

Text: Luke 12.13-21
St Stephen's

June 10/11, 2006
Sat PM/Sun AM

Healing Money Sickness

We are in a **New Message Series**: “He Gives, We Give Back.” I called it that because giving always starts with God. Because God is a giver, the best giver in the universe. God gives; we give back. And He gives more, multiplying the gift back to you in the form of additional supply.



This is the circle of giving and giving back. It is a circle of life, a circle of joy. You could **never deserve** to get into this circle. You could **never earn** your way in. But from the moment you open your heart to Jesus and give him your life, He pulls you in. Say “He Gives, We Give Back.”

Take your Bibles and turn to Luke 12...

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

This is a **fractured family**. They are falling apart over money. Happens a lot. But Jesus gives them a surprising response...

Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” Luke 12:13-14 (NIV)

You wonder what he is doing. I think he is saying, “I didn’t come to **adjudicate family wills**; this is not why I was sent...” Now he doesn’t turn and walk away because he knows that **where there are money problems there are heart problems**. This is a family with a **heart disease**, a very special kind of heart disease. They have **money sickness**. And he was sent to heal the heart. So he says this...

Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Luke 12:15

When Jesus teaches about money sickness here, the first thing he says is ‘**watch out**’. Why? Because money sickness is often a **hidden disease**. It is almost impossible to see it in yourselves. It is the kind of disease that **blinds you**, makes you unable to see it. So Jesus says, ‘watch out’, ‘be alert’, ‘be on your guard’ – or you can easily catch it.

Jesus doesn’t say ‘watch out’ about **adultery**. He just says, don’t do it. Why doesn’t he warn us to ‘watch out’? Because adultery is **not hidden**. You know you are committing adultery when you are committing adultery. You are not blind to it.

But **money disease** is different. It **blinds you**. Have you ever noticed that **no one thinks they are greedy**? No one has ever come to me and said, “Pastor I have a problem with greed.” Lots of people have come to me about relationship diseases. Because they are not hidden; when you have a relationship disease, you know it.

I think this is one of the reasons why **Jesus speaks 10X** about money for every one time he speaks about adultery. Not because greed is so **much more destructive** than adultery, but because it is so **much more hidden** than adultery. **Greed is very easy to see in other people but very hard to see in yourself**. Everyone thinks they are living a modest middle class lifestyle. No one thinks they spend too much on themselves. So Jesus says, “Watch out”.

‘*Watch out*’ means **be attentive**, be on your guard, stay alert, and **ask questions**. Like, “Do I really need all this stuff? Couldn’t I be more generous? Couldn’t I live more lightly?”

These weeks we are following a bible study written by Pastor Randy Alcorn, a small book called: **The Treasure Principle**. We have bought 400 copies of it, and we sold 300 last week. You can get yourself a copy and read it in your family or by yourself or in your small group. It’s available for “*A Buck a Book*” in the lobby after worship. One section in this book is a series of **31 prayer-questions** coupled with **31 passages of scripture**, one for each day of the month, that are exactly the kind of thing that would help you get over your money blindness and stay alert. I am going to be **using them for my own devotions over the next month**. Would you get a copy and do them with me? It’s a great way to ‘watch out’.

Jesus goes on to tell **a story about money sickness** in which he give us some of the things to look for when we are watching out. Some **warning signs**. I've got **four** of them here; here is the first...

Warning Signs of Money Sickness

Money's Potential is Overestimated

We think money brings **security** and **well-being**, **happiness** and **value** to our lives. But it is **rarely true**. The man in Jesus' parable had what we would call a bumper year, a windfall profit, and was suddenly fabulously wealthy. Maybe he won the lottery. And he asked himself, what should he do? Well, he decided to build bigger barns and store it all up for himself.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.'

Luke 12:19 (RSV)

He thinks storing up his money for himself will bring security, value, and pleasure to his life. But he has **overestimated money's power**.

Money can certainly help. But **isn't it true that money is virtually powerless to bring the things that you value most in life?** We think money will make us attractive, important, and gain the approval of our peers. We believe it brings power and control and influence to our lives. But it can't do it.

When I was 13, w. not too many friends - my parents got a **pool** – suddenly I had lots of friends, but I was never sure what was really going on – I had no idea whether anyone liked me for me or for our pool. And if you decide to use that strategy for gaining friends, it can turn you into someone no one likes.

Money can't make real friendships, and often it ruins them. Money can't prevent unexpected tragedies, heal broken relationships, prevent crippling sickness or in the end, hold off death. It can't give you love or faith or hope beyond this life. And in fact, money can even make life more difficult because **money always makes sharp demands** on your life and your time and your heart. It is easy to overestimate money's power. If you are doing that, it's **a sign** of money disease. Watch for it!

Another sign...

Your Planning is Short Term

This guy thought he was set for many years to come...

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.’” Luke 12.20

Randy Alcorn has a great phrase for what this guy was doing. He sums it up in one of the “**Treasure Keys**” he highlights in his book...

**Treasure Key: I SHOULD LIVE NOT FOR THE DOT
BUT FOR THE LINE.**

*From the dot – our present lives on earth – extends a
line that goes on forever, which is eternity in heaven.*

A great **story** is told about **Winston Churchill**, that in his later years a young officer fresh out of the military schools came to seek the advice of the old & wise prime minister. Churchill invited him to share his plans...

Well, I am seeking a commission in the army...

And then?

I would like to marry and have a family and make a career in the Armed services

And then?

I don't know... I suppose that I would want to see my children through college and into a start on their careers

And then?

Well, I haven't given it much thought, but I guess that I should think about provision for retirement...

And then?

Silence...

Young man, you have not thought it through enough.

Have you thought it through enough? If you haven't, it's a **sign** of money disease. The incredible thing is, **Jesus tells us repeatedly** that what you do with your money now, how you invest it, how you use it, how you give it – or whether you hoard it – will **affect your future**, your eternal future. Don't live for the dot. Live for the line!

A third sign...

Getting Overwhelms Giving

Twice in this story Jesus uses a phrase to describe this man's motive. He was in it for himself...

“Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself...”

Luke 12:20-21 (NIV)

You know, he didn't struggle over his decision; **it was easy** for him to spend it on himself. Because it is **always easy to spend more on what you really value. That's the sign.** Here's the test. You just got an extra \$10000. Where is it easy to put it? That is your treasure! Easy to go to the mall and shop for clothes? Your wardrobe is your treasure! Easy to put an addition on your house? Maybe your house is your treasure. Is it easy to sock it away in a savings account – maybe your savings account is your treasure!

Q. Is it ever easy to give it away for God's purposes? When you have just a little extra, does your heart ever go to those who have less? When you have a lot, do you ever think of how much more you could do to further God's agenda? If getting always overwhelms giving, it's a sign of money disease.

One more sign...

Your Life is Engulfed by Stress

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear... For the pagan world runs after all such things...”

Luke 12:22,30 (NIV)

Say, 'runs after' ... That's how too many of us live. **Spending everything, giving little, saving nothing and running hard.** Running after money. Stressed about money. Worried about money. And more money doesn't solve the problem. Still running, still stressed, still worried. **It's a sign** of money sickness...

Well, if you know you have money sickness, what do you do?

God's Healing for Money Sickness

Jesus ends his story with a strange phrase.

“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.”

Luke 12:21 (NIV)

You want to be 'rich toward God.' But what does that mean? I think Jesus is asking the question of **what your treasure is.** Of what you really value to **secure**

your life and **resource** your life and **supply** your life. Of what you are depending on for your beauty and your well being and your strength.

You have a **couple of choices**. You can choose **money**. Or you can choose **God**. Maybe you have been with me through this conversation today and **you know you have some money sickness**. You see the signs. And you know it is because you have **made money your treasure**. But you have **overestimated** this treasure, and it has **dissappointed** you. Maybe it's even **controlling** you. And you don't like it.

If you know that, you **need a new treasure**. That is how this disease gets healed. You **take your old treasure** and you give it to Jesus and ask him to teach you how to manage it. And you **make him your real treasure**.

If you do this, it will make you afraid. Look at verse 32 later in this chapter...

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Luke 12.32

I want to remind you **what it cost Jesus to make that announcement**. It cost him **the cross**. **On the cross** he gave everything for us. He gives up everything, his very life to bring you into his kingdom. Why? Because **you are far more valuable** to him than silver and gold.

Stand under the cross and look up at him. And then look at your wallet and then look back at him. Think hard and deeply about it.

Both ask for your **confidence**. Which will never fail you?

Both claim to bring **strength and power and abundant life**. Which will?

Both claim to **be there** when you need them. Which really is?

Both would **claim the deepest affections and loyalty** of your heart. Which do you trust?

He says, do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is happy to give you the kingdom. So come to me. I have given everything **for you** and promise to give all things **to you**. Trust me. I will not fail. **Come to me and follow me and learn to give**, give all you have and all you are for my purposes in this world. And I myself will be your treasure. I myself will be your supply. I myself will be your reward. And you will be rich, abundantly, overflowing with real treasure that will last.