

[1]
Money Matters
2 Corinthians 8 & 9, and other passages
September 29th, 2013, Jeff Germs

Today we are going to talk about money. Did you know that Jesus talked more about money than he did about heaven and hell combined? Out of thirty-nine parables eleven of them are about money.

[2]

Why do you think Jesus spent so much time talking about money? Was he trying to set up a pyramid scheme and train his twelve disciples to spread the good news that we can all be wealthy if we follow certain principles?

I think the key to unlocking the answer to that question is in Matthew 6:21.

[3]

Matthew 6:21 (NLT)

²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

This is key. Your attitude about money speaks volumes about the condition of your heart. One of the most often misquoted verses in the bible is 1 Timothy 6:10. I've heard many people wrongly quote this verse. They say, "Money is the root of all evil." That's not actually what Paul said. Here is what he actually said.

[4]

1 Timothy 6:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ 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.

Some people take this verse and wrongly surmise that Paul is saying that money is somehow inherently evil. It's not. But the *love of money* certainly is. It is idolatry. And as Paul said, people who have wealth as their ultimate goal in life fall into all kinds of temptations that can ultimately lead to destruction. As Paul said in verses 6 & 7 of the same chapter,

[5]

1 Timothy 6:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

When we die we will leave everything behind. So, money, and how we handle it is something that we need to talk about. And we need to be aware of our own attitudes towards money and possessions because the way we think about money and possessions reveals the condition of our hearts.

One of the criticisms of the church is that it is always asking for money. And there has been some validity to that accusation. One of the black marks against the church through the ages is that there have been some Christian leaders who have abused their power and manipulated their congregations by telling them lies about money.

Here are some common myths about tithing and giving.

Myth One:

- [6]
1. **Of the money you give to the church God will give you one hundred-fold in return.** (Mark 10:29-31) That's a very good investment. That's not a ten percent investment, or even a hundred percent. It's a one thousand percent return on your money. You give 10 dollars and you get one 1,000 dollars back.

Why wouldn't we all take our money out of the banks and invest in the church? Take all your money out of your pensions and mutual funds and just give it to the church. God will reward you one-hundred-fold.

That is a lie and a bold-faced manipulation of Scripture. The truth is that there is blessing in giving, but it's not always monetary. The real blessing is in knowing that you have the privilege of partnering with God in extending his kingdom. There is blessing in knowing that you are a part of something bigger than yourself. There is blessing in seeing lives changed because you chose to give. God is not going to make you rich if you give. **God is not an investment broker.**

[7]

Myth Two:

2. **God needs your money.** God has no needs. He is the only self-sufficient, self-existing, self-sustaining being in the universe. He has no needs. God does not need your money.

[8]

Myth Three:

3. **You give to pay God back for what he has done for you.** I've actually heard people say this. They are well meaning, of course. They say something like, "tithing is the least I can do for what God has done for me. He died for my sins." It sounds nice, but it goes against the whole idea of grace. We cannot pay God back for what he has done. That is a slap in his face. He gave us a gift. It's free.

[9]

Myth Four:

4. **Tithing somehow releases God's power.** God is not a vending machine that you put money into and out comes his power to get you what you want. God cannot be manipulated or bought.

[10]

Myth Five:

5. **When you tithe it shows that you put God first.**

That is a false hierarchy. When we have that sort of mindset we can fall into the trap of thinking that as long as I give the first ten percent of my money to God, I can do whatever I want with the rest of my money. Ten percent is God's and 90 percent is mine to do with what I want. God is not supposed to be just the first part of many parts of your life. He should be a part of each part. One hundred percent is his. You are simply a steward of what he has given you.

[11]

Myths Six & Seven:

6. **God will be mad at you if you don't tithe and you will be punished.**
7. **The New Testament Commands you to tithe.**

Ok, now I know I've got your attention.

When I was a teenager I was taken aside by my pastor and confronted. He said something like this, "Jeff, I've noticed that you don't tithe. Did you know that God commands you to tithe? You need to give ten percent of your income to the church. You are disappointing God when you don't tithe." How do you think I felt? I felt spied upon, manipulated and abused.

[12]

When we attempt to make tithing a law it reduces our faith to religion and rule-keeping. We add it to the many things we think will keep God from getting mad at us. We can check it off our list and breathe a sigh of relief. That is religion and it has no place in the kingdom kind of life that Jesus called us to.

[13]

The truth is that the New Testament does not require us to pay a tithe anymore than it requires us to sacrifice animals on an altar.

Did you know that there is actually no teaching in the New Testament about tithing? Wait a minute. Didn't I say right up front that Jesus spoke more about money than about heaven and hell combined? Yes, that's true. But, he didn't teach about tithing. He mentioned tithing, but he didn't teach on it.

Let's look at what Jesus said in Matthew 23:23. (and Luke 11:42)

[14]

Matthew 23:23 (ESV)

²³ ***“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.***

In the Matthew 23:23 and the parallel passage in Luke 11:42 Jesus was not teaching that tithing was required. The main point he was making was that the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees were hard. They were all about the rule keeping. Yes, they were big tithers. They gave ten percent of everything. They even went out to their herb gardens and snipped off ten percent of their herbs; mint, dill, and cumin, as if the point in tithing was to make sure you give exactly ten percent. The point was that their hearts were not worshipping God.

Notice that Jesus juxtaposed the three extra things they gave, **mint, dill and cumin**, with three other more important concepts that they neglected; **justice and mercy and faithfulness**.

Jesus wasn't teaching about tithing. His mention of tithing was incidental. He was simply re-enforcing that this was a requirement under the Old Covenant, but tithing wasn't the main point. The scribes and Pharisees performed that ritual in order to feel spiritually superior.

Now, I know some of you are probably pretty excited right now. You mean that I don't have to give? Calm down! Like I said, the New Testament has tons to say about giving.

[15]

Before we go on to that though let me just give you very short summary of tithing in the Old Testament. It was quite complex and we don't have time to look at it at length this morning, but simply put, every Jew was required by the Levitical law to pay three tithes of his property (1) one tithe for the **Levites**; (2) one for the use of the **temple and the great feasts**; and (3) one for the **poor of the land**.¹

Levitical law legislated that crops from the field, fruit of the trees, and herds and flocks (Lv. 27:30–32) were to be tithed. The way they tithed their livestock was like this: the owner would count the animals as they went out to pasture, and every tenth one was given to God. They weren't to pick and choose, so as to avoid the temptation of just giving from the sickly animals. Every tenth one that passed by would be given as a tithe to the Lord (Lv. 27:32f.).

That's a very concise picture of tithing. Tithing was an acknowledgement that everything belongs to God. He is the one who supplies and sustains. We may think that our hard work and ingenuity do it, but if it weren't for the grace of God we would have nothing. It could all easily be taken away.

That's the Old Testament. There are some principles from Old Testament that we can glean, of course. Mainly this, that tithes and offerings are not simply God's plan for financing His work.

[16]

Primarily it is a means by which the Lord develops His people. Giving is an acknowledgment that all we have and are belongs to God. What we possess has been entrusted to us to use for His glory. As His stewards we own nothing but are responsible for everything.²

I want to take a look at one long passage of Scripture this morning, 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. We are going to read the whole thing and I will simply make some comments along the way. Pay attention to the attitude of the givers. It's quite inspiring. And allow the Spirit of Jesus speak to you through his Word.

[17]

2 Corinthians 8 (NIV)

¹ ***And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in***

¹ Easton, M. G. (1996). *Easton's Bible dictionary*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

² Hobbs, H. H. (1990). *My favorite illustrations* (108). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

rich generosity.³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,

[18]

⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵ And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶ So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

[19]

⁷ But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. ⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

[20]

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰ And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. ¹¹ Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.

[21]

¹² For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. ¹³ Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴ At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵ as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

[22]

¹⁶ Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. ¹⁷ For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. ¹⁸ And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.

[23]

¹⁹ What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. ²⁰ We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. ²¹ For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.

[24]

²² In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. ²³ As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. ²⁴ Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.

[25]

2 Corinthians 9 (NIV)

¹ There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the Lord's people. ² For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.

[26]

³ But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴ For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident.

[27]

⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. ⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

[28]

⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

[29]

⁹ As it is written: “They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.” ¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

[30]

¹² This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. ¹³ Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

[31]

¹⁴ And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

I want to commend you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord’s work at CRBC.

[32]

As Julian reported to us last week, our giving is up ten percent this month over the same month last year. That’s very encouraging. God has been multiplying. I really am excited about what God is doing through us. He has taken those gifts and has been extending his Kingdom in Campbell River and around the world because you have been partnering with the work at CRBC.

I don’t believe that tithing is a New Testament command. Paul actually says as much. But, that doesn’t get us off the hook from giving. We have the tremendous privilege of partnering with God. Let me put it this way. If God’s people gave ten percent of their income out of obligation in the Old Testament, why would we give any less?

[33]

There’s a story that has been told many times about the late R.G. LeTourneau. He died in 1969 at the age of 81. LeTourneau ran into financial trouble when he was young and had to file for bankruptcy because of a \$5,000 debt, which was a lot of money at that time. His pastor told him that the Lord uses businessmen as much as he uses pastors so he got a job in construction and ended up starting his own business building earth moving machinery.

LeTourneau started out tithing, giving ten percent of his income to the Lord’s work, but he realized that he was actually just a steward of what God had given to him so decided to reverse tithe. He gave ninety percent of his income to the Lord’s work and kept ten percent.

Now, there are some people who hear stories like this and get motivated to view God as an investment banker that pays high yields interest. It doesn’t work that way. Sorry folks.

[34]

Yes, there is blessing when we give. We get to be a part of what God is doing. We have the privilege of partnering in something far bigger that we could ever ask or imagine. That is a phenomenal return on our investment.



Money Matters
Week of September 29th, 2013
2 Corinthians 8 & 9

Objective: To understand how our attitude towards money reveals the condition of our hearts and adjust accordingly.

Worship (5 - 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. Have someone read Psalm 138 meditatively to the group.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 minutes)

Icebreaker: Have you ever had an investment go wrong? Have you ever been sorry you missed an investment opportunity?

Word (30 – 40 minutes)

1. What stood out for you from the sermon?
2. Read **1 Tim. 6:6**.

Consider this quote from the sermon: *"We need to be aware of our attitudes towards money and possessions because the way we think about these things reveals the condition of our hearts."*

What are some attitudes towards money? Collect ideas as a group. Have someone record them. Eg: Money can be seen as a way to power, or spending money can be used as a way to soothe emotional pain. Think of more.

Also: What are some attitudes that undermine contentment?

3. **Matt. 23:23-24**. From this warning to the Pharisees, we see that we do not imitate God's heart by making rules about tithing. What was Jesus pointing out about the condition of the Pharisees' hearts? How do the "more important matters of the law" relate to how we should use our money?
4. **2 Cor. 8 & 9**. Break into small groups. Read these chapters looking for principles that have to do with use of resources, giving, and conditions of the heart that pleases God. Regroup and share your findings.

Work (30 – 40 minutes)

1. **Matt. 6:19-21**. This passage has to do with investing the resources God has entrusted to us, with developing treasure. Sermon quote: *"What we possess has been entrusted to us to use for God's glory."*
What are some ways we can be irresponsible with money?
What resources has God entrusted to you?
2. We don't all have the opportunity to make large investments on earth, but we ALL have the opportunity to be rich in Heaven by making large eternal investments there, now. What kind of eternal investment would you like to make?

Prayer

1. Take a couple minutes of silent prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about these things, and to show you ways you can use your resources to make eternal investments.
2. Share answers to prayer and prayer requests and pray for each other.