



## **Jesus & Money**

### ***The Story of Scripture – Part 26***

Last week we looked at Jesus and marriage in a way that has led to all kinds of spouses and couples reaching out for help. Let me encourage you to continue to do that as you walk through struggles in marriage which are inevitable in a world of sin. If there's any way we can help you, please reach out. I hope this will transform our marriages in the days ahead.

Today we're going to look at Jesus and money in a way that I pray will transform our lives in the days ahead when it comes to money—and really, for all of eternity. We're about to read the story of a rich man who approached Jesus asking Him about eternal life. But before we read it, I want to ask us to open our hearts to what God has to say to us today. When we hear the word “rich,” we usually think about those people who have more than we do. “That person is rich.” This means we rarely perceive ourselves as rich, because we can always think of even richer people.

There are varying levels of riches around us and varying levels of riches in the church for that matter. But we all need to realize that if we have clean water, sufficient food and clothes, a roof over our heads at night, access to medicine, a mode of transportation—even if it's public—opportunity for work and the ability to read a book, then relative to billions of people in the world, we are very rich.

Economics professors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert observe how the standard of living essentially common among us is extremely uncommon in human history. In their words, “At no time in history has there ever been greater economic disparity in the world than at present.” Speaking specifically about present day Americans, they write, “By any measure, we are the richest people ever to walk on planet Earth.”

My goal in sharing that is not to make us feel guilty, but simply to open our eyes to the reality that when most people in the world—even in the history of the world—hear the word “rich,” they picture us. Me. You. Even average, ordinary, middle class working Americans are an extremely wealthy aristocracy in a world surrounded by billions of extremely poor neighbors.

Even as there are different and varying economic levels in our gathering today, let's realize that for the most part, we are extremely rich. This means that this story has particularly significant implications for our lives—for my life and for yours. So let's read this story in Mark 17 with open hearts,

and then I want to dive with you into ten truths that we learn from it about Jesus and money that are very different from the way we are prone to think. The Bible says:

*<sup>17</sup> And as [Jesus] was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>18</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" <sup>20</sup> And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." <sup>21</sup> And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." <sup>22</sup> Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

*<sup>23</sup> And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" <sup>24</sup> And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>26</sup> And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."*

*<sup>28</sup> Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you."*

*<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first."*

Let's pray.

God, we pray that You would help us, in a very materialistic world, to hear what You are saying to us today. I've been praying for this in my own life, and I've been praying for this in every single person who has gathered in various settings in greater Washington. Please, God, help us to hear You. Even this last verse we just read tells us You turn things totally upside down.

So we pray, turn our minds totally upside down. Help us to see ways where our thinking is of this world and not of Your Word. Transform our thoughts and lives; give us courage to respond today however You are leading us to respond. I pray this over every single one of our lives. Speak to us now. Supernaturally do a work in our hearts in the next few minutes, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **1. Jesus' call to salvation demands radical surrender.**

Let's be honest here. According to contemporary standards, Jesus would have just failed a personal evangelism class. Picture this. A guy comes running up to Him and bows down. He's eager, he's young, he's rich, he's intelligent and he's influential. This is a prime prospect. Just imagine, if this guy becomes a follower of Jesus, we can get him on the circuit and start sharing his story. Think of all he could do. We have to get this guy in.

He's asking, "How can I be saved?" That's what this text is all about: eternal life, salvation, entrance into God's Kingdom. These terms are used six times in this passage, all of them synonymously. Jesus says to him, "Here are the commandments. Go sell all you have, give it to the poor, then come follow Me. This is eternal life." Huh. Not, "Hey, man, pray a prayer, say these words, then you're in."

Jesus apparently has no clue how to close the sale. In what is a classic example of letting a big fish get away, the man leaves. Why? Because he was not willing to surrender his possessions to Jesus. Did you hear the man's language? He called Jesus a "Good Teacher." Apparently, this man was willing to have Jesus as a Teacher to respect, but not as a Lord to obey.

I give you a picture of so much of what passes as Christianity today. So many have come into so-called Christianity through an invitation to say some words or pray a prayer, but have never been confronted with the reality that Jesus is the Lord before Whom we lay down our lives—including our possessions. I fear that many, even in this gathering today, are okay with looking to Jesus as a Teacher to respect, but not as a Lord to obey—and they call that Christianity. But do not be fooled. According to the Bible, you are not a Christian if you are not looking to Jesus as Lord.

The most basic Christian confession is in Romans 10:9: "*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus...*" is a respectable Teacher? No, "*...is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*" It's all over what we're reading in the Gospels right now. In Luke 9:23, Jesus says, "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*" So He is telling them, "Die to yourself and follow Me—wherever and however I lead you, no matter what it costs."

Luke 14:33: "*Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*" I ask you, based on the words straight from Jesus' mouth, do you die daily to all you are and renounce all you have to declare allegiance to Jesus as Lord of your life? This is what it means to be a Christian, a follower of Christ. For some today, you have spent years—maybe decades—playing games with Jesus. Today is the day to declare allegiance to Jesus as Lord.

## **2. Jesus' call to salvation involves radical commands.**

Jesus' call to salvation demands radical, total surrender, knowing that it involves radical commands. When you look at Mark 10:21, you see five commands in one verse: go, sell, give, come, follow. That is loaded! There are two common errors when it comes to these commands in this passage.

The first error is when people try to universalize them, basically saying that every follower of Jesus has been commanded to sell everything they have and give it to the poor. But we know that's not the case. At least a couple disciples in this passage, who we know had abandoned much to follow Christ, still had a home and likely still had boats or some kind of material support. Obviously following Jesus does

not mean you can no longer own private property or possessions or have a job. So many of us breathe a sigh of relief at that point. We think, “Okay, good. We don’t have to sell everything we have and give it to the poor.” But be careful, because that leads to the second common error.

Some people universalize these commands and try to apply them to everyone, but then other people minimize these commands. Basically they think, “Jesus would not call us to do this.” But in reality, if this story teaches us anything, it teaches us that Jesus does call some people to sell everything they have and give it to the poor. In other words, Jesus could say this to any one of us. In fact, one particular quote I read from one commentator on this passage said, “That Jesus did not command all His followers to sell all their possessions gives comfort only to the kind of people to whom He would issue that command.” So if you are comforted, be careful! But we are so prone to minimize Jesus’ commands. We’ll take a passage like this and we’ll say, “Well, what Jesus really meant was that this man needed to be willing to sell all that he had.” The only problem with that interpretation is it’s not true. If that’s what Jesus meant, it’s what Jesus would have said.

This is where we need to be really careful not to adjust Jesus’ teaching to fit what we think. We’ll do that here and with other passages like I read from Luke 9 and Luke 14. We’ll say, “What Jesus really meant was...” and this is where we really need to pause. This is where we are subtly giving in to a temptation to take the Jesus of the Bible and twist Him into a version of Jesus we’re a little more comfortable with. We create a nice, middle-class, northern Virginia, southern Maryland version of Jesus Who doesn’t mind our materialism, Who would never call us to give everything away, a Jesus Who wants us to be balanced, to avoid dangerous extremes. For that matter, we think He’s a Jesus Who wants us to avoid danger altogether. He’s a Jesus Who brings us comfort and prosperity, as we live out a nice Christian spin on the American dream.

But do we realize what we’re doing? We are molding Jesus into our image. We are making Jesus into someone who looks like us and thinks like us. Without even knowing it, we’re now in real danger. As a people who have molded Jesus into our image, now when we gather together on a Sunday, sing our songs and lift up our hands in worship to this version of Jesus we’ve created in our image, the reality is we’re not actually worshiping the Jesus of the Bible. Instead, we are worshiping ourselves—and we are calling it Christianity.

We cannot minimize Jesus’ commands. This is the Jesus we follow and His commands often go totally against the grain of the way this world thinks and the way we are wired to think. So let’s put these two truths together and look at a question we all need to ask. Do you, right where you are sitting, declare allegiance to Jesus as Lord of your life, such that you will do everything He says to do and give away whatever He tells you to give away?

When it comes to money specifically, are you looking to Jesus for some advice in your life or are you looking to Jesus for sole leadership of your life? There is a significant difference. Will you follow Him when His Word goes against everything our affluent culture tells you to do? Jesus' call to salvation demands radical surrender and it involves radical commands. Please don't miss this, because some of you are ready to tune me out. For some of you, all it took was point one. By the way, if I'm saying anything that does not square with the Bible, then please tune me out.

I think about a conversation I had with a successful doctor in the church. He looked me in the eye and said, "Pastor, I think you're going too far with the things you're saying." Then he said, "But you're not going any farther than what Jesus said, so I need to figure out what needs to change in my life." Just read these verses and ask, "Does what I am saying square with what Jesus is saying? Or maybe on a deeper level, does my life square with what Jesus is saying?"

### **3. Jesus calls us to give sacrificially to the poor because He loves us.**

Mark 10:21 includes radical commands for this rich man which can almost seem cold when they come out of Jesus' mouth. It's like He goes right to the jugular. It can seem hard to us. But don't miss the beauty of this passage. Look at the very beginning of verse 21: "*Jesus, looking at him, loved him...*" He loved him. Don't miss this! Jesus loves rich people, like you and me, enough to tell us the truth.

This is so important to hear. Jesus is not giving this rich man an ultimatum because He doesn't care about him, because Jesus wants the worst for him, because Jesus wants to make his life hard and miserable. No, Jesus is giving this rich man these commands because He wants what is best for him. O God, help us believe that surrender and obedience to Jesus are for our good. Jesus demands radical surrender and gives radical commands—why? Because Jesus loves you and me. He knows better than we do what is best for our lives.

God, free us from pride and thinking we know better than You Who created us what is best for our lives. Open our hearts to hear.

We were reading Luke 12 earlier this week and I was so struck as I read it—you've got to see this. In Luke 12:33, Jesus says, "Sell your possessions and give to the needy." He doesn't just say this to one guy. This is not an isolated incident. He says this to all His disciples in Luke 12. But then I want you to listen to what He says right before this. I could not get over this verse this week, Luke 12:32. Jesus says, "*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" What a verse! Let's realize how packed that verse is.

In one verse, you have three pictures of God in your life. Jesus just said God is a Shepherd Who protects you. We are His little flock. Two, God is a Father Who loves us; Who takes pleasure in loving you. And three, God is a King Who promises us a Kingdom. His Kingdom!

In light of the fact that the God of the universe is your Shepherd Who protects you, He's your Father Who loves you and He's your King Who has an eternal Kingdom prepared for you, therefore sell your possessions and give to the poor. Oh, don't miss this. The key to overcoming materialism is believing that Jesus and His plans for you are so much better than the possessions of this world. Jesus is better than money. He's better than more things, than nicer and newer clothes, than bigger and better possessions. Jesus is better. Believe this!

Jesus calls you to give sacrificially, not because He hates you, but because He loves you. God, help us to hear this. He's not telling you this because He wants your life to be miserable, but because He wants your life to be good. Jesus wants a life for you that is better than the best things this world has to offer, if only you will trust His love. That's the question in this third truth, right? What do you trust to satisfy you more: God in the flesh or the stuff of this world?

God, help us choose wisely. Jesus calls us to give sacrificially to the poor because He loves us.

#### **4. The gospel, not guilt, is the primary reason we give sacrificially to the poor.**

Jump down to Mark 10:23, where Jesus says, *"How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"* Now, that verse should reverberate throughout this church. Jesus just said, "It's hard to get to heaven from this location. From the capital of one of the most affluent countries in the world, it is hard to get to heaven from here. That's what Jesus just said. It's really hard.

Jesus says the same thing again in verse 24; then in verse 27 He says it's impossible—with man, but not with God. This means the life of a true follower of Jesus who, at least in this case, gives everything he has for the poor—that kind of surrender and obedience—is not natural. It is supernatural. It comes from God. That is the primary point of Mark 10—don't miss it. The primary point of this passage is that we need new hearts. Nothing we're seeing in God's Word today comes naturally, right? The world thinks what we're talking about right now is crazy. Some, maybe many of you who are here today, think this is crazy, especially if you're not a Christian, or you're a nominal Christian—a Christian in name only. But that's kind of the point. Everything changes when God takes hold of a heart.

When God opens a person's eyes to the gospel and Who Jesus is, everything changes. God opens our eyes to the reality that we have all rebelled against the perfect, holy, good and just God Who created us. We all deserve eternal judgment for that rebellion which we need to realize and know that God loves us and has made a way for us to be saved from judgment and brought back into relationship with Him. We need to realize God has come to us in the person of Jesus, Who laid down His perfect life on a cross to pay the price for all our sin and rebellion against God, then Jesus rose from the dead in victory over sin. When we realize the depth of God's love, we renounce our sin and love for the things of this world over

our love for God. We announce our allegiance to Jesus as Lord, God forgives us of our sins and fills us with His Spirit, then we have a new heart—the very heart of Jesus Himself!

So what happens? We want to give to the poor. We don't have to be cajoled into sacrificial giving, which is sadly what so many pictures of Christian giving revolve around today—manipulating and manufacturing giving by making people feel guilty for all they have. No, it is not guilt that drives us—it's the gospel. It's Jesus inside us. When Jesus' heart is our heart, we don't have to be cajoled into sacrificial giving. No, sacrificial giving just makes sense to us.

So see that our greatest need is new hearts. All across this room, we need the heart of Jesus. We need God to change our hearts, so that we want to give to the hurting and the poor. And we want to give, not because we feel guilty, but because we are overwhelmed with the love of God for us and for those in need. This is an other-worldly kind of giving that cannot be manufactured by man. We need God to give us new hearts.

## **5. We need to understand our use of money and possessions in the context of redemptive history.**

Now, this is a loaded outline point. You may wonder, “What does that mean?” I'm glad you asked. This is so important. When we hear this conversation between Jesus and the disciples, we need to put ourselves in the disciples' shoes. When Jesus says it is difficult for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God, the Bible says the disciples are amazed at His words. They're shocked. Jesus says it again in 24-25, then in verse 26 it says the disciples were “*exceedingly astonished.*” They were amazed, but now they're exceedingly astonished. That's like ratcheting it up a few levels. Which begs the question why? Why were they so amazed—exceedingly astonished—by what Jesus said here? The answer goes in part back to Old Testament history.

Think about this with me. We've read it over the last six months. Throughout the Old Testament, God promised to bless His people materially for their obedience to Him. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David—over and over again. I'll give you one summary example of this from Deuteronomy 28:1-6. God says to His people:

*And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.*

Did you hear that? God was promising to bless His people with abundant material prosperity for their obedience. This continues. Just think about the extravagant wealth promised David and given to Solomon. Now think about why. It was because God was establishing His people in a physical land, as a nation, with a temple that was constructed and designed to display God's glory among other nations—among “all the nations.”

Now imagine in Mark 10 a rich man, who has strictly followed God's law ever since he was a kid, saying, “What must I do to inherit the Kingdom?” and Jesus says, “Sell everything you have and give it to the poor.” The disciples are shocked. Why? Because they thought obedience to God led to acquiring possessions in the world. But Jesus just said that obedience to God in this man's life meant not acquiring possessions but abandoning possessions.

If you look at the story of the Bible, you realize this passage represents a major shift in redemptive history—the story of God bringing salvation and redemption to the world. From this point on—really from the point Jesus comes in the New Testament—material reward on this earth for spiritual obedience will never again be promised to God's people. Search the entire New Testament and you will not find any promise of abundant material possessions in this world for spiritual obedience to God.

This is so important; please follow this. When we are reading our Bibles, we need to see significant shifts that happen from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Think about this in numerous ways. In the Old Testament, they sacrificed animals for their sins. In the New Testament, Jesus is our perfect, once-and-for-all, full and final Sacrifice for our sins. In the Old Testament, the temple was the special dwelling place of God's Spirit. In the New Testament, God's Spirit dwells in every single believer. We are the temple.

In the Old Testament, God was working through one nation. In the New Testament, God is working through His churches that are gathering and multiplying among all nations. In the Old Testament, they gave money to build a temple for the display of God's glory. In the New Testament, we give money to the church for the spread of God's glory in the nations. Think about how we miss this. We oftentimes view church as a building, which misses the whole point of the New Testament. When churches have building campaigns to raise money for a building, then we'll use Old Testament passages. “Bring your money to the temple so we can build a building.” But nowhere in the New Testament are we ever told to construct a building.

This is not saying buildings are bad; we are obviously enjoying buildings in different places today. But the church is not a building—the church is a people. And yes, while we're thankful for a building to gather and worship in, this is no temple. Where you're sitting is no temple. This is why our priority is not on having great buildings, but on building a great people who are caring for one another



like family, growing together in Christ and sharing Christ with a world in need around us. That's what the church is about. We can't miss the shift here.

From the moment Jesus comes, search the entire New Testament and you will not find any promise of material possessions in this world for spiritual obedience to God. Instead, you will find the opposite. You'll find commands and exhortations to give, to sell and to sacrifice possessions in this world. This is so significant, because so many Christians, even entire denominations and networks of churches around the world, are still operating under an Old Testament view of wealth and possessions, teaching that God blesses our obedience by giving us stuff in this world. But Jesus never once teaches that. We find it nowhere in the New Testament. Instead, we find something wonderfully, radically different.

It's not that God had messed up in the Old Testament and changed His mind in the New Testament. It's all part of His big picture plan. The Old Testament is pointing us to a much greater plan of a people living and giving and sacrificing for the spread of God's glory among the nations—and you and I get to be a part of that plan.

God, help us not to miss this shift that happened 2,000 years ago. God, help us live according to Your plan to spread Your glory, not through extravagant standards of living in this world, but through extravagant standards of giving for this world.

That is a very different way to live. It's even a very different way to live from that which is sold as Christianity in many parts of the world—including many parts of our country.

## **6. We desperately need to realize the deceptive, dangerous, deadly nature of desire for money and possessions.**

Again, let's just be honest. Most people in our culture and in the church don't believe Jesus in this passage. When we hear Jesus say that wealth can be a barrier to entering the Kingdom, we just don't believe it. We have so convinced ourselves that wealth, affluence, comfort and possessions are His blessings. That's the blessing category. But Jesus just said here in Mark 10 that wealth can be a barrier to God—a barrier to what matters most in life.

Now, I want to be clear. The Bible doesn't teach here or anywhere else that wealth in and of itself is bad. The Bible doesn't teach that money or wealth or possessions are evil. But the Bible does give us strong warnings like this one. Just hear 1 Timothy 6:6-10:

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

This is a picture of living simply. The old adage says there are no U-Hauls behind hearses. God, help us hear these words and heed Your warning.

Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare. It's a trap, the Bible says. The constant desire for more and nicer and newer and better is like drinking sea water. If you're thirsty, you look at sea water and think, "That would be good for me." You don't realize that sea water has a high concentration of salt, so the more you drink, the more thirsty you become. The more you drink, the sooner you dehydrate. And if you keep drinking, you will get headaches, dry mouth, low blood pressure, a rapid heart rate, then eventually you'll become delirious, go unconscious and you will die. It's amazing. You see water and you think, "That's what I need." But as you drink it, unbeknownst to you, you are killing yourself.

This is a picture of materialism. The more you go after money and possessions, the more they will kill your soul—and you won't realize it's happening. God is saying materialism is deceptive, dangerous and ultimately deadly—which is not too strong of a word. God just said in His Word that the desire for riches plunges people into ruin and destruction.

And that's just the desire for riches. What about when you have what you want? What other words does He have to give us? The Bible is telling us to give away riches and possession, not just out of concern for others but out of concern for ourselves. Hear God's kind, loving warning to us today: desire the wealth of this world and it will destroy you, yet the whole time you will think you are okay. God says, "Run. Don't walk. Run from the desire for riches and the love of money. Run, run, run!" We need to realize the deceptive, dangerous and deadly nature of desire for money and possessions. That's the sixth, totally countercultural truth.

God, help us to believe these things.

## **7. Jesus doesn't want to take away our pleasure; He wants to satisfy us with His treasure.**

Number seven, Jesus doesn't want to take away our pleasure. Instead, He wants to satisfy us with His treasure. This is so good. Back to Jesus' words to this rich man here in Mark 10. Listen closely: "*Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.*" We've been talking like this passage is a call to sacrifice, which in obvious ways it is, but not ultimately, right? Did you hear what Jesus just said? He is not calling this man away from treasure; Jesus is calling him to treasure. There's almost a tinge of self-serving motivation here. Jesus is saying, "Give away, then get something better." Jesus is not saying, "Stop caring about treasure." Jesus is saying, "Start caring about real treasure." Be smart.

What are you going to live for—short-term treasures that you cannot keep or long-term treasures that you cannot lose? When you put it this way, you realize that materialism is not just deceptive, dangerous and deadly, but here's another D: materialism is dumb.

Jim Elliot left behind all kinds of stuff this world has to offer and lost his life sharing the gospel with a remote tribe. He said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." This is the most basic investment principle. If you have a stock that will yield a little treasure for a little time and you have a stock that will yield a lot of treasure for all time, which do you invest in?

God, help us apply simple financial sense to what matters most in our lives. Help us not to be foolish with that which matters the most, but to be smart.

Jesus is calling us to treasure—and not just in heaven. Don't miss that Jesus says, "Come, follow Me." Jesus doesn't just call us to treasure in heaven. Jesus calls us to treasure in Him. Yes! For all who are truly followers of Jesus, we want Jesus more than we want stuff. This is the curse of what's called the "prosperity gospel" that's being sold all over America and all over the world today. It says, "Come to Jesus and get wealth. Come to Jesus and get good health. Come to Jesus and get this and this and this." No, no, no! Don't miss the point. We come to Jesus to get Jesus. That's the point. He's better than all the best things this world has to offer. He says, "Come, follow Me." Can you answer, "Yes, I'll let go. I want You"?

## **8. Jesus desires to free us from bondage to ourselves and our stuff.**

How dumb is the contrast here? This man's response in verse 22 is that he leaves Jesus sorrowful. What a sad picture. Here's a man walking away from heavenly treasure while he's holding on to little earthly trinkets. He's walking away, full of sorrow, not realizing he's turning his back on the only One Who can bring him eternal joy. Don't let that be you.

I say to every single person here today, whether you call yourself a Christian or not, don't let verse 22 be your life by walking away from the only One Who can give you life. Don't let verse 22 be you. Let verse 28 be you where Peter said, "*See, we have left everything and followed you.*" Jesus gives him promises of eternal joy. Oh, be free. Be free from bondage to self and bondage to stuff. Here's the good news today: you can be free from the rat race of northern Virginia, southern Maryland and DC. You do not have to live with the constant, unending quest for satisfaction with more stuff in this world and things that will inevitably let you down. For that matter, people will let you down in this world that will let you down.

I was talking with a retired general this week who had climbed the military ladder, who would have called himself a Christian, but the truth was Jesus was not Lord of his life—this world and all it offered was. He realized this, so turned from this world and trusted in Jesus as Lord. Now, you should see

his face and listen to him talk. He is experiencing true life. Oh, retirees, realize that the possessions and achievements of this world do not satisfy like Jesus does. Young adults, don't wait until later to realize this.

I was talking with two young adults in their 20s this past week. Both of them found themselves climbing the corporate ladder, getting high on it, living it up in this world, but they realized it was leaving them empty inside. Then they met Jesus and everything changed. God is saying to every person right now, "I have come to give you satisfaction that saves you from the endless empty quest for it in this world."

## **9. The cost of discipleship is great, but the cost of non-discipleship is far greater.**

Does it cost to follow Jesus? It absolutely does! It costs everything you have. But just ask what if you don't follow Jesus in total surrender, like we're talking about here. What's the cost there? It's far, far greater. The cost of not following Jesus, of not radically surrendering to Him and radically obeying Him, will be great.

Many people are physically poor—hungry, oppressed and enslaved right now—and will continue in need, while supposed Christians pursue more possessions and call it Christianity. That cost will be great for many people who are spiritually poor, who are without Christ and who will continue on toward a Christ-less eternity—many without ever hearing the name of Jesus—while we live comfortable Christian lives on earth. That cost is great for many people, but the cost is also great for us, if we look at what we're leaving on the table.

Listen to Jesus' words in Mark 10:29-30: "*Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold...*" Circle that word, "hundredfold." Jesus says, "In Me, you will have a hundred times more—now." You don't have to wait. It's a hundredfold return now. That doesn't sound costly. That sounds compelling.

I think about interviewing Dr. Z and Naomi a few weeks ago in Ethiopia, sharing how they were on an extravagant vacation in Ethiopia when God opened their eyes to orphans in need and Jesus' call to care for them. Their lives changed in ways that have literally saved countless children's lives and created a coalition of churches caring for orphans in the capital of Ethiopia. I asked them, "Do you miss your old life?" They smiled and said, "Not for a second."

## **10. Our lives will count on earth only when our eyes are fixed on heaven.**

Jesus has something better for us in this world—better than what this world says is best—if we will trust Him. This leads to number ten, our lives will count on earth only when our eyes are fixed on heaven. Now and then, Jesus says, "*...in the age to come eternal life.*" Don't miss this. We've just walked

through some crazy, radical ideas about money—at least according to our world and sadly, even according to the Christian world many of us have grown comfortable in. But don't miss this. The key to sacrificial giving and living like this is realizing that this world is not our home. If only we would realize that this is not our home.

Let me illustrate. Imagine with me for a moment that your home is in Australia and you've come to visit the United States for a month, where you live in a hotel that has everything you need. Imagine there's a rule that you can't take anything back to Australia on your flight home. You can't carry anything back with you but money. You can earn money in America and you can send deposits back to the bank in Australia. Would you take any money you make and buy expensive furnishing and extravagant wall hangings to put up in your hotel room? Would you focus on making that hotel room as immaculate as possible? I'm guessing you wouldn't. And why not? Because your time here is so short. You know you can't take any of it with you; it's a hotel room for one month! So if you're wise, you cover your needs here, but you don't invest money in your hotel room. You send it on ahead.

I give you a picture of your life in this world. See it? You are only here for a little while. The longest amount is 70, 80, 90 years? That's not very long though when you think about ten trillion years and eternity will have just begun. So during these short days here—it's like a mist, the Bible says in James 4:14—you are bombarded with the temporary. Get stuff in this world. Make yourself comfortable in this world. But God, Who knows all things and knows what is best for you and me, never, ever tells us this. He actually tells us the opposite. God says, "Fix your eyes on another world. Don't store up treasure on earth—it won't last. Store up treasure in heaven—that will last." So brothers and sisters, let's take our focus off the hotel room. It's just a temporary room.

In an instant, you and I are going to stand before God to give an account for how we've spent the time, money, gifts and resources we had here. When that moment comes, we will not wish we had acquired more stuff or lived more comfortably here. We will wish we had given more of our lives and the abundance of our resources, making them count for the spread of God's glory and love in a world of urgent need—starting right around us and extending far from us. Let's not waste our lives. Let's not miss what matters. Ultimately, let's not miss Jesus.

Will you bow your head with me? I just want to ask the question that we asked earlier in this text. Right where you're sitting, with your head bowed, do you declare allegiance to Jesus as Lord of your life, such that you will do everything He says to do, give away whatever He tells you to give away? I'm guessing there are some, maybe many, who have come here today and when you walked in here, the answer was no. If you were honest, the answer was no.

But right now, in this moment, in your heart right where you're sitting, I want to give you an opportunity to say, "Yes, I declare allegiance to Jesus as Lord of my life today." I've prayed that

supernaturally God would bring many people to this point today, so that today you are saying, “I declare allegiance to Jesus as Lord. My life is His. Save me from my sin and myself, leading me as the sole leadership of my life.”

With heads bowed all across this church, I just want to invite you to respond to this truth. If today you came in here and Jesus was not Lord of your life, but now you are saying, “I declare allegiance to Him as Lord,” I just want to give you an opportunity physically to say that before God by raising your hand right where you are. As people have their heads bowed and eyes close, between you and God, if you would say, “Today I am declaring Jesus is Lord of my life,” would you just lift up your hand where you are, just before God? Praise God!

O God, You see these hands raised before You. They’re not walking away from You; not doing verse 22 and walking away with possessions in hand. Instead, they’re laying possessions down and saying, “You’re Lord. Take my life. Lead me and guide me and use everything in my life.” God, please hear their prayers. Show Yourself as the Savior from sin and self and all the endless empty quests for satisfaction in this world. We pray that they would know life in You, life through surrender to You today. And not just today, but in the age to come, forever and ever. I praise You for this supernatural work in our midst today.

I pray, God, for all who would say coming in today, “Yes, Jesus is Lord.” God, we need You to continually transform our hearts. Make our hearts more like Yours, we pray. Make our heart as a church more like Yours. By Your grace, You’ve given us so much. We want to be faithful stewards with what You’ve entrusted to us. Please, help us take the wealth You give us and use it for the spread of Your worship in Washington, DC. Use it for the spread of Your worship in the world. Help us follow You, Jesus. Truly, help us follow You, we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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