

The Danger of Wealth

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Shine Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace.

And no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word. We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and His life and His death and His resurrection. And last week, we took a look at the importance, in fact, more than the importance, the necessity of childlike faith, the necessity of acknowledging that we have nothing to offer to God, and all we can do is receive.

This week, we're going to continue that theme with one very specific application of Jesus talking about the issue, the challenge, the danger of money. Money is one of those things that falls into the category of not bad, just dangerous.

[1 : 1 8] In fact, in many ways, money is good. It's a blessing. There was great wealth in the Garden of Eden when God created Adam and Eve, and we look forward to the new heavens and the new earth when there will also be great wealth.

And so money is not bad in and of itself. It just presents unique temptations and challenges. And so it's with that we're going to dive right in. As we come to this passage in Mark chapter 10, I'm going to tell you three things.

First of all, about the love of money. Second of all, the danger of money. And third, the new heart. That's the love of money, the danger of money, and the new heart.

With that, I invite you to turn with me to God's Word. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn in your worship guide. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word.

In Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5, tells us that every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

[2 : 1 7] And so that's why we read now Mark chapter 10, starting at verse 17. And as He 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?

And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 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. Verse 20.

And He said to Him, Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.

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. Disheartened by the saying, He went away sorrowful, for He had great possessions. 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.

[3 : 3 3] 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. 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.

Verse 26. And they were exceedingly astonished and said to Him, Then who can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, With man it is impossible, but not with God.

For all things are possible with God. Peter began to say to Him, See, we have left everything and followed you.

Verse 29. 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, 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.

But many who are first will be last and the last will be first. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in heaven, we come to you this morning confessing that we need to be like little children to receive your instruction.

[5 : 04] And so we ask that you would help us. We know that we can't do it alone. That all by ourselves, we are incapable of hearing and understanding what it is you have to say to us.

And so we ask that you would send your Holy Spirit to be with us. That you would soften our hearts. That you'd open up our minds. That you would be at work this morning. So that we would be able to hear and receive and obey your words.

We thank you most of all that you don't come to us as simply a moral instructor. But you come to us as a man who lived and walked among us as Jesus.

Full of beauty and glory and holiness and truth. We ask that you would show us him and that we would be changed as a result. We ask all these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. The last time we saw Jesus, he was in the midst of taking these children up in his arms and blessing them despite the protests of his disciples.

[6 : 08] But the time has come now for Jesus to pack up and move on to his next adventure. You might think of this as a scene at the end of a lecture or an event and the speaker is trying to make his way out.

He has somewhere else he needs to be. But you have an urgent and pressing question. And so you rush in on him to catch him before it is too late. Because what you have to ask is so incredibly important.

That's what happens with this man here. He runs up to Jesus to block him before Jesus is able to escape to the next event because his question is so pressing.

And thankfully he's able to catch Jesus here just in the nick of time. We understand why his question is pressing because he wants to know of all things, how is it that he can inherit eternal life? And in that he addresses Jesus as this good teacher. Jesus' answer here should surprise us because Jesus seems to correct him. He says, why are you calling me a good teacher?

[7 : 14] Only God is good. And we should be surprised by this because we saw in Mark chapter 8, Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ. That Jesus is actually God.

And so why is Jesus seeming to misdirect this man here? It should seem to us it would be the most normal expectation for Jesus to accept this. Yes, I am divine.

You recognize me for who I am. Of course, I should be called good. Why does Jesus act as if he's not God?

What we have to understand here is that Jesus is playing into this man's assumption. This rich ruler does not see or know that Jesus is divine.

He sees Jesus as only human. And so what Jesus is doing in this passage is instead of correcting him, he decides to play along with this man's perspective.

[8 : 12] Jesus is saying, oh, you think that I'm merely a good teacher. You think that I am just another rabbi. Okay, let's roll with that and see where it takes us.

Let's operate on that assumption and see what happens. Well, if I am a mere human, if I am just a rabbi, if I'm just a teacher, good, can't and doesn't apply to me.

Because no human can truly be called good. And in that answer, Jesus has already indirectly cut out the legs from underneath this man's question.

What does he ask? What must I do, right? How can I be good enough? And Jesus is poking him here. No one is good.

You think I'm just a human. Well, then you have overestimated me. This phrase here that he asks him, what must I do?

[9 : 25] Verse 17, it is the opposite of what we saw last week, that we must receive the kingdom as children. But Jesus decides he's going to keep playing this game out with this man.

And so he says, okay, let's continue to unfold this, unroll this blanket and see what happens. Verse 19, what about the moral law? What about the Ten Commandments? How are you doing with your performance in your life?

This man, missing the fact that Jesus has already corrected him, continues to take the bait and says, yes, I can make this a matter of moral performance. If that's the bar that needs to be set, I have met it and exceeded it.

I have done it. I have kept all of these things from my youth. And so he misses the deeper point that Jesus is driving at, the deeper issue of the human heart, the deeper issue of love for God.

Has this man kept the law? Well, no, not in the way Jesus is going to go on and define it in Mark chapter 12. In Mark chapter 12, someone's going to ask him what the greatest commandment is.

[10:39] And Jesus' response is that the sum of the law is love for God and love for others. And so Jesus is setting this man up to suddenly crush his understanding of himself by helping him understand you don't love God.

You think that you have kept the law, but you are so incredibly far away. You love and trust and worship something much more than God himself.

And that's what he sets him up for in verse 21. Looking at him, Jesus 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.

Jesus brings down the hammer on this man. Not to crush him, but we're told explicitly because he loved him.

You're almost there. There's just one more thing you need to do. Give up all your money.

[11:57] Jesus is asking him, where is your true heart? What is it that you actually love and worship? What is your ultimate treasure?

Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Jesus is telling him this, you may be generally morally good and upright, but your trust and your hope and your love is not in me.

It is in money. You do not love the Lord your God with all your heart. One pastor points out that this word here in verse 22, disheartened, that is used to describe this man is the same word that we're going to see in Mark chapter 14 used of Jesus when he's facing separation from God the Father as he looks to the potential and the reality of heading towards the cross.

In other words, what this man feels about money is what Jesus feels about God the Father. That is how rapt and enamored he is with his possessions.

He was good at external moral commands and he loved money more than God. This man loved money most of all.

[13:30] And so Jesus uses this as an object lesson for his disciples to help them understand the danger of wealth. It's right after this episode that he begins to teach them.

Verse 23, he looks at his disciples and said, how difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. And then we find out verse 25, it is not simply difficult.

Verse 27, it is impossible. Jesus uses this illustration of the camel, which is the largest animal, and the thread, the eye of a needle, the smallest opening, and says, for a rich person to enter heaven, it is like taking the largest animal that you have as a frame of reference and putting it through the smallest opening.

Now, there have been attempts throughout the centuries to explain away this passage and to say, well, the eye of the needle maybe was referring to this gate in Jerusalem that was narrow, but it wasn't too narrow.

And so if you unpack the camel, then maybe you'd be able to make it through. And that's not what Jesus is saying. We use Jesus' words here to interpret his meaning.

[14:43] Verse 27, he tells us, it is impossible. He is giving them an image that is meant to be so extreme that there's no way of wiggling out of it.

If you have money, if you're wealthy, you can't enter the kingdom, at least on first appearance. With man, it is impossible.

With God, all things are possible. Money, outside of God's intervention and work in our hearts will keep us away from his kingdom.

Why? There's two reasons. One, money pretends to be God.

And money tempts us to believe that we are God. Money pretends to be God and money tempts us to believe that we are God.

[15:51] I have some examples for you on the back of your worship guide. There's a book called *Far From the Tree* that studies, among many things, children with profound disabilities. And the author makes this observation that people of higher socioeconomic status tend towards perfectionism and have a harder time living with perceived defects.

One French study said, baldly, the lower classes show a higher tolerance for severely handicapped children. In other words, rich people can't handle imperfection.

Why? Because money has convinced them that they are all powerful. There is nothing for which they cannot simply write a check.

And so, they are unprepared to face the brokenness of this world. They believe that they are God because of their money, their experience in this life. Everything has been easy.

There's been no challenge. They're not able to buy their way out of or hire their way into. And so, when they hit up against imperfection that they cannot solve, they do not know what to do.

[17:10] Money causes us to believe that we are like God. In an article about rich politicians, we're told this, a mounting body of research is showing wealth can actually change how we think and behave and not for the better.

Rich people have a harder time connecting with others, showing less empathy to the extent of dehumanizing those who are different from them. They are less charitable and generous.

They are less likely to help someone in trouble. And they are more likely to defend an unfair status quo. These aren't just inherited traits but developed ones.

Money, in other words, changes who you are. The researchers then go on to say they believe this has to do with the fact of a few things.

First of all, money tends to make people think that they're special and different. Somehow they're set apart from other people. They don't have to be bothered by what bothers normal everyday folks.

[18:12] The other reality is that money allows them to disconnect from other people. The more money you have, the less dependent you are. You don't need to ask your neighbor or friend for help if you're simply able to pay to get things done.

Which makes us less empathetic and connected to those around us. The point of all of those things is this.

Money allows us to pretend we aren't children. Money gets in the way of the childlike posture we talked about last week.

And remember, Jesus didn't say being like a child is helpful. He said being like a child is necessary. It is a requirement. Need is the price of admission.

And wealth deceives us into believing we have no need. Wealth is an obstacle to childlike faith.

[19:24] Wealth is dangerous because it is an obstacle to childlike faith. What is it that children don't have? Many things.

One of them is money and resources. Trusting in riches is the opposite of trusting in God. Trusting in money is the opposite of having childlike faith.

And so we think in this way. You know what? Jesus is kind of volatile. You know? But money is safe and secure.

And the more I have of it, the more I've piled up and saved, the safer I am. That's something I can really rely on. And so I don't have to be like a child.

I don't have to recognize and embrace helplessness. It's a natural posture for a child to believe that her parents are going to provide for her.

[20:27] And so there's something deeply wrong. I want you to imagine for a second that you're a parent and you discover that your son is hoarding money in this mason jar in the back of his closet.

Right? And so you ask him, what is this money for? Why do you have this jar filled with quarters and dollar bills? And your son says to you, well, I'm afraid that there's going to come a time when you're not going to be able to buy food for us.

So I've stored a little something away. And what is your response as a parent? Heartbroken, right? And there's a ridiculousness to it that this child thinks they can store enough away to care for the family. There's a sadness, right?

You want something better for that child. Brothers and sisters, the same is true with us and our heavenly father. It is ridiculous for us to think that it is our job ultimately to provide for ourselves.

[21 : 43] It is laughable that we can store away enough money to protect ourselves. there's something sad for you, right?

As a parent, you want something better for that child. You know that children are not meant to stash away money in the back of their closets thinking that you're going to run out of an ability to feed them or provide for them.

And so there's a joy and a relief that comes for that son or that daughter in trusting that their parents are going to make sure that they have enough. The same is true for us.

as tempting as money is, as alluring as wealth presents itself to be, God wants something better for you. God wants you to have the joy and relief and trust that comes from knowing that he will provide.

He wants us to be able to pray and believe, give us this day our daily bread. wealth is such a challenge and such a threat.

[23 : 01] And by the way, whether you think so or not, if you live in America in 2022, you're basically in the top 1% of the world throughout history. In other words, you're wealthy, whether you want to admit it or not.

what are we supposed to do if wealth is the opposite of childlike faith? Well, Jesus gives us an answer here.

Verse 21, he tells this man, go sell all that you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me. What's the solution for that child with the mason jar in the back of his closet?

The solution is to get rid of the mason jar. What is the solution for making wealth into a god?

The solution is to get rid of it. Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. Jesus' command is not for every person to give all their money away.

[24 : 05] This man receives a specific command from Jesus because money is such an idol for him. We talked earlier about the fact that money for him is like God the father to Jesus. He's so wrapped around, it is so powerful in his life that the only way he's going to be able to receive and embrace the kingdom is to give it all away.

Jesus does not give that same command to everyone he meets in the gospels. Luke 19, for example, Zacchaeus, remember, is defrauding people. Zacchaeus gives a tremendous amount of his money away.

We don't hear that he gives all of it away. If we take the teaching of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, we see there are three things we're supposed to do with money. We're supposed to give it, we're supposed to save it, and we're supposed to spend it in that order.

And so Jesus' command for you this morning is not that you would give all of your money away to the poor and have nothing left, but the way to break the power and allure of money is to get rid of it. Remember what Scott read earlier this morning, we know that money is a problem for us if we are unable to give large amounts of it away. We know that money has become a God when we are unable to give large amounts of it away.

[25 : 33] money. And if that sounds radical, that simply reveals how powerful and consuming money truly is.

If that sounds radical, it simply reveals how powerful and consuming money truly is. And so that's why Jesus tells us the truth here, verses 26 and 27, it is impossible.

with man it is impossible, with not with God, for all things are possible with God. The command for this man is not necessarily the command for us, but what should be true of us is this, Christians' fists are not tightly grasped around money.

We're able to let it go. when we let it go, the spell that money has over us breaks. When we're able to let it go, we recognize it's not our God.

When we let it go, we are saying, Jesus, I trust you enough that you're going to provide for me tomorrow. I am able to receive from you my daily bread.

[26 : 59] God. If we cannot let money go, it proves we don't trust God. It's that simple.

If we cannot let money go, it proves we do not trust God. God. hard task.

How do we do it? I've told you before about this man named Thomas Chalmers, who is a Scottish preacher in the 19th century, and he preached this famous sermon on 1 John 2 called the expulsive power of a new affection.

He says if you want to get rid of one thing, you must replace it with another thing. Our hearts are this affection vacuum that we have to love something.

We can't get rid of one love without replacing it with another. He gives this illustration of a house where a strong man lives. If you want to get rid of that strong man, there's only one way.

[28 : 08] You have to find a stronger man to kick him out. If you want to love one thing less, you must find another love that is even greater, even more powerful.

He goes on to talk about the love of riches in this sermon, and he says if you want to tell a man to stop loving money, it's the same as telling him to burn his house down.

It makes no sense. And so what he's saying is basically everything that I've told you this morning is worthless. it doesn't matter.

You can tell someone over and over again that they need to give up wealth, but no one is going to burn their own house down, right? Except unless, Chalmers says, he knows that when he burns it down, he's going to have a new house ten times as great.

no man in his right mind will burn his house down unless he knows when he does, he will receive one ten times as valuable.

[29 : 21] Jesus knows the human heart better than anyone else, and that's exactly what he does here in this passage. church. He tells them, there is something ten times as valuable as money.

In fact, more than ten times as valuable. Jesus is the strong man that is more powerful than the love of money.

And he presents them with this vision here in verses 29-31. Peter, looking for reassurance here, says, see, we've left everything and followed you. By the way, people pointed out, Peter does not say, we've sold everything and followed you.

Again, Jesus' command is not for every Christian to divest themselves of all resources. Jesus gives him this assurance. 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 now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mother and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life.

Jesus is saying there is something not ten times greater, a hundredfold greater. there are things that wealth offers you that it cannot deliver.

[30 : 58] It cannot provide satisfaction and joy and significance. You know what can? God and his people. The brothers and sisters that he is promising them here in the present are the people that you can look around and see here this morning.

when he talks about all the great things that he has for his people, he's also presenting them the vision of what is to come in his heavenly kingdom. Money, brothers and sisters, cannot deliver on its promises.

It can arouse and entice. It cannot fulfill. Do you want more of what matters? Do you want more relationships of significance?

Do you want more things that fill up the emptiness of your heart? Jesus tells us clearly what needs to happen. He says, follow me. Do you want to have a future?

Jesus says, the future is with me, not in your investment accounts. I am your security.

[32 : 08] And so what he tells this man is true of us as well. No one is good. God, everyone needs, verse 27, Jesus to do the impossible.

Everyone needs a change, a radical, miraculous change of heart so that we love what is truly good and valuable and precious and not just what appears to be.

This man does not understand that he is not simply spiritually bankrupt, but he is also in debt. He needs Jesus' divine intervention just like us.

And so we have not just Jesus' promise of what is to come in the future, but we have Jesus as our hope that what is impossible with man is possible with God. That when Jesus died on the cross for us, taking the punishment that we deserve, when he lived the perfect life doing what we should have done, he is able then to come and change our hearts and lives and minds so that we love what is actually valuable.

And so we confess with this man, or with Jesus here, that we are not good. God alone is good. We need him to change our hearts and our loves and our affections.

[33 : 28] In the year 79 AD, there was a volcano that erupted on Mount Vesuvius on the western coast of Italy, destroying the ancient city of Pompeii, which was terrible for the residents of Pompeii

and was wonderful for archaeologists because the ash preserved everything that was in that city.

And so it buried what became an archaeologist's dream. In January of 1911, there was a California newspaper that announced a recent discovery that archaeologists have made of a woman's petrified body as she was fleeing from the city trying to escape the volcano.

With her, she had what was most valuable, and so the newspaper report tells us both of her hands were full of jewels. Evidently, the woman was fleeing from the eruption that overwhelmed Pompeii, carrying her valuables and was buried.

The jewels are excellently preserved. They consist of bracelets, necklaces, rings, amulets studded with gems, and a pair of earrings which are probably unique. They may be the most valuable specimens of ancient jewelry ever discovered.

Each earring contains 21 perfect pearls set in gold in imitation of a bunch of grapes. She had the most valuable specimens of ancient jewelry ever discovered, and they were worthless.

[35 : 06] Ultimately, her jewels were of no use. Mark chapter 10, verse 15, truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

And verse 21, 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. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you offer us something so much more precious and more valuable in the wealth and riches of this world, and yet we also confess that we, without your help, love what cannot deliver.

And so we ask that you would change our hearts, that you would do what is impossible with man but possible with you. That we would be willing to burn it down knowing there will be something ten times more valuable, the value of you and your kingdom.

We ask all these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn. Amen. Amen.