a not feeling great today.

[15 : 33] It's a much deeper issue than that. We are blind to how big this issue is. So how do we recover from it?

I've got two ways that we recover from it. The first solution is to have a radical experience of the grace of God in the Lord Jesus.

Hopefully, you've picked that up in the last number of weeks. We have constantly heard that the gospel is the solution. Jesus himself is the solution to this. And we need to, as I said last week, keep driving, driving it in again and again, driving the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts again and again.

It's no different today. We have to keep coming back to God's grace to us in Jesus and savoring his gospel to us again and again and again and again.

And can I say, sorry, translators, you may have been sitting in church for 30 years but you have not been driving the gospel of God's grace into your heart.

[16 : 47] Just gathering, doing your thing, giving 10%, just settled with that. You need to have a fresh experience of God's grace.

We need to see Jesus, what he's done for us on the cross again and again and again until he becomes our greatest treasure. We need to preach the gospel to ourselves every single day.

And God's grace to us is again here in this passage. Notice that Jesus doesn't say here, as he did with the rich young ruler, that if you sell all your possessions, give them to the poor, then God will forgive your sins and let you into his kingdom.

He doesn't say that. What he says is in verse 32, do not be afraid, little flock. I love it when he says that. Do not be afraid because he knows that he says don't trust money, trust me instead with everything in life.

Our first instinct is fear. fear is the response. He says, do not be afraid, little flock, for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

[18 : 06] Sell your possessions and give to the poor, provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

The order is crucial. The little flock have been given the kingdom apart from any effort on their behalf.

When we see that we start, when we see that, when we see that we have it first, we start to become free to give in radical ways. And Jesus says a similar thing in verse 21.

This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God. Rich toward God means counting God of greater worth than anything in this world.

Rich toward God means using earthly riches to show him, the world, our own hearts, how much we value God.

[19 : 13] And this is what the prosperous farmer failed to do. And the result is God calls him a fool and he lost his soul. A fool.

Jesus considers money hazardous. It lures us out of love for God. It lures us away from treasuring Jesus above everything else. The issue here isn't that this man, this rich fool's land was prosperous.

It's just that God ceased to be his supreme treasure. Anyone who stores up things rather than giving it away, they do it because they're not rich towards God.

It's a lack of inner wealth. If you worry about money, you're resentful towards those who have money, running after money, hoarding it.

It's simply because Jesus says you're not rich towards God. There is a lack of inner wealth. What I mean by this is basically what 1 Peter 2 verse 9 says, but you are a chosen people a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, which literally means in the original language, you are God's treasure.

[20 : 52] What do you get the person who has everything? everything? What sort of gift would cause the person with billions and billions of dollars to go, wow?

Well, that's God's question. What do you give him who's got everything? literally, absolutely, everything is his.

What do you give him? Peter is saying here that with everything he possesses, his people, his disciples, the ones who trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, are his greatest treasure.

That's what it's saying. God treasures us. That is a life-transforming truth. It's a life-transforming truth that's confirmed in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verses 7 and 9.

See that you excel in the grace of giving, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

[22 : 16] Paul doesn't say that if you give your wealth away to God, God will give you eternal wealth. He says that you will never be free, never be free of eternal treasure, sorry, of earthly treasure until we see that God has given us eternal treasure as a free gift.

His eternal treasure is Jesus. And when he came to earth, Jesus quite literally lived in poverty. He said he didn't even have a place to lay his head as a grown man.

And this is just a small glimpse, just a small glimpse of the much, much, much deeper poverty that he endured on the cross for us. He did exactly what he is asking us to do here at the end of Luke 12.

He's already gone before us and done it. He's fulfilled it for us. He is the richest one. He lost everything for the poorest ones. He did it to pay for our sins on the cross.

And the inner wealth comes to us when we know that we have been treasured treasured by the treasure worthy.

[23 : 48] He was willing to give up and pay anything to treasure us. Every single one of us sitting in this room right now as everyone who's outside this room has something that they treasure at the center of their heart.

Every single one of us there is something that we treasure that we look to consistently for our security, for our approval, for our significance. The way you know it's there and what it is specifically is when someone challenges it in your heart, it will result in anger.

You'll want to defend your treasure. Every single one of us has those treasures that will demand us. We will surrender for it.

This treasure drives us to run after it consistently. In fact, we will die in order. In fact, that's what it calls us to do. It runs us into the ground and requires of us to die for it.

And Jesus is the only treasure who dies to purchase us. The treasures of our heart drive us to surrender and sacrifice absolutely everything in order to achieve it.

[25 : 09] And yet Jesus is the only one who dies so that we might be his treasure. See that he has treasured you.

See how he has treasured you. And then you'll be free from money, blindness, and sickness. You need a radical experience of God's grace. grace. You also, there's one more thing to add here.

It's also crucial to be a member of a radically grace-changed community. See this back in verse 32.

Have a look at this. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. This is in a moment of fear and worry which strikes it whenever we think about money and stuff and handing over to God instead.

This verse is such a tender verse. God knows that we are scared to trust him. We're scared to live like this, too scared to step out and trust him and to give our money away.

[26 : 25] He calls us not to be afraid and to remember that we get to call God our father and we are his little flock. But notice that this promise here, this promise to give the kingdom is a plural promise.

Little flock. For those of us who are Westerners, Christians think so much as individuals, that's not what's happening here.

There's a place in Mark chapter 10 where Jesus spells it out just a little bit more detail for us what he's referring to here. The rich young ruler walks away too afraid to trust Jesus with his wealth.

And at that point, his disciple Peter pipes up and he says, we've left everything to follow you. And then Jesus says, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in his present age.

homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields along with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life. What's getting at there, what's referring to here in God providing for our needs is that in the Christian community you get a new family, you get new relationships, you get eternal relationships.

[27 : 56] We will love each other forever. Forever. If you're struggling to love me now, you won't in heaven. Isn't that good news for me?

But there's also a tendency I think to forget the bit in this passage in Mark 10 about the fields and the homes. Try to explain that away a little bit.

But in Mark 10 and Luke 12, along with the new community of relationships, comes homes and fields. And we must not read these terms any differently than we read the brothers, the sisters, the mothers and the children in this passage.

You can't read any differently. That would be a major error in biblical interpretation. Jesus' view is that in the new community of grace, we not only share and engage with one another's families, but we also share and engage in one another's homes and possessions.

You see this in the book of Acts in the early church. And the reason Christians in Mark 10 and Luke 12 are free to give away money when needs are evident is because it is an assumption in those passages that they're part of a community that will do for them as they do for others.

[29 : 35] That's the assumption in those passages. That's the assumption of the new community. We need to be a community that is so humbled our pride that we are willing to let people know when we've got a need.

And we need to be a community where the grace of God has so transformed us that our money sickness is disappearing. A community that gives, shares, receives.

We have a long way to go before we really become this kind of grace-filled little flock. But the point here for us today is get a vision for using your wealth.

with eternity in mind. To be a community of love and sharing in such a way that we reveal that Jesus truly is our greatest treasure.

And the solution to that is keep looking to Jesus, our great treasure. love and love and love and love. The heavenly vision is a hymn that was written in 1922 by Helen Lamelle.

[31 : 03] It's more widely known by the first line of its chorus and it sums up the thrust of this whole series on wealth in purpose, wealth with purpose.

Wealth, possessions, money and riches with eternity in mind. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

One of the things we get to do this morning to remind ourselves of God's grace to us in the Lord Jesus is to share in the Lord's Supper together. I think it's a great way to focus again that Jesus is our greatest treasure.

We have these two elements. Let's see if I can navigate this. We have these two elements.