

Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom

The Trouble with Treasure • Message 8

Bryan Jones

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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Ask God to give you a generous heart that reflects His love.
- Ask God to help you use whatever you have for eternal impact.
- Ask God to remind you that He is the ultimate treasure.

Scripture Reading:

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Matthew 6:19-24 (NIV)

A. Introduction.

I shared this before, but any guesses on what the two most requested topics to speak on are?

- 1.) Sex
- 2.) End times

With a possible third... Will there be sex in the end times...

Do you know the two subjects people don't ever request me to speak on?

- 1.) Fasting (which I preached on previously.)
- 2.) Money (which I'm preaching on today.)

So, I just want to say it's been fun being your pastor... No, but seriously, today is the next sermon in the *Sermon on the Mount*, where Jesus is sharing what His kingdom is like and what His people are to be like...

And let me say, while money is not a popular subject with some people... and I know some pastors have abused the subject of money and taught some things that might have made you uncomfortable or are frankly unbiblical—I have never shied away from this subject because Jesus didn't.

In fact, there are 39 parables in the New Testament, and 11 of them speak about money.

And one out of every seven verses Jesus speaks about is around money...

Why? I think it's because it's such an important subject for so many of us. It is a central part of lives, both good and bad...

But there are reasons Jesus talks about money. So, let me make an observation and then ask two questions about money.

B. GREED is one of the hardest sins to spot.

(Matthew 6:22-23. C/R: Luke 12:15)

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Matthew 6:22-23 (NIV)

Now this can seem like a random verse... Jesus talks about money and ends the section of scripture talking about money... but then there is this random part about the eye... what is this about, Jesus?

What Jesus is saying here is quite unique... He's saying greed is different than any other sin because it darkens your eyes spiritually. Materialism can blind you spiritually.

Our approach to money either brings great light or great darkness.... So, if you are in a dark spot or a dry spot spiritually, one of the culprits might be the issue of greed.

That's why Jesus says in Luke 12...

Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

Luke 12:15 (NIV)

Notice, *WATCH OUT*... Why? Because greed is one of the hardest sins to spot...

I have shared this before, but as a pastor, there is only one subject I have never had anyone sit down to talk about, and that's greed. I have never in over 20 years of ministry had someone sit down and say they struggle with greed.

You notice other sins... if you have anger or hate, you don't say... *You know, I had no idea I hated you*... You know it... Adulterous people don't go... *Oh wait, you're not my spouse*, they know it ... people know if they struggle with drunkenness, or laziness or if they idolize their work....

But greed is the thing that you have to watch out for because no one thinks they are greedy... because greed blinds you and it hides itself...

Part of this is because we all know someone who spends more extravagantly or makes more money than us... and we go... *Yeah, but I'm not like them*... and what Jesus is saying is a symptom of greed is... *Oh, this doesn't apply to me*...

And let me just say this... the reason this is important to me is that for years, I lived with what Perry talked about... Worry... and one of the worst culprits was money... and listen... worry and peace can't coexist. They can't share the same space... and so I really want you to live with peace and freedom... so this isn't just a talk about money, it's a talk about worry and fear.... and an unhealthy relationship with money will keep us from that...

So let me ask you two questions that I think will help you see how your eyes and heart are towards money...

C. Two Helpful Questions:

1. Is money your TOOL or TREASURE?

Matthew 6:19-21. C/R: Psalm 104:14-15a; Matthew 6:24)

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Matthew 6:19-20 (NIV)

Notice God says: *Don't treasure stuff here, treasure stuff in heaven...* So, if you're healthy with your approach to money, you're going to be thinking about heavenly treasures. If you're unhealthy with your eyes, you will just be thinking about materialism here.

You can't take money with you, but Jesus makes it clear... You can send it ahead of you! And when you truly understand this, you stop asking how much do I have to give... because you want to store up treasures that truly last...

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 6:21 (NIV)

Think about this: What you treasure, your heart follows, and then your money will follow that... think about it, if you start treasuring golf, your heart and time will be focused on that... you read articles on it, and then your money goes to it...

There's nothing wrong with spending money on things, nothing at all. But years ago, God showed me I was spending more on my home, that I was tithing to my home and tipping God. As I've started to treasure God more and more... my money starts to follow what my heart cares about...

So, a way to find out what you treasure is to trace your money...

Let me be very clear... God doesn't say here that money is bad or evil. God views wealth and savings as good things... He wants us to view money as a tool, not our treasure...

God doesn't want us to feel guilty about money... You know the movie *Schindler's List*?... it stars Liam Neeson, one of the greatest actors of our time, right behind Bruce Willis and Nicolas Cage, who make up the trinity of actors... but if you haven't seen the movie, Liam Neeson's character takes his money and spends his fortune to deliver Jews from being killed in the Holocaust. And at the end, he's looking at his watch, thinking this could have set two more Jews free... and so he's just feeling guilt...

And this is how some Christians feel about spending any money... they feel guilt about anything they spend, or they can judge how others spend their money...

Like, how many of us have ever said this... *There are starving kids in Africa.* (won't eat that)

It's okay to go to a nice restaurant or buy things... and we shouldn't be judging Christians or criticizing every dollar spent... that can quickly turn into legalism... Don't go to the other extreme where you spend all on yourself and don't give anything to God.

But God loves to bless His people... He loves to bless people, and he loves for them to enjoy his blessings...

And where do you get that?

He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts,

Psalms 104:14-15a (NIV)

For you Baptist folks out there, the Hebrew word for wine is sweet tea... ☺

But think about the Garden of Eden, which we read about in Genesis. Its size... it was roughly the size of Yellowstone National Park, and probably 1,000 times more beautiful. And he created all of that for two naked people to run around in...

Also, remember Jesus turning water into wine... and do you remember what kind of wine it was? It was the best wine at the party... God loves to bless his people and for people to enjoy his blessings...

See, money and resources are to be a tool to use and enjoy, not a treasure to trust in...

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 6:21 (NIV)

But let me say this... about the treasure... when Jesus says we treasure money... let me show two ways...

Let me show you two ways everyone in this room is prone to trust in money as a treasure...

Money

Significance
(Spenders)

Security
(Savers)

For some, money is about significance. It gives you a sense of status. You spend and buy things to give you a sense of joy and purpose. You get your sense of identity from what you are able to get.

Now, savers, this kind of living stresses you out... and you can judge the spenders. You just want to save because you don't know what tomorrow will hold. Deep down, you don't have to trust anyone if you squirrel away enough. But the unsavory secret or the thing you might be blind to is that money has become a security to you ...

How many of you would say you fall to one side or the other?... Now, any of you brave enough to admit that, like me, you fall into both categories? ... nice to know some of you are as jacked up as me... Welcome. ☺

But I heard a wise man say we should put limits on spending and saving. We should enjoy money as a tool, but we shouldn't be foolish in spending it... We should also put limits on saving... because the problem is, have you noticed how it always becomes just one more hundred, just one more thousand, just one hundred thousand more...

Part of what we can be blind to is how much significance or security we are getting from money...

And guess who is supposed to give us our significance and our security?

God

Significance
(Spenders)

Security
(Savers)

Money is a great tool, but it's a terrible master... that's why Jesus says...

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

Matthew 6:24 (NIV)

2. Do God's blessings increase your standard of LIVING or your standard of GIVING? (Matthew 6:22)

You know, some people talk about money and how they want to make more or need to keep making a certain amount so they can keep up their standard of living.

But a healthier approach to money is understanding that part of God's blessing to you is increasing your standard of giving...

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light."

Matthew 6:22 (NIV)

The word healthy is a Greek word with a double meaning. It can mean healthy or good, but it also means generous. So, with that in mind... think about how that verse reads.

So, how do you know you are free from greed? ... you're generous...

See, for a lot of people, they spend, or they save generously, but they give sufficiently...

And what Jesus has called us to do is to save and spend sufficiently and give generously.

One of the questions I get often is... *What about if I'm in debt? Should I wait to start giving generously?*... My simple answer is always no...

Now, I confess I don't do great when I'm sick. Most men don't. There's a reason women give birth and not men... because we don't handle sickness well.... When you get sick, your body will target the sickness, and it will spend a lot of its energy on getting well, but unless someone goes into a coma, they still have other bodily functions, and they can do other things...

And I think if you're financially sick, I wouldn't divert all your resources just to get out of debt, but biblically speaking, healthy generosity is essential to a healthy spiritual life...but pray about what you give.

You know we use a phrase around here...*Jesus at the Center*... how can Jesus be at the center of your life, if he's not at the center of your finances?.... When he clearly says here... Money or me will win the affection of your heart and life... one will be the center, he says...

So, we talk a lot about just taking a step. You don't have to get there overnight, but start towards generosity and honoring God with resources.

Show graph

Nothing to something

Something to specific

Specific to tithe

Tithe to spirit-led

You know, I believe the tithe is really to be a reference, a starting point... take a step. But if you're tithing, it's so easy to go... *God, I've done it*. Listen, for some of you, giving 10% will be a stretch, but for some of you, if we were honest, it wouldn't really be sacrificial giving at all... it wouldn't change anything...

A while ago... I was meeting with a guy...

See, a moment of transparency. Some of our founding pastors will hate me saying this... but our founding pastor, Perry, and our Executive pastor, David Hardy, have modeled this so well...

All my life I've watched pastors or people get to a certain age and then buy an expensive car... and don't hear me say that as judgement to people who drive nice cars... some of the most generous people I've known drive nice cars... but Perry and David are some of the first people I've known who have chosen to live beneath a certain Soci-economic status... meaning they could drive nicer cars, they can live at a higher status but they just don't choose too... and can I say this... its messed with me and challenged me...

When I first got here... several of my friends were getting new cars... and my wife got a new car... something I never thought I would buy as a teenager: a minivan. But one day I was riding in it, and it had something I had never experienced before in my car... heated seats. Not just heated seats, it had a backup camera, and not just that... it had automatic start... and one day I was driving, and this is literally what I thought... *This isn't fair!* ... and I started going, *God, I'm doing all this work for you. I need a car with heated seats, and I need a push start... God, I don't know if my 2012 Sonata is going to cut it right now...* and guess what? I was complaining a little, and I saw David Hardy pull in with his older Honda, and God just said: *Look at him...* and so from that moment on, I've hated David Hardy. 😊

But in a good way, church, God used that to recalibrate my sense of entitlement. When people choose to live beneath a socio-economic line, it causes people to go, *Why are you doing that?* Because what happens is we get more money a lot of times, and it just goes to enhancing our lives. And that's not bad or evil.... but it's not investing in eternity...

Now one day I will probably get a new car, there is nothing wrong with that, but I can say this for the first time in 5 years... God has freed me from this sense of status, or identity, and my rights to certain privileges... it feels like for the first time in my life, God has started to unravel me from greed...and my eyes are getting healthy from this greed thing... but 5 years ago and before I would have told you I'm not greedy... people are living extravagantly and make way more money... but I was blind. God has been waking me up.

Because the cross cuts into everything in our lives, as a Christian, I know that the cross cuts into my bitterness... I have to learn to live sacrificially in that area and forgive. But the cross should also cut into my finances... and it should cut into them in a way that I might not be able to do everything I want because I'm learning to give sacrificially...

And we can't just avoid this subject because of the way it's been abused, or because it's taboo, or hard to talk about...

And so, I'm just asking you to ask the Spirit how he wants you to give... and ask the Spirit to give you a heart like Jesus, who loves to give and bless.... think about it: Jesus didn't tithe his blood; he sacrificed it for you. And why did Jesus do that? You were the only thing he didn't have in heaven...

He had all the treasures in heaven, all the glory and honor, but you were His treasures. So, think about it: he sacrificed his socio-economic status, lived beneath his status, had no home, no great earthly wealth, because you were worth it... You were His treasure. He didn't do it out of guilt or obligation; he did it out of love...

Love is our motive to give. We give not because we feel guilt... we give because it's our way of saying, *Jesus, you're better than any treasure of this world...* we give because it's our way of saying we treasure you the most!