

“Wealth as Gift, Not god”

This morning Jesus says to you – “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God” – and like His disciples, you are amazed, astounded by what He says. His words are a wake-up call for all who would be His disciples – for all who would “enter the kingdom of God.”

“Then who can be saved,” Jesus? Before you check out – before you look for an excuse to get up and leave – Jesus also says to you – “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”

Folks, wealth is not bad, its not evil, its not a sin to be prosperous – and having wealth will not keep you out of heaven. It just cannot get you into heaven – only God can. Only God can save – and He does save – all who trust in Him.

And that’s where the rubber hits the road. Wealth is a gift – not a god. You are not to “fear, love and trust” in wealth above God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God speaks quite clearly to you in 1 Timothy 6:10. “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.”

Notice that MONEY is not “the root of all evil” but “the LOVE of money is a root of all kinds of evils.” Such a love of money – making it your god – leads you away from the faith, from salvation through Jesus Christ, from the kingdom of God and heaven. Such a love pierces you with “many pangs.” That doesn’t sound good.

It’s like that crush you had on that girl in Middle School. You were head over heels “in love” with her – and it ruled your whole life. You oriented your days around her – paying attention to where she was at all times of the day and looking for ways to cross paths with her. And when you couldn’t be in her presence – you were always thinking of her – how she looks, how she talks, the things she says.

If anyone knows what its like to have a crush on money – its Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes. He was richer than the rich – surrounded by wealth – and yet, he pursued more wealth.

And what does he say from his first-person perspective? “He who loves money will not be satisfied.” It’s “vanity” he says – it’s empty – it does not satisfy. The love of money leaves you crushed and broken-hearted.

That’s not the life that God desires for you. That’s why He who gives you your possessions and income also commands that – “You shall have no other gods.” You are to have only one God – your life oriented around the one true God. You are to have Him on your mind – even as His words direct your life.

So how does this all work with wealth and the one true God? How are we to receive His gifts in such a way that He remains at the center? Well, first of all, Solomon teaches us the many things that wealth does, and cannot do – why it is “vanity” to love money.

The first thing he mentions is that “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money.” The pursuit of money plays a huge role in our lives. We’ve been taught that we can’t live without it – that more money means security and happiness. But what does Solomon say?

“When goods increase, they increase who eat them.” Those who come into money know how true this is. How many lottery winners suddenly hear from relatives that they’ve never known. Accumulate some wealth and your mailbox will be full of those who want to eat it all up.

But that’s not all. “Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.” Gorge yourself on the sumptuous feast of wealth and your belly will not let you sleep – or your mind, as you lay awake, pondering how to increase your treasures, or fearing that they will all be taken away.

“There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches are kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture.” Notice again that the “grievous evil” is not riches, but that they are “KEPT by their owner to his hurt.”

A man toils and toils and toils to accumulate wealth, but they are lost. “As he came from his mother’s womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for

his toil that he may carry away in his hand.” You know that you “can’t take it with you” – so why do you live as if you can?

A man spends his life worshipping the god of wealth – and like all false gods, it does not satisfy. What it promises, it cannot deliver. It only demands more acts of devotion, more slavish toiling but the satisfaction and rest never comes.

So what do you do with your wealth – whether it’s a large sum, or small? Some preachers would tell you to give it to them – but that’s not what God says. “Behold, what I have seen is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.”

Like Adam, God has created your life, and He places you where He wants you, to do your work. Since Adam fell into sin, the work God has given us to do is a toilsome labor. But Christ shed His blood to redeem you from the curse of sin – to restore creation and make you to be a new creature. In Christ and His forgiveness, you are set free to live, and work!

God placed Adam in the garden to take care of it. What has God given you to do? “Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil – this is the gift of God.”

Rejoice in the gifts that God gives you – first and foremost, the satisfaction of sins forgiven, death defeated, and life eternal in heaven – but also rejoice in the wealth and possessions He gives you now – and the opportunity to use them, and your work, as God’s blessings for you and others.

Dearly beloved, the Lord is taking care of you – for eternity, but also now. Go ahead and eat, drink, and enjoy your work. Don’t wait until you get to heaven to rejoice – it’s already yours, now, through faith in Christ Jesus. That is not vanity. That is not a false god who never satisfies. That is true joy in living, now and eternally. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.