

Family Bible Series for Jan. 8: Money has its place, but it's not first place

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Money has its place, but it's not first place

- Luke 12:16-28, 31-34

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While it is true that the most important things in life are things money cannot buy, it also is true that life in the modern world requires we have the things money can buy. Food, clothing and shelter are necessary to life and only are available at some level of financial cost.

Yet many people today go beyond securing the money to meet their needs and allow the quest for the accumulation of wealth to consume their life. Since some measure of social power, influence and celebrity often accompanies wealth, many see the accumulation of wealth as a means of obtaining security.



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Yet the irony is that rather than providing more security, excess financial gain creates the need for still further security in order to protect that wealth. We spend untold millions on locks and devices designed to secure that which was supposed to provide us with security. This in turn does not provide the sense of peace which the initial temptation had promised, but an increased level of stress as the “need” for still more wealth grows.

As one might expect, the Bible has a great deal to say about money. Yet it does not, as many assume, speak of money or wealth as inherently evil. Many biblical writers and Jesus himself recognized money as necessary for meeting physical needs. The Bible does, however, teach the urgency for maintaining a proper perspective on money so the desire for more does not overtake us. In Luke 12, the writer records some of Jesus’ most significant and direct teachings concerning this proper perspective.

Luke 12:16-21

Apparently following his baptism, Jesus quickly acquired a reputation as a wise and fair teacher. He often was sought out for advice or as a mediator in personal disputes.

One day, two brothers came to him arguing about the rightful division of their father’s estate. One of the brothers was feeling slighted and demanded that Jesus force his brother to give him his fair share. Jesus used

the opportunity to warn the crowd around him against the dangers of greed.

After refusing to directly mediate the dispute, he told a parable about a farmer who had an especially good harvest. Seeing that his current barns were not large enough to store the abundance, he decided to tear down the barns and build larger ones which would be sufficient to store the excess. The farmer could then cease the hard work and rest in the knowledge that he had a surplus.

Jesus points out the folly in the story is that no one knows when they will die. If one spends his or her time and resources in accumulating wealth, what good will it do on the day of their death? They will simply leave their accumulation to someone else. God blesses us with financial prosperity to meet our needs and those of others around us. The goal is not to stockpile the money God gives and then sit back, but to use it as it is given in helping others. This is how we can become “rich toward God” and store up our treasures in heaven where we will be able to enjoy them into eternity.

Luke 12:22-28

The avoidance of the folly of accumulating wealth was only part of Jesus’ proper perspective on money. Jesus also knew the danger of accumulating wealth was that we would eventually put our trust in the money. We would see it as the means of security.

Thus the other part of Jesus’ perspective on money was to trust God to provide for the meeting of our needs. In these verses, Jesus points to several examples in nature of ways that God meets needs. He points to the birds and the fact that they do not spend their lives concerned about insuring good crops in order to store up possessions. Yet God feeds them all they need.

He then points to the example of the wildflowers which do not work to produce elaborate wardrobes of clothing, yet God dresses the fields more brilliantly than Solomon in all of his wealth.

The point here is hard to miss. God knows what we need and is in possession of infinite resources with which to meet those needs. We thus do not need to be concerned with accumulating earthly resources to meet possible future needs. We simply need to devote our energies to developing a growing relationship with God by seeking his kingdom above all else.

Luke 12:31-34

Jesus certainly must have anticipated their questions. “How can I do this in the midst of a world which constantly entices me to pursue wealth?” Jesus addresses this question by saying that in order to do this one must make a deliberate decision. One must decide to seek God’s kingdom above the kingdom of the world which is based on placing trust in things. We need not question whether we will be able to find God’s kingdom because God has given it to us.

Through the life and ministry of Jesus, he has placed it in our world here and now. As we actively seek his kingdom, all other things we need also will be given to us without the usual accompanying stress. To seek this kingdom, we simply choose to relinquish all claims to worldly possessions and to use our resources to meet the needs of others around us. Since, as Jesus has already taught us, God created and owns it all anyway, this choice is simply an acknowledgement of the unseen reality concerning all wealth.

Discussion questions

- What are some other biblical teachings concerning wealth?
- Why is the temptation to pursue the accumulation of wealth so strong?
- What are some ways that you are exercising a biblical perspective on money?

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