

# Sermon Theme: Christ's Mission is not about the Money.

Read Luke 16:1-9

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After a church service Sunday morning, as per their custom, the congregation began to file out at the usher's direction. As they approached the doors of the sanctuary, they shook the pastor's hand on the way out. During this time, it happened to be the church's occasional stewardship Sunday, which is a service that has the theme of the day focus on the Christian's giving of time, money, and talents toward the spreading of the gospel. As the pastor stood in the doorway to shake the hands of his parishioners, he noticed further back in the line a man that he didn't recognize. "A newcomer! How exciting!" thought the pastor. Eager to introduce himself to the newcomer, the pastor reached out his hand...but the newcomer didn't engage. The newcomer rather kept his distance and said in a disappointed way, "Money. All you preachers ever talk about is money." For the rest of that Sunday, the preacher had second thoughts about preaching on the topic of stewardship. "Was that man right? Do we talk about money too often? I shouldn't have even bothered with this topic and Scripture text." His wife noticed his distress. He explained the situation to her. To get him to think further, his wife said, "I wonder what Jesus would have said to that man?" She encouraged him to talk to the lay leadership for their thoughts. He called the president of the congregation, and he said, "she answered wisely. I know what I would've said, but

Jesus would be much more tactful than I. I'm sure he wouldn't say, 'you try running a church without resources.'

I truly do wonder what Jesus would say to such a statement as "all you care about is money." To reprove the misunderstanding that Jesus would never dare talk about money and so we shouldn't either, we see many accounts in Scripture where our Lord and Savior takes up the topic in a sanctified way. In one we see Jesus driving out people who were money exchangers from the temple, showing that God's house is not a house of greed. In another though we see Jesus encouraging the heart of the cheerful giver when He commended a poor widow for putting two mites, her entire wealth, in the church collection. In another we see Him telling a rich young man to sell all He has, distribute the proceeds to the poor, and follow Him to show that the rich man was a sinner who never kept the Law. In another He tells people to render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's, thus teaching financial responsibility while also getting out of a clever legal trap set by the Pharisees.

Seeing these accounts, it would be wrong to say that Jesus never talks about money, on the contrary He brings it up often. And yet, does the number of times that Jesus discusses money mean that His mission on earth is all about money? By no means. As our theme for today, we will see that Christ's Mission is not about the Money, though He doesn't denounce the use of money as a whole. Money is rather a trust, or a gift from God to help in the goal of Christ's mission—the spread of the message found in God's Word, the message that teaches the minds and hearts of many about the redemption of their souls for eternal habitations.

(We pray...)

To fully illustrate the theme that Christ's mission is not about the money, we must first grapple further with the parable for our consideration this morning. In chapter 16, Jesus turns to His disciples to give them direction in how to go about as Christians as regards money and how to use it for the good of the kingdom of God. So then, to His disciples, Jesus presents one of His more unique parables.

What makes this parable unique is that usually in His parables Jesus illustrates the relationship between God and man by having characters or objects in the parables represent one of the two parties. What makes this parable unique is that in this parable He does not do that. Perhaps in any parable or any other metaphorical story we naturally look for the character we ought to love and the character we ought to despise or root against. In this parable, you can't root for anyone. That is rather strange. To illustrate, perhaps you've read the ancient and magnificent work of medieval, English writer Geoffrey Chaucer: *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer presents many characters throughout his classic work, engraving much detail into all their design. In it you will find that none of the characters are good. Chaucer presents this satire for the sake of comedy and self-reflection on the unsavory qualities of mankind. Perhaps he did this on purpose to cultivate a guilty feeling in an attempt to drive the readers to be better! And so, Jesus, a more capable storyteller than the great Chaucer, tells a similar sort of tale. He tells a satire of sorts which presents the darkness of the children of this world and their shrewdness with their created gifts of intellect and use. And by

this parable, Jesus is telling all of Christendom to be better at using their gifts and money for the sake of the Kingdom of God. To put it another way, if the world puts so much stress into gaining more mammon and can easily operate amongst their own community of darkness, why is it so hard for Christendom to match intensity and productivity in the Kingdom of Light?

And so, here Jesus lays down His indictment. At the end of the story, what do we see? The manager, after hearing of the steward's misdeeds, commends the steward for his shrewdness. A wild end to a wild tale perhaps, but Jesus has a point to it: look at the intensity that the children of darkness put into their pocket-lining escapades. Look at how shrewdly they deal with each other, stabbing each other in the back and manipulating heart and minds to get whatever they want. They pour their hearts and souls into these clever schemes. And the sad part is that that is all they care about. They only care about this life. They only care about this world, who's going to be top dog, who is going to be number one, who is going to have the most toys and accolades. Who is going to get by? And so the steward in the parable, following in the ways of the children of darkness, lies to keep his job or else manipulates hearts and minds so that he can live on hospitality in case he is caught red handed in his cheating. So then, in our world, look at how intense mankind can put their best foot forward for the mammon of this world. Look at how they do it at the expense of each other. And all one can say about it is, "Smart play, clever move! For your work you win...perishable money."

Once again, what is Christ's Law indictment? Be better. Be better Christians, for you are being outperformed by the children of darkness. Where is this sort of intensity and use of skill and use of money in the work of the Kingdom of God? Now Jesus is not asking us to lie or manipulate hearts and minds. He is asking for the same shrewdness, that is employment of your God given gifts toward His kingdom. He wishes He saw more steps taken in helping our brothers with charitable means, with boldness for the truth, with articulate presentations of the Gospel, with teaching, with finance, with whatever else He's given. We should put forth the same intensity toward the kingdom. Yet, we don't. "All you ever talk about is money!" No, that's all the world ever talks about. Sinful man tries so hard and uses many clever schemes just to end up with money. Us Christians on the other hand, when it comes to advancing God's Kingdom, do we talk about the use of our shrewdness and finance enough?

Now with this dangerous and often times controversial topic before us, Jesus knows the danger that can come with money, hence why he calls it the "mammon of unrighteousness," and He is aware that it will go away at the end of days. Therefore, Christ's mission is not about the money. It never has been. "All you churches talk about is money," some claim. Though when the mind is led by Christ and His word, that is not true. All Christ's churches talk about is Him and Him crucified. And let's talk about that further. Money...is that what the church of God talks about? What is the purpose of church? What is the purpose of Christ? We confess that Jesus has redeemed us lost and condemned people. How? Not with gold or silver, not with

mammon, not with money, for it never was about that, nor is that valuable enough by any means to buy your souls back to the loving arms of God. What were we purchased with? Jesus Christ's holy precious blood, His innocent suffering and death. He did this so that we could be His very own, live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in eternal righteousness innocence and blessedness. We then, blood-bought children of the light, will use whatever reverent means we can to spread that message, even if it means spending money for God's sake. For what's the end game? When we get to heaven because of the ever-searching love of our Savior Jesus, imagine hearing someone saying, "I would never have heard the Gospel if that missionary never came. Thankfully, with the way paved for him, he was able to preach fully and freely the forgiving Gospel of Christ crucified for me!" Or imagine hearing "that act of kindness you showed me meant so much when you bought me clothes or a meal, etc., but what was even better was that your kindness led to me hearing the message that Christ died to take away my sins!" Money is not our end goal, fellow believers. Everlasting habitations is our end goal. Christ Jesus has purchased that for us. He promises that to us. He sets us aside for that. He has done this for all people. He preaches that to all people. Christ Jesus has forgiven you, made you children of light, and has given you His Holy Spirit so that we can go forward with shrewdness, using whatever means we have been given by our Heavenly Father to spread the message of Christ crucified so that when we reach heavenly habitations, we may see our fellow brothers and sisters in perfect glory there.

Let's now turn back to Jesus' heavenly teaching one more time. We see that He makes another comparison to the parable. In it we see that the steward cut the bill of the debtors that he may garner hospitality and obligation from them, making friends in the context of money. Christ connects the same money to our lives. What does Christ want us to do with it? Use it towards making friends for the kingdom, like the steward made friends for his own safety. Use it for the interest of God, so that when it crumbles, when the dollar bill is burned and the quarter melted at the end of time and we have nothing left but eternity, we may be commended by them, those who have heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ for their salvation from death, in everlasting habitations—Heaven. Now how does that work? Is Jesus telling us to use money to buy people into Heaven or pay them to believe in God? By no means. How then is money involved in the eternal realm of Heaven? It can be employed on this side of eternity for the furtherance of the Gospel message of Christ Jesus. Some give offerings so that churches can be built, missions can be developed, and preachers/teachers can live comfortably while they preach and teach the Gospel of Christ. Some use their money to show one on one hospitality to a friend in need. The kindness of this action is a fruit growing from the vine of faith. Of course, the hospitality of a Christian, whether using money or not, may lead the friend to hear about Christ their Savior and God.

So then, "all you guys ever talk about is money." Well, yeah, to an extent that is true. We do often talk about money, but so did our Lord Jesus. As Jesus warned, we by the grace of God's Holy

Spirit make sure that we aren't consumed by the desire for money that this world has. And also, as Jesus encouraged, we are taught to use money for the glory of God. Christ talks about money, and He does a lot, but His mission is not about the money. It never is. His mission is to save sinner. He did so by offering a perfect life on the cross in order to purchase the lives of sinners for redemption, saving them from an eternity in hell. He didn't do it with money, but with His blood. He sealed the deal for the salvation of you and everyone else in this world, and now He is having that message spread that all may know about it so that they may end up in the same eternal habitation as us. This mission then is not about the money, but it may take the use of money to put the Gospel of Jesus where it needs to be. It will take more than money, but talents of all kinds and any other sort of stewardship responsibility given to us by God. It takes a lot of effort perhaps, but let God assure you that it is never about the money. It is about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is about His love that brings us and our friends to eternal habitations.

So then let us pray that God may take our lives and let them be consecrated to Him. Let us pray that God may use our talents, wisdom, silver, gold, and whatever else we have that He has given us towards the spread of the Gospel of Jesus for the saving of many. Let us pray for these things so that when the dollar bill is burned and the quarter melted at the end of time, we may see our brothers and sisters in Christ, our friends and neighbors, in eternal habitations. Amen.



