

## Red Letters: Jesus on Money

The title of today's lesson is Jesus on Money. This is the **red letter** class where we are looking at things Jesus taught so we can put into practice the commitment we made that Jesus is Lord! People get weird when we talk about money. Please don't get weird. Money often means a talk about giving or about budgeting; those aren't my topics today. Jesus said some other things I want to look at this morning. I have only two points. The points are quite different and perhaps only one point will apply to you. So if Point 1 doesn't apply; wait for Point 2. Your turn will come. But even if one point doesn't really apply to you, let's pay attention to Jesus words so we can help and encourage each other. My two points are: (1) Guard against Greed; and (2) Food for the Family. Let me give you fair warning as we start. I have deep convictions about this. I may get a little intense. I shed tears preparing this class. I don't mean to be "heavy"; I'm not down on anyone. But Jesus was strong about the perils of money. My goal is to be sure we hear him and pay attention. To become more attuned to Jesus outlook on money.

Guard against Greed.

My first point is Guard against Greed. Turn to Luke 12. How you ever seen a family fight over an inheritance? A loved one dies, leaves behind some money and the heir squabble over it. Sad but common. Why do people do that? Jesus faced this very situation. Let's see what he had to say.

Luke 12:13-15 This man wanted his share. His brother, probably the eldest, inherited most or all of the estate. The man thought it wasn't fair. He wanted Jesus to intervene. Jesus would have none of it. Instead he issued a warning. **Be on your guard against all greed because a man's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions.** Greed is the problem. Greed is why people fight over the inheritance. What is greed? I suppose we could look in the dictionary, but Jesus gives us a definition right here in Luke 12. He says greed is the attitude that life consists of the abundance of your possessions. The more money you have, the better off you are. The more things you buy, the happier you will be. He who has the most toys when he dies, wins. That's greed according to Jesus. It's a mindset; an outlook; an attitude that shapes how we think and how we live; an attitude that becomes a lifestyle; a way of life.

How common is this attitude of greed? If you turned on the TV or the radio or you went surfing on the Internet, how long before you would see the attitude that life consists of the abundance of your possessions would come up? Not long. Commercials cater to this attitude. The most obnoxious are luxury car commercials. The guy with the snooty voice who makes you feel like a loser if you don't drive a Lexus or BMW. Beyond advertising, how many people do you know who think, talk and act as if life is mostly about the pursuit of prosperity? People at work. People in your neighborhood. Family members. It's everywhere; all around us all the time; it's virtually in the air we breathe. We have to fight this head on or it swallows us too even as disciples. Jesus said: **"Be on your guard."** Are you on your guard? Are you alert to the influence of greed in your life? Turn to Mark 7.

How bad is greed? Is greed a sin? Is it as bad as murder or adultery? What did Jesus say? Mark 7:22. Yes, a sin. Right here on the list with murder, adultery and all the rest. Do we treat greed as a serious sin? Or do we think of sexual sin or anger or bitterness as more serious? How often do we confess greed? How many times have you sat down with the scriptures to show a brother or sister their greed? I don't think we deal with greed as sin much at all. Yet we just saw how greed is all around us all the time. Bombards us daily. Are we ignoring the sin that may send more Americans to hell than any other? A sin perhaps more likely than any other to ensare us as disciples? Jesus said **Be on your guard!** I think we need to wake up! Take greed far more seriously. For the sake of the lost, for the sake of our families, for our own salvation. Turn to Luke 16.

How important is the American Dream to you? With the election of Obama, I think more people than ever believe the American Dream should be theirs. Everyone should have a shot at prosperity. A house, 2 cars, decent job. Affordable healthcare. Education for the kids. Comfortable retirement. Does that capture our imagination? Luke 16:10-15. **Can't be slaves to both God & money.** We've heard this many times, but does it really sink in? Jesus says you cannot serve God and money. God and prosperity. God and the American Dream. You can't pursue both. You have to choose. One of them has to go. [pause] Now, God may bless us with prosperity. Just living in America, we are more prosperous than most people in the world. But what is our main focus? What is our primary goal in life? What are striving for? God or prosperity?

**What is highly admired by people is revolting in God's sight.** What is highly admired by people in our society? Highly valued. Being successful; making money. Nice home Nice furniture; modern kitchen. *Better Homes & Gardens*. Nice clothes; the best fashion. Flashy car; latest electronics; biggest flattest TV; hottest phone. Greed is woven into the very fabric of our society. Christmas. Sports. Youth culture. When I was a kid the hippie movement rejected materialism and "selling out"; music of the 60s echoed these themes. Not any more. *Moss grows fat on a Rolling Stone*. Now everyone has "sold out". Today's rock & rap stars are into bling bling. Young folks are into Abercrombie or high-priced sneakers. Greed is all pervasive. Almighty Dollar.

This is revolting in God's sight. Detestable. What sin is condemned most often in the OT? Prophets railed against it. Idolatry. God hated it; considered it spiritual adultery; seeking other lovers. The NT says greed is idolatry (Eph 5:5). Worshipping created things instead of the Creator. Greed is our culture's idolatry - a religion that people bow down to and make sacrifices for, even sacrifice their children to. [pause] Do we participate even as disciples? Spend too much. Listen to the commercials all day long on TV or radio or the Internet. Expose our children to it. God finds it revolting. Detestable. In the Collier household, we cut back on Christmas this year. We mute commercials. We limit TV. I don't want the world's religion preaching at my family.

What is the antidote to greed? In I Tim 6 Paul urges us to be content. I am content; I have no desire to increase my lifestyle; it has not changed much for years. We traded down in price with our last house. I probably earn more than anyone here; maybe a lot more; yet the Colliers live below our means; I don't think our lifestyle is not that different from folks who earn a lot less than I do. I don't say that to say how great I am; but rather follow my example. We have other examples in our ministry of people who

have rejected greed. Rouses. Barrys. Hoods. Alaways. Yet I think many of us are striving for a better lifestyle; working hard to have more. We should think hard about that - where is that is coming from. Is it coming from the world? Is it greed? Are we pursuing the Lord or the American Dream? Greed pours into our lives from every direction. We have to be on our guard. See what the world highly admires is revolting to God. Detestable. Idolatry. It is sin to chase after these things; to make them the focus of our lives, our energy, our time. We need be content. Let go of greed and serve God.

### Food for the Family

Turn to Mat 24. Point # 2. Alan talked about this to the men on Thursday. In Mat 24 & Mat 25, Jesus teaches that God holds us accountable. From v3, he is speaking to his disciples, not the world. :45-47 Jesus describes **a faithful and sensible slave, whom his mater has put in charge of his household to give them food at the proper time.** This describes most of us in this room. We are God's servants and He has put us in charge of one of His households; our family. How are you doing with the household God has given you? Especially if you are the head of the household? Are you providing food at the proper time to those under your care? **That slave whom the master finds working when he comes will be rewarded.** Are you working? Providing the basic necessities. Jesus praises that kind of servant.

But then Jesus talks about a wicked servant. :48-51 **[he] starts to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards.** Taking advantage of those under his care. Pursuing his own pleasures. [I am reminded of the scene from the Lion King where the young prince Simba has run away and is living the carefree life of Akuna Matata with Pumba and Simone. His old girlfriend Nala comes looking for help and reminds him of his responsibility. He needs to go home and shoulder the leadership role he was born for.] How about us? Do we shirk our duties? Avoid working too hard? Do we blow money on our own desires even when our household budget is tight? If you are a man, do you lean on your wife financially and expect her to bear a large part of the load? I know economic times are hard. Obviously, I am not talking about someone who lost their job or has health issues where a wife may need to help out. But what about the rest of us? Are we working hard & providing? Esp. men, are we carrying the main load? Are we fulfilling our role? Jesus even talks about beatings/abuse. Financial stress and self indulgence can lead to abuse. Jesus is clear here. Harsh words for the wicked servant.

Look below Mat 25. The parable of the talents. Many of us are familiar with this parable. We usually think about using our abilities for God, but first and foremost this parable is about money. A talent in Jesus day was a sum of money. The servants were given money to handle. Different amounts according to their abilities, but how did they do? Two servants put the money to work and earned more. They were praised and rewarded. Amen. One did not. Let's read what Jesus says. :24-30. Doing nothing was not an option. **You evil, lazy slave. . . good for nothing.** Laziness is sinful. What happens if we don't put our resources to work? **To everyone who has, more will be given . . . but from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.** Use it or lose it. The money is given to the one who had 10. Taking from the poor and giving to the rich. That's the opposite of how we normally think. Not exactly the policy in Washington

right now. But Jesus isn't talking economics; he's talking about spiritual issues. Laziness & irresponsibility lead from bad to worse, but diligence & resourcefulness lead to more and more blessings from God. How are we doing with the financial resources God has given us? Are you a good employee? Are we energetic about improving our abilities? Do we use what God has blessed us with – our God given ability to work and earn money – to the fullest? Or are we passive? Leave it buried in the ground. Afraid to step out. Slack. Jesus calls that attitude lazy/evil/wicked. Laziness is sin. Jesus again describes a harsh judgment.

Do you pull your own weight or are you dependent on others? Do you look to the church or friends or family to bail you out financially? Sometimes we have the attitude we are entitled to receive help. We feel like someone owes us; we are a victim and deserve assistance. That's not what the Bible teaches. I Thess 4:11-12 says work so you won't be dependant on anyone. I think the "I deserve it" mindset sometimes comes from another sin - envy. Back in Mark 7, Jesus also lists envy among the sins. I looked up envy in a Bible dictionary - "envy is a feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing the prosperity of others." In the KJV, Mark 7 reads "**the evil eye.**" You look with animosity at those who have more than you. It is not fair. They don't deserve it. I should get mine. This attitude is sinful. How bad is envy? [pause] Envy caused the Jewish leadership to hand Jesus over to be crucified [Mat 27:18; Mark 15:10]. Not good. Let's repent of envy.

We have many great examples of diligent & resourceful people to inspire us. Todd Shultz – Gwinnett HS teacher of the year. Roxanne Galbreath and her Masters. James Martinez & his doctorate. But it is not easy. You have to work hard. Danny Doble – was it easy to get an engineering degree from GA Tech? Mary Joy – was medical school & residency easy? Diligence like this requires discipline. Perhaps growth in your character. Becoming a lawyer wasn't easy for me. My parents divorced when I was a teenager and weren't able to help me pay for school. It was hard. The worst time was the Fall of 1982. Mom sick. Interviewing for jobs. Full class load + Law Review. In the Law Library every night until they turned out the lights. I wanted to quit. I felt overwhelmed. Brothers encouraged me to stick with it. God refined my character and I persevered. God will help you too. Let's reject laziness & envy; let's become diligent and resourceful. Use what God has given us. Amen. Let's pray.