

MONEY MATTERS**1 Chronicles 29:10-20**

Money. Money matters. Now, some of you are already tuning me out – right? “There goes another preacher talking about money. All the church ever talks about is money, money, money.”

Well, I’m sorry, but that simply is not true. I checked with Pastor Steve shortly before he left for his well-deserved vacation, and I asked him when the last time was that he preached about money here. He said it was at least two years ago, maybe more.

Why do pastors and churches sometimes talk about money? Because the Bible has a lot to say about money, and I mean a lot. Someone has done the math for us and discovered that in the Bible there are 40 verses about baptism; 275 verses on prayer; 350 verses on faith; 650 verses on love; and 2,350 verses that relate specifically to finances or material possessions.

In the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), would it surprise you to learn that two-thirds of our Lord’s parables dealt with money? The fact of the matter is that Jesus taught more about money than He did about heaven or hell. Let that sink in for a moment. Jesus taught more about money than He did about heaven or hell. Why might that be? Because stewardship is a huge part of discipleship. Being a good steward is a key component of being a good disciple, a faithful follower of Jesus.

In the passage that was just read for us from 1 Chronicles 29, King David had grasped an essential, foundational principle of being a good steward. If you are not sure what a steward is, substitute the word “manager.” The very first thing we need to realize and understand and come to terms with when it comes to being a good steward or a good manager is this: God owns everything. God owns everything.

1 Chronicles 29:11 says everything in heaven and on earth is God’s.

-vs. 12 “Wealth and honor come from You.”

-vs. 14 “Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand.”

-vs. 16 “It comes from Your hand, and all of it belongs to You.”

A big part of being a faithful follower of Jesus involves being a good steward or manager of all that God has entrusted to our care. And being a good steward or manager begins by settling the “ownership question.” The ownership question. Just like King David who, under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, freely declared that everything comes from God and everything belongs to God, so we must also declare and believe in the very core of our being that everything we have comes from God and belongs to God. Everything. God owns it all. We “own” nothing.

Oh, we may think we own clothes and books and cars and houses – but technically we do not own them. God owns it all, and we are simply managing that which God has chosen to entrust to our care for now.

But sometimes we forget that, don't we? Sometimes we slip into thinking that these are my clothes, and these are my books, and this is my car, and this is my house, but it is not. It is not! It comes from His hand and all of it belongs to Him! This can be such a freeing concept, such a freeing truth, if we would only fully embrace it.

Now, since what I am wearing are God's clothes, I will keep them clean and will do my best to look after them, but I am also going to be very careful not to become too attached to them because if God, for whatever reason, should choose to take away these clothes that's okay – they are not mine anyway.

And this applies to everything – books, CDs, DVDs, computers, Nintendo games, furniture, dishes, tools, food, homes, cabins, boats, stocks, bonds, jewelry – whatever. It comes from His hand, and all of it belongs to Him.

And this doesn't only apply just to our "stuff" – the things that we can hold and handle and literally hang onto. It also applies to our time, and to our talents, our gifts and our abilities. Everything we have and everything about who we are – it comes from His hand, and all of it belongs to Him.

That kind of attitude, that Biblical mindset, is absolutely crucial if we are going to enjoy life and be fruitful in ministry.

Jack Taylor, in one of his books, has a great idea when it comes to settling this "ownership question" in our lives. He suggests that at least once in our lifetime we sit down with a piece of paper and list everything we have. And he means everything. You might start by listing your possessions like your clothes, cars, house, etc. List all of the "stuff" that you have.

But don't stop there. Be sure to make a note of your salary, what's in your bank accounts, your investments, any insurance policies you might have, your credit rating.

Then write down "my body" and underneath that list all of your strengths and gifts and talents and abilities. If you are able to make friends easily – write it down. If you are a good teacher – write it down. If you demonstrate care and concern when people are in need – write it down.

Next, list your achievements – any schooling completed, degrees earned, honors received. Write down your good reputation or the position you have at work.

Then list the important people in your life – your spouse, your children, your parents, your relatives, your friends.

And then don't forget to jot down the amount of time you invest at work, at home, at church, in the community. In other words, try to think of anything that you have or that you have control of or that is a part of your life. Write it all down. And then, when you think your list is completely complete, write across your paper in big bold letters: **NONE**

MINE – ALL HIS. None mine – all His. That will go a long way in settling the ownership question and in reinforcing 1 Chronicles 29:16b: "... (everything) comes from Your hand, and all of it belongs to You."

Once you have settled the "ownership question," your giving to God will take on a whole new dimension. Now, when it comes to worshipping God through your giving, instead of wondering how much of my money should I give to God, the question gets flipped and I start asking, how much of God's money should I keep for myself? Instead of wondering how much of my money should I give to God, how much should I keep for myself?

And, I am assuming at this point that you already know that one important way that we worship God is by giving to God – right? In the famous Sermon on the Mount, as Jesus was teaching, He just assumed that the people listening to Him already knew certain things. For example, Jesus did not say if you pray, He said when you pray, and then went on to give instructions on how to do that well. He did not say if you fast, but when you fast. And He did not say if you give, but when you give.

All throughout the Scriptures giving to God is strongly encouraged as a crucial part of our worship of God. In our call to worship right at the outset of our service this morning we were told in Psalm 96:8 "bring an offering and come into His courts." Proverbs 3:9 commands us: "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops."

And there are many, many, many other verses in the Bible that tell us how important it is that we give regularly to God and to His work. One of my favorite passages about giving is found in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7. Keep in mind that the context of these verses has to do with giving. The Apostle Paul, under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly [gives sparingly] will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 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."

God loves a cheerful giver. Someone has suggested that the Greek phrase used here could be translated, "God loves a hilarious giver." When was the last time you gave something to God so cheerfully that it bordered on being hilarious?

Friends, part of our worship of God involves giving to God and to His work. It is not the only part of our worship, but it is a very important part. Giving back to God helps to settle the "ownership question" in our lives, for as we give to Him regularly and consistently, we are acknowledging that He truly is the Lord of our lives, and that everything that we have is really His to begin with.

And if you have been neglecting this area of your walk with God, may I encourage you to reconsider, to reevaluate your priorities, and to start once again to honor the Lord with your finances? To rediscover the joy of giving, and to experience first-hand His faithful provision as you do? I close with this somewhat humorous poem.

DO YOUR GIVIN' WHILE YOU'RE LIVIN', SO YOU'RE KNOWIN' WHERE IT'S GOIN'

Let me tell you the story of Fredrick R. Birch, once the wealthiest man in the church.
He owned hotel and factory, buildings and stock; he had many investments solid as rock.
One day he made up his will, bequests large and small;
Not a good cause was missed that Fred could recall.

To his own little church in the village he planned, new carpets and pews to look so grand.
For his Pastor, a new house with trees large and nice,
And to the Sunday School a generous slice.
Another large gift to their own local college,
Where young folks were taught of inventions and knowledge.
For the youth group at church, Lord, room and tuitions,
To all of them choosing to join foreign missions.

Now, Satan stood by with a devilish grin,
Seeing all that Fredrick had just put in.
“Hmmm” said the devil, sporting a smile,
I’ll see that this old rascal lives a long, long while.
So, Satan chased off every menacing germ,
And sprayed with “hell-septic” each threatening worm.
Not a disease could get near dear brother Birch,
His excellent health was the talk of the church.

At 60 Fredrick was hardy and whole,
At 70 he still hadn’t started to go.
At 80 his step was still youthful and spry,
At 90 they wondered, will Fred ever die?
But the day after he turned 107, a germ slipped on through and sent Fredrick to heaven.

So there lay Fredrick R. Birch low in his grave,
And his relatives gathered in solemn enclave.
Lawyer Smith read the will in deep voice and frowned,
Because there wasn’t a named legacy to be found.
The little old church he had loved in his youth,
Had closed its front doors and ceased spreading the truth.
His pastor had died penniless years before,
And the Sunday School library existed no more.
The local college they found when they wrote,
Had long since been sold on account of a note.
So, his ungodly relatives each took a slice,
And his lawyer forgot and paid himself twice.

And Satan still smiling turned to tasks fresh and new,
My friend let this be a lesson to you.
Do your givin’ while you’re livin’, so you’re knowin’ where it’s goin’
Give all that you can when you’re still alive and strong,
And update your will often – Fredrick R. Birch was wrong!