

“KEYS TO THE TREASURE (#2): THE PURPOSE OF MONEY”

(1 Timothy 6:17-19)

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[PROPS NEEDED: Points in #5 and #6.A. in bulletin & on Screen Slide]

[Cornerstone U.M.C.; 10-23-22]

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1. **[11am ONLY:]** Read NRSV Text: 1 Timothy 6:17-19 and Pray.

2. [STORY OF FISHERMAN LEARNING BUSINESS SENSE...]

There once was an American businessman who visited a small Mexican coastal village on vacation. And as he stood on the pier of that village, he noticed a simple boat tied up, and inside, next to the boat’s owner, were several large yellowfin tuna. He complimented the man on the quality of fish and asked how long it took to catch them, to which the owner said, *“Only a little while, señor.”*

So the American then asked why he didn’t stay out longer and catch more fish. The fisherman said, *“I catch enough to support my family,”* to which the American asked, *“But what do you do with the rest of your time?”* The Mexican fisherman replied, *“I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take a siesta with my wife, and stroll into the village each evening to play guitar with mis amigos. You see, I have a full and busy life, Señor.”*

But the American scoffed at all of this, *“Well, I’m a Harvard MB”, and I could help you. You should spend more time fishing. With the proceeds, you could buy a bigger boat. And with the proceeds from the bigger boat, you could buy several boats, and eventually you would have your own fleet of fishing boats. Then, instead of selling your catch to a middleman, you could sell directly to the processor and eventually open your own cannery. You would control the product, the processing, and the distribution. You could then leave this small coastal village, move to Mexico City, then to L.A., and eventually to New York City, where you would run your expanding enterprise.”*

The Mexican fisherman then asked, *“But señor, how long will all of this take?”* *“Fifteen to twenty years,”* was the American’s response. *“But what then, señor?”* asked the fisherman. The American laughed and said, *“Why, that’s the best part. When the time is right, you would announce an IPO, sell your company stock to the public, and become very rich. You would make millions!”* *“Millions, señor? Then what?”* asked the fisherman.

And the American replied, *“Then you would retire, move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take a siesta with your wife, and stroll into the village each evening to play guitar with your amigos!”*¹

3. Does life ever feel that way to you?... a rat race to accumulate “stuff” that you don’t really need anyway?

A--Well, to help address this, last week we began a new series exploring biblical principles that can help us unlock a few “Keys to the Treasure” of a vital relationship with God by how we understand and use money and possessions.

B--We talked the dangers of looking to them for security and certainty in life, resulting in disappointment, pain and problems.

C--And today, I want us to turn our attention to the purpose and use that God designed for money and possessions to have in the first place, and how -- properly understood and used -- these can be a powerful tool for good and for joy in life. ²

4. We find the apostle Paul addressing this in today's scripture from 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

[**9am ONLY...** Listen to what he says there... "*Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical and not to place their hope on their finances, which are uncertain. Instead, they need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, & to share with others. 19 When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly life.*"]

[**BOTH services...**] Here/There, we find Paul describing what happens when money and possessions are both *out of place* and *in the proper place* in our life's priorities.

--II--

5. Let's first look at 3 ways Vs 17 says these are *out of place* (all found in your *bulletin notes* ³):

A--First, as we said last week, they're out of place when they're seen **as an object of our affection or basis for security** -- when we (as the verse says) "*place our hope on finances*"; e.g., when we love *stuff* instead of loving *God*, then it's out of place.

B--They're out of place (second) **when they're a source of pride** in life -- when we become what Verse 17 calls "*egotistical*" (i.e., *full of ourselves/haughty*); when we have more money/possessions than others, we need to remember that it *doesn't* mean we're *better* than them, just that we've been *blessed* by God for now; So, we dare not get smug about what we *have*, because it's all just a *gift* from God anyway!

C--Finally, the warning not to be "*egotistical*" also tells us that money/possessions are out of place when we view them **as a measure/source of significance & fulfillment** -- we dare not view our significance/importance as human beings by how materially "successful" we are, because ultimate "success" in life is not determined by how much money we make or by how many "toys" we have, but by our relationship with God. ⁴

--III--

6. So if these are a few examples of when money and possessions are *out of place*, then when is it that these things are *in* their proper place? In other words, **for what purpose did God originally design money & possessions** anyway (the title of today's message)?

7. Well, I want to suggest a simple answer (in your bulletin notes and ON SCREEN) that has three dimensions that I want to unpack from today's scripture (read with me...) ...***"Money & possessions exist to be Enjoyed by us as we use them to Love God by Loving people."***
8. First, they are created by God **FOR OUR ENJOYMENT** and pleasure.
- A--Verses 17 & 19 says that *"God... richly provides everything for our enjoyment.... [so that we can] save a treasure for ourselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way [we] can take hold of what is truly life."*
- B--In other words, possessions aren't evil or bad in and of themselves. No, they're given to us by God as *gifts* so we can enjoy the fullness of life in God's world here on earth -- the "stuff" we have is actually *meant* to be enjoyed, savored & taken delight in
- C--The problem is when we begin to either *worship* these things *AS God*, or when we look to them as objects/sources of affection, pride, security, or significance
9. And that illustrates the second purpose... that it money/possessions are meant *"to be enjoyed ...**as we use them to LOVE GOD**...."*
- A--Verse 17 says to *"Tell people who are rich at this time... to hope in God."* In other words, our possessions are given to us *by God* as a tool for *us* to love and glorify and worship *Him* in return.
- 1--Have you ever thought of your house, car, computer, smartphone, lawnmower, boat, or music collection as things to help you love and worship God?
- 2--If we do that, it may actually changes the way we use those things -- the websites we visit, the places where we drive our car, who we open our home to, what we use our boat for & who we take in it, or even whose lawn we cut.
- B--I love my astronomy telescope & all the eyepieces, equipment & gadgets that go with it -- when I stargaze outside at night, I feel peace, relaxation, and closeness to God.
- 1--But when my use of these things becomes more important than the time I spend with my wife, family, or God, then I've gotten things out of whack
- 2--When that happens, I've become *possessed* by my possessions, instead of allowing *them* to help me glorify and be pointed towards *GOD*.
- C--Money and possessions exist, you see, as tools to help us *love God* -- which is why you've probably heard me say that the main reason we collect an offering in worship each week is *not* to pay a light bill or salary (though it does these), but to provide us all with an opportunity to glorify, love & worship *God* through our financial resources. ⁵

10. Finally, though, money & possessions exist “*To be enjoyed by us as we use them to love God... **BY LOVING PEOPLE***” -- in other words, we show our love for *God* by how we use our money and possessions to love and help our *fellow human beings*.

A--Listen (again) to Verses 17 & 18: “*Tell people who are rich at this time... to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others.*”

1--In other words, this third dimension deals with COMPASSION, which the American Heritage dictionary defines as: “*Deep awareness of the suffering of another accompanied by the desire and inclination to relieve it.*”⁶

2--Whether that's giving to things like Hurricane Ian relief (that we've been collecting the last few weeks), or bringing items for our Trinity Table lunches, or doing two things that you can do at the end of today's worship service... (a) taking & packing a box for Operation Christmas Child; or (b) supporting our El Salvador ministry partnership with the Dubberlys... giving helps us to love God through acts of loving *people*.

B--You see, it's not enough just to *feel* sorry for others, or be emotional *about* their suffering. No. “Compassion” requires an *act / action* of kindness.

1--Remember that Verse 18 says that we are “*to do good, to be rich in the good things [we] do, to be generous, and to share with others*” -- in other words, God gives to us our earthly wealth & possessions *precisely SO THAT* we can practice *acts* of compassion towards others by helping them materially.⁷

2--During an interview, Mother Teresa was once told by a TV reporter “*I wouldn't do what you're doing for all the money in the world.*” To which she replied simply, “*Neither would I.*”⁸

C--You see, when you & I realize that money/possessions exist partly to help us *act* with love and compassion towards *others*, it changes the way we view and use them.

--IV--

11. So, “*Money & possessions exist to be enjoyed by us AS we use them to love God by loving people.*”⁹

A--You or I may not have a lot of money or possessions *ourselves*.

B--But whatever we DO have, God wants us to *enjoy* as we use them to love *Him* by loving *others* -- and *that's* the real “*Purpose of Money.*”

12. [PRAY: *If you're willing to give God your finances in this way... ask people to take out their wallet from pocket or purse and lift it up in surrender to God...*]

ENDNOTES:

¹ The original source of this story is unknown, but I share it here from the front page pastor's article (Rev. Dr. David Jones) of the Trinity-on-the-Hill United Methodist Church (Augusta, GA) newsletter from March 3, 2000 (Vol. 47, Issue 9).

² Many of today's points and ideas were either inspired or modified from Dr. Dale Burke's sermon "*Money: The Heart of the Matter; Sermon #5: Compassion*", preached 10/31/04 (<http://www.leverageleadership.org/>).

³ Bulletin sermon notes: **Money/possessions are out of place: 1) as an object of our affection or basis for security; 2) when they're a source of pride; 3) as a measure/source of significance & fulfillment. Instead, "money/possessions exist to be enjoyed by us as we use them to love God by loving people": 1) For our enjoyment as we 2) Love God, and 3) Love People.**

⁴ This directly *contradicts* the popular saying, "*Whoever dies with the most toys wins.*"

⁵ We find this outlined in 1 Chronicles 16:29. I've heard it said that "*Giving is not about the need of the church to receive, but about the need of the giver to give*" (Stewardship consultant Herb Miller). This means that even if someone an anonymous big check to pay the rest of the budgetary needs for the year, we still wouldn't cancel the weekly offering, because the primary goal of offerings is to give *us* the chance to give to God, rather than the church needing to collect funds to pay bills or do ministry.

⁶ <https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=compassion>

⁷ And this is true not only of our financial resources, but also of our actions of kindness towards/with others. So, whether we have lots of money or little, we can all be "*rich in good works*" as Verse 18 says -- we can be generous, ready/quick to share with others. Another scripture that illustrates this point very well is 1 John 3:16-18. If John 3:16 is the most famous passage on how to know God, then 1 John 3:16 is probably the most important passage describing our need for compassion as Christians. In his sermon "*Money: The Heart of the Matter; Sermon #5: Compassion*", (preached 10/31/04, daleburke.com), Dr. Dale Burke makes several observations about the nature of compassion as found in this passage: (#1) Compassion is modeled by the cross of Jesus (Verse. 16 ' he laid down his life for us, *therefore* we ought to lay down our lives for one another); (#2) Compassion calls us to sacrificial giving -- its not just about us *caring*, but about us *daring* to take a step of *action* and give something up/ sacrifice something for the good of those who are hurting (Read, for example, Deuteronomy 15:10); (#3) Compassion flows from hearts that are stirred by our relationship with Christ -- it's not about us just "sucking it up and trying to do good," but it should flow naturally out of our relationship with Christ; (#4) Compassion assures our hearts before God -- if we want to be confident of our relationship with God, then we must check our compassion meter: if we lack compassion, we should ask ourselves if we're *truly* born again, because if we have the heart of God and spirit of Jesus living within us, then our natural inclination should be to have compassion towards others. None of us will ever "get there," but are we at least making progress? If not, then we need to ask: are we truly into a relationship with Jesus? Or merely into religion? You see, God not only wants us to *feel* the pain of those who hurt, but also wants us to take simple acts of compassion to help and get involved; and (#5) Compassion catches the eyes, awakens the ears, and pleases the heart of God. God's heart is touched when we demonstrate acts of compassion towards others.

⁸ Shared by Dr. Dale Burke in his sermon "*Money: The Heart of the Matter; Sermon #5: Compassion*", preached 10/31/04 (<http://www.leverageleadership.org/>).

⁹ Dr. Dale Burke (see citation in previous endnote) states that there are at least four consequences of us ACTING with compassion towards others in our financial and material giving: (#1) Our heart will become more compassionate (Read Matthew 6:21), so that if want to learn how to become a more compassionate person, we simply need to start giving; (#2) Our God will provide our needs and increase our ability to give (Read Isaiah 58:10-11), meaning that as we give, God will not only provide our needs along the way, but make it possible for us to give even more in the future; (#3) When we give, we will receive blessing from other people (Read Proverbs 11:24-25), meaning not that God promises us prosperity, but that He will take care of our needs in life when we trust in Him; and (#4) We will build eternal rewards (Read 1 Timothy 6:19), meaning that we'll be storing up "*treasure in heaven*" when we give.