

The Treasure Principle

The Treasure of Money

Luke 12:13-21

Intro: It's the final week of our Treasure Principle Series. It's built on...

"The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein," Psalm 24:1 // Everything belongs to God. He made it, he owns it all and he is the only one qualified to say how life works best!

However, we get the incredible privilege of stewarding (managing) the gifts that God gives us. He has entrusted to us "Treasures" that belong to him, but we get to enjoy according to his instructions. There are three that top the list of things we get to manage for God: Time, Influence & Money.

Illus: A mother looked over at her 2-year-old son just in time to see him swallow a nickel. Knowing how dirty money is, & how harmful metal can be, she ran to him, turned him upside down & began to smack him on the back. After a few seconds of this, the boy coughed up 2 dimes. She freaked out, called for her husband who ran in asking, "What happened?" She replied, "Nick swallowed a nickel but, when I turned him upside down, he coughed up two dimes. What do we do?" Dad replied, "Keep feedin' him nickels!"

Trans: Today, we will read about a conversation Jesus has with someone who was coveting & didn't even know it. Jesus will use a parable to explain that being rich toward God is more important than any other kind of wealth.

Text & Prop: To help me steward money, Jesus offers 3 vital truths: Luke 12:13-21

- I. **Greed says, "It's All About the Stuff!" - vs. 13-15** *"Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Man who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?' And he said to them, 'Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'"*

Exp: In front of a crowd of thousands (vs 1), a presumably Jewish man demanded that Jesus set his brother straight. It was common for Rabbi's of that time to settle disputes pertaining to the Law of Moses. It was further instructed that the firstborn son get 2/3rds of the inheritance & the younger son get 1/3rd (Deut 21:17). But, Jesus had no interest in telling this man's brother what to do; he was far more concerned about this man's heart.

"Who one is is far more important than what one possesses." **Warren Wiersbe**

Exp: So Jesus strongly condemns, not the brother's sin but the man's greed. Notice that he says *take care (recognize) AND be on guard (put up a defense)* against covetousness. This sin is so difficult to avoid because it is nearly invisible. Covetousness can appear to the world as simply trying to provide for my family, or be successful or have nice things. But, really, it's a deep desire rooted in discontentment. Others can't see it in us, so it's dangerous!

A Step Further: Many times, we don't recognize covetousness in ourselves.

"As an older man I have listened to thousands of confessions and I have yet to hear one person confess to the sin of covetousness." **Father Frances Xavier**

"Covetousness is an insidious sin. It can destroy your marriage, wreck your family, ruin your health, and grease the skids on the road to hell." **J. Merritt**

Misconception: You don't have to be rich to be covetous; some of the poorest people on earth are very greedy. You don't have to be mean, some of the kindest people on earth are eaten up with covetousness. No easier sin, IMO!

Illus: We are like the dog carrying a juicy steak across a bridge. While crossing, he looked over and saw the reflection of his face with the steak in his mouth. He thought it was another dog with a bigger steak. So he dropped his in the river & went after the reflection of the bigger steak. He got neither and went home hungry!

"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this is also vanity." **Ecclesiastes 5:10 // What to do???**

The only way to fight Greed & Covetousness: The 3 P's of Generosity:

1) Priority, 2) Percentage & 3) Progressive

Greed says, It's all about the STUFF...so recognize & defend against it.

- II. **Fear says, "It's All About the Future!" - vs. 16-19** *"And he told them a parable, saying, 'The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'"*

Exp: To make his point, Jesus shares a parable with the man. Not only with the man, but with the thousands of people gathered to hear him teach. He told of a man who had a great year. His fields produced very well for him. It's important to note that nowhere in the Bible is well-earned, honest financial prosperity every condemned. And, Jesus does not rebuke this man for making money or being wealthy. His problem wasn't that he had money; it was that he loved money.

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils." **1 Timothy 6:10a**

Note: He had more crops than he could use, needed or even could store. So, he considered (deep contemplation) what to do about it and came to the conclusion that he should tear down his barns to build bigger ones. His desire was to set himself up for years of security, prosperity and leisure.

Consider the personal pronouns. "I" and "Me" occur 11 times in 2 & 1/2 verses. It is obvious that he never heard about the treasure principle. He fell into the trap of believing that this harvest belonged to him & not God!

Illus: We believe that money protects us from every eventuality, but it does not, because money can be taken from you or you can be taken from money. While greed says, “It’s all about the Stuff...Fear says “It’s all about the future!”

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” **Matt 6:19-21**

Application: We have a hard time knowing when to say, enough! When asked how much money was enough, John Rockefeller replied, “Just a little bit more!” And, honestly, that’s the way many of us feel too. We think, if we had a little bit more THEN we’d be happy, or THEN we’d give some away, or THEN we’d start to tithe, or THEN we’d be generous. Not true...

“You don’t have to be rich to be generous, you have to be generous to be generous.” **Pastor Johnny Hunt**

The Treasure of Money: God has given us this treasure to manage according to his will: The 3 P’s: 1) Priority, 2) Percentage & 3) Progressive.

Trans: Jesus is telling us that greed says it’s all about the stuff and fear says it’s all about the future...but what does God say?

III. **God says, “It’s All About Eternity!” - vs. 20-21** “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Exp: God uses a powerful word to describe the rich man’s decision to build more barns to hold more stuff for his future...FOOL! Is God saying it’s wrong to save for the future or to plan for a rainy day? No...

“Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.” **Proverbs 13:11**

“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper....” **1 Cor 16:2**

FOOL: The man wasn’t a fool because he was saving for the future; he was a fool because he thought he could satisfy his soul with stuff & security! He was a fool because, in all his planning, he didn’t account for God owning it all! He was a fool because he thought that the abundance of the crop was designed to raise his standard of living, when God wanted it to raise his standard of giving. He was a fool because he bet the house on this life...

Illus: When the civil war was coming to an end & it was apparent that the southern states would be brought back under control of the union, there was the question in the south about what to do with confederate money. Smart people knew what to do; they aggressively traded in their confederate money for American money because very soon, their confederate money would be worthless. It would be worthless because that kingdom was passing away.

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” **2 Cor 4:16-18**

God’s Point: Your wealth profits you nothing when you hoard it for yourself. Jesus then puts an exclamation point when he declares... “So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” **Luke 12:21**

“Being rich toward God means to acknowledge gratefully that everything we have comes from God, and then make an effort to use what He gives us for the good of others and the glory of God.” **Warren Wiersbe**

How does one begin to build wealth toward God? - The Three P’s: 1) Priority (give first), 2) Percentage (proportional) & 3) Progressive (don’t get comfortable)... **Illustration:** 10 \$1 dollar bills...

Conclusion: The Treasure Principle just makes sense. If life is short, but eternity is forever, then we should manage the treasures of time, influence and money in light of eternity! But, I want you to notice something about the rich fool. When God came for him that night, it wasn’t his money that he was after. When God came for him, Jesus said, “Your soul is required of you...” That phrase is a banking term that literally means, “to call a loan” That night; the rich man’s life was called for like a lender may call a loan due. Just like the lender owns the money, God owns us.

That’s right, God not only owns everything you have (time, influence & money), but God owns you! You belong to him. Look again, at Psalm 24:

“The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,” **Psalm 24:1 // God owns it all, including you & me!**

Invitation: If you are really struggling with this idea of stewardship, having a hard time surrendering your time, leveraging your influence and managing your money...could it be because you’ve never surrendered yourself to God?

God is not most interested in your time, your influence or your money because His greatest treasure is YOU! He proved this when he sent his only Son, Jesus, to pay the ultimate sacrifice for your sins.

You will never fully take control of your time, your influence or your money until you surrender to God’s complete control of You!

Sources and Further Reading Opportunities:

- *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* – Warren Wiersbe (2007)
- *The New American Commentary: Luke* – R.H. Stein (1992)
- *Word Pictures in the New Testament* – A.T. Robertson (1933)
- *Trivial Pursuit* – James Merritt (2001)
- *The Treasure Principle* – Randy Alcorn (2001)
- *How to Be Rich* – Andy Stanley (2013)

