

## Matt 6:19-24—The Spiritual Nature Of Money<sup>1</sup>

**Introduction:** Christ's great adversary is Satan. You'd think that Jesus would have said "You can't serve God and Satan." But no—"You can't serve God and Money/wealth/Mammon (i.e., money and things)." **WHY?** B/c he realized that probably the biggest thing that will lead you away from God is money and material possessions. The reason is:

**Proposition:** MONEY IS SPIRITUAL. It is just as spiritual as that cross—indeed, money may be *more spiritual* than a cross. **WHY?** Both are external things. They can be used for good or bad. Lots of people wear crosses (earrings, necklaces, carry in pocket)—but money *reveals what's inside of you:* our attitude toward it and what we do with it demonstrate better than almost anything else, where our heart, mind, soul, and priorities really are.

Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*: Sacraments = "outward and visible sign, of the inward and spiritual grace." That principle applies to all of life. What we do with our money demonstrates what we *really* think of Jesus Christ—like a "*spiritual barometer.*"

**Organizational sentence:** I want to do three things: (1) Look at the spiritual nature of money; (2) Consider the early church which understand this, and how that radically affected what they did with their money; (3) Make some concluding comments.

### I. Spiritual Nature of Money.

**Matt 6:19-20**—"Don't store up treasure..." "Store up" in the Greek is the verbal form of the word "treasure"—i.e., "*Don't treasure the treasures on earth, but treasure the treasures in heaven...*"

- **v. 21**—Does NOT say, "where your heart is, there your treasure will be..." (although that's true)—but "*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" **WHY?**
- We treasure what is very valuable to us: I treasure my wife. She is the most important person in my life. So I will do whatever I can to strengthen our relationship ... (not perfectly—as she could tell you—but...); it's the *way I treat her* that demonstrates what I really think of her (which now makes me think ...)
- So Jesus has given us a very practical, outward and visible sign—what we do with our money--that demonstrates what we really treasure: this world and the things of this world, or God and the KOG. It shows *where our heart is.*

**A. What we do with our money is a form of worship:** **Matt 2:11** (wise men); **Mark 14:3-9** (woman with vial of costly perfume). They gave something directly to Jesus:

- But Jesus isn't fooled and can't be bribed: **Matt 15:5-9** (Read). Worship ≠ singing & coming to church.
- 2 Greatest Commands: "*Love God & love your neighbor*"—2<sup>nd</sup> Command (how you treat neighbor) is really the outward, visible sign of whether you really meeting the 1<sup>st</sup> command; it is the *spiritual barometer*—MONEY IS SPIRITUAL.

**B. What we do with our money is a manifestation of true faith:** **Jas 2:14-18** ("Go in peace"); **1 John 3:16-17** (Read). MONEY IS SPIRITUAL

**C. What we do with our money is a form of ministry:** **Phil 4:18** (OT sacrifice language); **Jas 1:27** ("Religion" = "the external ceremonial service of worship"—that takes money). MONEY IS SPIRITUAL

### II. Early Church understood this.

- Early church characterized by **ASTOUNDING GENEROSITY**—which *everybody could see*. **WHY?**
- 2 things: (1) Jesus had truly changed them from the **INSIDE-OUT** (easy to say "Jesus is Lord" or "I've been born again"—but they *proved* that it was true), b/c (2) they understood the *implications of the Gospel*:
  - If Christ forgave us, how can we be unforgiving people?
  - If Christ gave everything he had for us, how can we just clutch onto our money & possessions?
  - If Christ had no place to lay his head, how can we not open our homes to the homeless or other needy people?

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<sup>1</sup> To a large extent this is a *topical* sermon concerning the nature of money, although it is *anchored* in a particular text.

### Examples:

A. **Luke 19:1-10**—Zaccheus; **Acts 2**; **Acts 4**—Church in Jerusalem; **Acts 11:27-30**—Antioch.

B. **2 Cor 8:1-5**—Macedonia (20 years later ≈AD56—Background: famine in Jerusalem—**1 Cor 16:1-4**)

- **WHY** were the Macedonians so generous? Answer: v. 5—Their lives changed from INSIDE-OUT; they had a *new set of eyes*—a new set of values (i.e., love of God; love of neighbors).
- **2 Cor 8-9**—Paul’s longest dx. of giving money, but never uses the word “money”—calls it: “*grace*,” “*this gracious work*,” “*koinonia*” (Lord’s Supper); “*leiturgia*” (liturgy); “*service; ministry*”—i.e., *all spiritual terms*—**WHY?** Answer: b/c MONEY IS SPIRITUAL

C. **Church up through the mid-300s** (Read quotes re. the early church and their use of money):

- They changed the Roman Empire. They lived a life that was so good, so DIFFERENT from the way most people lived their lives. People wanted it. The power that comes from the freedom from enslavement to money and things. Their lives had been changed from the inside-out—and they demonstrated it through lives of astounding generosity.
- **IS THAT WHAT PEOPLE SEE IN US? If not, why not?**

### Conclusion:

A. **Not trying to lay guilt on anyone:** **2 Cor 8:8, 13; 9:7** all say Paul is NOT Commanding people to give—and we should NOT give grudgingly or if we feel under compulsion. **WHY?** God doesn’t need your money; giving only b/c you feel pressured doesn’t honor him; and he can’t be bribed or placated anyway.

- So if you feel that way: DON’T GIVE.

B. **But we all know that we should be constantly assessing our lives & our walk with the Lord:**

- Our attitude toward money and what we do with it is the *most practical, spiritual self-assessment tool* there is.
- It is a NECESSARY self-assessment tool: WHY?
  - **Matt 6:22-23**—“Eye is dark”—**Materialism** (an “*inordinate desire for or dependence on money and material possessions*”)/**Greed blinds us to our own materialism/greed**—just need to know one person who is more extravagant in his conspicuous consumption than you are... i.e., *Macedonians had a “new set of eyes.”*
  - Ave. “Christian” gives under 3% of income—if everyone in U.S. who calls himself a “Christian” gave just 10%, there would be **>\$150 Billion** available for missions, the church, the poor & needy.
  - Africa (Muslims pouring MILLIONS into sub-Saharan Africa)—Obama trying to socialize U.S. economy—largely b/c the church is not acting like the church did during the first 300 years of its existence.
- God is so gracious: He changes us from the inside-out—that alone should cause us to want to be extravagant givers to help the poor and build the Kingdom—but he also gives us a *MOTIVE TO DO SO*:
  - **Matt 6:20** told us to “*store up treasure in heaven.*” **1 Tim 6:17-19** tells us *how* we store up treasure in heaven: generous giving to help the poor & needy, and build the KOG.
  - This requires: **BUDGETING – PLANNING – TALKING – But you can’t lose!**

C. **MONEY IS SPIRITUAL.** It goes to the heart of our faith, b/c it reveals what is really in our heart. What we do with our money demonstrates what we really think of Jesus. Let us live like we truly love Jesus.