



Transformed Giving

Sermon 1 of 2: Investing in the Kingdom

Date: May 5, 2013

Reading: Luke 19: 11-27

Background:

Recalling our motto verse, we continue our consideration of what it is to live a life that is being transformed by the risen Christ.

Having completed a teaching series that challenged us to think how our “new life in Christ” must transform our mind, motivation, thinking, speaking and living, we now consider how faith in Christ must affect our personal finances.

Ice-breaker:

Take a few moments to consider the blessings that we receive from God.

Study: (See **Helpful Hints**)

Read Luke 19: 11-27

1. A) What is the point(s) that Jesus is making in this parable?
B) How does this parable (an earthly story with a heavenly meaning) speak to us today?

(Remember that Jesus is making teaching points through his teaching. He is not describing a situation. Hence, we are not to read too much into the details of the parable except the teaching points. This helps us to understand that the character of the King is not meant to fully resemble God.)

2. If we accept that all we possess are actually gifts from our generous and loving God and if we accept that as a new creation in Christ, we are to honour God and live for the kingdom of God not the world, how ought this to affect our financial giving to the work of God?
3. What are some of the barriers to honouring God in our personal finances?
4. What are the consequences of failing to honour Christ in our finances – for ourselves and the kingdom of God?
5. Jesus taught that our attitude in giving financially matters. What is your attitude?

Conclusion:

In the week(s) ahead, give time to prayerfully reviewing how you honour God financially and respond accordingly.

Returning to the blessings that we acknowledge receiving from God, consider concluding by praying prayers of thanksgiving together.

Helpful Hints:

1. To understand a passage, it's always helpful to look at the context – what has happened before and the place of the scripture in the Biblical timeline.

Jesus has just restored Zacchaeus – the corrupt tax collector who was an outcast in Jewish society. He is transformed by coming to faith in Christ (19: 8-10). A new creation in Christ, Zacchaeus willingly gives his wealth to build the kingdom of God. His motivation is now to live fully “in Christ” rather than “in the world.”

From this encounter, Jesus continues on his journey to Jerusalem and the cross. The closer that Jesus gets to Jerusalem, the clearer his teaching about salvation and how his followers are to live as citizens of the kingdom of God becomes.

Verse 12 is important. Jesus knows that he will soon die, rise and ascend to heaven leaving his followers to continue the work of God – to build His kingdom. So in this parable, Jesus sows the seed in the minds of his hearers that they will be entrusted to continue his ministry after his ascension.

What's more, by inference, Jesus is asking the question what do we value? If we truly value Christ, we are to willingly surrender and devote our lives to building the kingdom of God.

This links back to Zacchaeus. How we use our money must honour God i.e what we spend our money on. Secondly, the first call on our money must be to worship God. We are to willingly surrender our finances to God. This is because money is required to further the kingdom of God. Giving, and giving willingly, is a discipleship issue.

Verse 14 is interesting. Such an incident had occurred 30 years earlier. Herod Archelaus went to Rome to be appointed ruler of the Jews. A deputation of Jews travelled to Rome to petition Caesar not to appoint Herod. Commentators suggest that Jesus included this element in the story to engage his listeners and importantly, to warn the Jews against rejecting Jesus.



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Sermon 2 of 2: Surrendered Giving

Date: May 12, 2013

Sermon Reading: Mark 12: 41-44

Background:

Jesus taught that He is interested in what is in our heart. Our actions must stem from the right motivation. Accordingly, we conclude our two week series on how we are to honour God with our money.

Ice-breaker:

You will be familiar with the saying 'It is better to give than to receive'. What do you think about this? Can you share any experiences you have had relating to this?

Study: (See **Helpful Hints**)

1. Read **Matthew 6:19-22**. This teaching from Jesus builds on teaching from God in the centuries before. Read Ecclesiastes 5: 10-15. Share your views on these verses whose message is timeless.
2. Read **Luke 12:16-21**. In our lives, how and where do people place their hope and security?
3. What is the 'right' balance between giving to God and providing for ourselves?
4. Contentment is the opposite of consumerism. How in Christ are Christians content? How ought this contentment influence our giving to God?
5. Read **Mark 12: 41-44**. This is a familiar story. Why do you think Jesus singled out the woman for praise? How does Jesus' teaching challenge us in our giving?

Conclusion:

Spend time praying for those in our community who are struggling financially at this time and for how many churches, including St John's, are reaching out to help people who are in debt.

Helpful Hints:

2. This parable challenges us to examine where we place our hope and our security.

Saving, like insurance, provides an element of protection against unpredictable events in the future. But sometimes, we can go beyond prudent provision for the future. What's more, it's possible that we can base our identity and self-worth on what we spend our money on.

How does our love for Christ reveal itself in our finances?

4. A consumerist society seeks to make our material things obsolete so that we will replace them with new items. This one premise has many consequences.

Christians are content because through faith in Christ, we have received new life in Christ – life today, tomorrow and for eternity. Life in relationship with God and life in which we are progressively transformed into the nature and image of Christ.

Given this, our motivation must be to live for God and not for the world (Matthew 6:19-22). This will influence how we handle money.

You may like to look at Paul's advice to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:1-10).

6. Witnessing the large donations made by the rich people towards the costs of the temple, Jesus intentionally chose to draw to his disciples attention to the contribution of a poor widow. She gave two mites – the least valuable coins of the day.

Through Jesus' commendation, we learn several things:

1. We are all to honour our discipleship responsibility of supporting the ministry of God by giving financially.
2. The widow gave a large proportion of her wealth – relative to the rich people. What proportion of our wealth do we give to support the work of God?
3. The inference is that the widow also gave willingly and sacrificially. Do we?
4. Verses 41 & 42 are also very interesting.

The widow gave humbly and without drawing attention to herself. We read that she put her coins in the temple treasury. In contrast, "*many rich people threw in large amounts.*" The rich drew attention to themselves by how they gave. They "*threw their coins*". What's more, their coins, being larger and more valuable, would have created a noise when they entered the Treasury chest. In contrast, the widow "*placed her coins*" and so they did not make any noise. Admittedly, the smaller coins were lighter and therefore would have not made a large sound. Nevertheless, she chose to give discreetly compared to the rich people.
