

A DEEPER LOOK 8

“AT MONEY”

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Riches and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and it is at your discretion that people are made great and given strength...all that we have gathered comes from you! It all belongs to you!” I Chronicles 29: 11-12, 16

Most years about this season I spend some time teaching about Stewardship; this year will be no different. I’m continuing the Deeper Look series for a few more weeks by taking a Deeper Look at Money (today) Giving (next week) and Tithing the week following. I know that for some of you this is old hat, but for some others of us, I hope this little mini-series might contain some new thought or insight about how God wants us to consider those three subjects. It is said that Jesus spent more time teaching and preaching about money than just about any other subject, and I think that might be true. If there is a subject that most Americans need to learn more about than handling money appropriately, I’m not sure what it is. If you have all the money you want or need, and are fulfilling all God wants you to be doing with that money...then you can sleep guilt-free during the sermon the next 2 weeks...or better yet, you need to be up here preaching about this subject.

I believe in talking about money with God’s people, because money is a representative, a revealer of some deeper things in our lives. Money is a wonderful tool to do amazing things when handled appropriately, but money can also be a curse about the neck for those who live in an inappropriate relationship with this necessary resource. A number of us here at FUMC are taking a course on Money and Stewardship and in the first lesson I’ve learned the most profound thing. It is found in the verses which will serve as the text for this message: *“It all belongs to God.”*

Until we wrap our heads and our hearts around that truth; until that truth takes up residence in our lives, until that truth plays out in the ways we spend money, make money, give money, and invest money...we'll never get this money thing straight!

Many of us live under the misguided lie that life is a series of disconnected compartments, with our social life over here, our family life over there, our personal life over here, our religious/spiritual life over there; and never do those parts connect. You see this in the numbers of Christian young people engaging in pre-marital sexual activity, or in older Christians cheating on their taxes, or their wives! Well, nothing could be further from the truth. All our life is connected, because all our life has been created by God. All our life belongs to God. All our resources belong to God; not just 10%; all our resources belong to God...it all belongs to God! You might not believe that, but your unbelief doesn't change the fact. So too, our fiscal life is not disconnected from our spiritual life, but rather deeply intertwined. What we do or don't do with our money is often a revealer of our true religious/spiritual/Christian life...self!

I've known otherwise faithful people, who don't handle their money appropriately, and they suffer; some physically, some emotionally, some relationally, some financially; because of their lack of honest faithfulness in this important area of life. So we begin this important sermon with this basic understanding: IT all belongs to God, we belong to God, and therefore how we handle God's money matters to God, to us and to our world! Let's begin.

The Bible is full of teachings about money, today I'll focus on a letter Paul sent to his young understudy, Timothy and we'll consider some lessons he was trying to instill in young Timothy. Here it is from 1 Timothy chapter 6 from The Message:

"A devout life does bring wealth, but it's the rich simplicity of being yourself before God. Since we entered the world penniless and will leave it penniless, if we have bread on the table and shoes on our feet, that's enough.

But if it's only money these leaders are after, they'll self-destruct in no time. Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.

Tell those rich in this world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage—to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.” 1 Timothy 6: 6-10; 17-19

There are at least three common misunderstandings found through out the Bible that underlie all we are going to address today. They are:

1. Having more things will make me more happy.

Ecclesiastes 5:10-11 He who loves money shall never have enough. The foolishness of thinking that wealth brings happiness! The more you have, the more you spend, right up to the limits of your income. So what is the advantage of wealth—except perhaps to watch it as it runs through your fingers! (In our study we also learned that the average American today spends \$1.23 cents for every \$1 they are currently earning.)

Ecclesiastes 6:9 A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; mere dreaming of nice things is foolish; it's chasing the wind.

2. Having more things will make me more important.

Luke 12:15 Beware! Don't always be wishing for what you don't have. For real life and real living are not related to how rich we are."

3. Having more things will make me more secure.

Proverbs 11:28 Trust in your money and down you go! Trust in God and flourish as a tree!

Proverbs 18:11 The rich man thinks of his wealth as an impregnable defense, a high wall of safety. What a dreamer!

At the end of his first letter to Timothy, his son in the faith, Paul writes some specific instructions regarding money. This passage is set in the context of warning about some who were teaching the church false doctrine.

OUR TEXT TODAY TEACHES US TO CONSIDER MONEY IN FOUR DISTINCT WAYS:

1) WE ARE NOT TO OWN IT! vs. 6-8

“Yet true religion with contentment is great wealth” 6

Internal contentment seems to be the key. Paul reminds young Timothy to remember three things;

- we brought nothing into this world
- we will take nothing with us when we leave this world
- while we're in this world, if we have food and covering – we probably ought to be content.

We are not to own our money, for as soon as we think we do, it begins to own us. It is clear in this passage that contentment comes from a whole and balanced life.

Contentment is best defined by the Apostle Paul in that famous passage in Philippians 4: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, (even ND) therein to be content," {Phil 4:11 RSV}. Then Paul goes on, "I have learned both to be abased [to live without anything]; I have learned to abound [to have all I need] ... I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want," {cf, Phil 4:12 RSV}. The next verse tells us the secret: ready; here's how to discover contentment; "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," {Phil 4:13 RSV}.

Paul goes on to prove the truth of these words by using birth and death as examples. He says we came into the world with nothing, and we can take nothing out of it. What do you have when you are born? Nothing. You come into the world a little red-faced, wrinkled, naked baby. You do not have anything; even your diaper has to be furnished. What do you have when you leave this world? Nothing. You leave it all behind. We are not to own our money, but see it as a necessary tool that God has provided to meet our needs. We don't own it; we're borrowing it for a short time. We're using it for the time being.

We are not to OWN our money. It is not a sin to have money; but it is a sin to think we OWN our money.

2) **WE ARE NOT TO SEEK IT !** vs. 9

“But people who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money, things that hurt them and make them evil-minded and finally send them to hell itself.” 1 Timothy 6:9 LB

Notice where the emphasis of this verse lies: it is on the DESIRE to be rich.

This is really a heart issue; our desires and longings originate in our hearts.

If our predominate heart desire is to be rich, or have more; then Paul warns that we will soon begin doing all kinds of evil things that will hurt us, make us evil minded people, and finally send us to hell! That’s a pretty severe consequence of the indiscriminate seeking and undisciplined longing for money.

Nowhere in this passage does Paul say that money itself is wrong. Nowhere does Paul say it is a sin to have money. Here he says, it is a sin to always be desiring to have more...money. If our only passion in life is to have more, we are on the path to destruction.

Paul says that when we give into this temptation, and give way to this desire or lust for more things, we create a snare for ourselves; our possessions will soon begin to possess us.

Better would we be to heed Matthew’s advice: *“Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you.”* That’s what we are to seek, not more and more stuff, more and more God! Seek God and God’s kingdom. It is not a sin to have money; it is a sin to always be seeking to have more money.

3) **WE ARE NOT TO LOVE IT !** vs 10

“For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil things. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith, and spiked themselves on many thorny griefs (KJV) “live to regret it forever.”

Paul says the love of money, not money itself, is the root of all evil. Money is a very necessary commodity in life; it is impossible to get along without using money in

one form or another. Yet loving money takes us again to the heart of the matter, and makes the faith-life, fiscal-life connection even stronger.

What Paul is really saying is that we cannot love anything more than we love God, including our money, or even our lack of money. Loving money is at the 'root' of all kinds of evil things. This love though, is not restricted to the obvious evils of gambling addictions, or wanton spending, or casual bankruptcies.

This love of money is more insidious than that; reaching even to those among us who live in the constant envy of those who appear to have more money than we do; or to those of us with the insatiable desire to accumulate more things and toys and trivial trinkets. It includes those of us who hoard our money, who lie about our wealth, who hide behind a false humility while wanting everyone to know we really are well off.

It is not a sin to have money, it is a sin to LOVE money.

4) **WE ARE NOT TO TRUST IT!** vs. 17-19

"Tell those rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment." 17

Those of you who have lived through the great depression have a different outlook on money than those of us who have not. You can testify to the uncertainty of placing our hope in something as uncertain as money. You have survived the crash of the stock market, and the bankruptcy of our banks. Many in my generation have placed blind trust in those institutions. We would all do well to remember that money, wherever it is stored, in our banks, in bonds and stocks, or in bed mattresses, money, is never something to be completely trusted.

Paul instructs Timothy to tell us all to instead put our trust in the one investment that will never fail, that will pay us huge dividends, that will never crash, or ever be lost.

We are to put our trust in God, who endows us richly with all good things to enjoy. It is not a sin to have money; it is a sin to put our TRUST in our money.

Paul concludes (as will I) with some specific instructions for those who think they are rich, or think they might want to be: I'll call my conclusion

How to Enjoy Life More ... With Less

1 . Find Satisfaction in Helping God's Peoples.

Acts 20:35 "And I was a constant example to you in helping the poor; for I remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Matthew 5:6 "Happy are those who long to be just and good, for they shall be completely satisfied."

2. Find Self-Worth in Knowing God.

Matthew 6:26 "Look at the birds! They don't worry about what to eat-they don't need to sow or reap or store up food-for your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than they are."

Romans 5:8 "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

3. Find Security In Trusting God.

Hebrews 13:5 "Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never, never fail you nor forsake you."

Matthew 6:19-21 "Don't store up treasures here on earth where they can erode away or may be stolen. Store them in heaven where they will never lose their value and are safe from thieves. If your profits are in heaven, your heart will be there too."

Philippians 4:19 "And it is God who will supply all your needs from his riches in glory because of what Christ Jesus has done for us."

Let us pray: It is all God's!

A DEEPER LOOK 8

“AT MONEY”

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Three Common Misunderstandings:

1. Having more things will make me more _____
2. Having more things will make me more _____
3. Having more things will make me more _____

FOUR WAYS TO CONSIDER MONEY:

- 1) WE ARE NOT TO _____ IT !
- 2) WE ARE NOT TO _____ IT !
- 3) WE ARE NOT TO _____ IT !
- 4) WE ARE NOT TO _____ IT !

How to Enjoy Life More ... With Less

1. Find _____ in Helping Others.
2. Find _____ in Knowing God.
3. Find _____ in Trusting God.

