

## Christ the Center of Our Finances Luke 18:18-30

### Introduction

- Last week, I began by suggesting that you would be convicted by the sermon. Today, you may just be mad at me by the end of the sermon
- We are going to look at how Christ can be at the center of our finances
  - Talking about money is never an easy topic
  - Many pastors avoid the topic; and congregations would advise their pastors to avoid bringing the topic up
  - The topic of money has been abused by pastors, and also misinterpreted by congregations
  - So why stir the pot?
    - The Bible, in particular Jesus, talked about money a lot
    - If we really get to the heart of things, finances are not the heart of the issue, we've just misplaced our concerns with money
- For example
  - The more money you have the happier you will be, however I've met a lot rich people who are miserable and a lot of happy people who have very little.
  - The more money you have, the less problems, however I've met a lot of rich people who acquire more problems as they acquire more money.
  - The more money you have, the less you will need. Yet, I've seen people who have a lot of money, but just can't seem to get enough stuff.
- Just like any of the topics we have discussed thus far in our series (identity, time, etc.), when Christ is not at the center, our entire purpose gets misplaced.
- I received a book this week, *Gospel Reset: Salvation Made Relevant*, by Ken Ham.
  - One of the arguments in the book, is that the more our society becomes secular, the less familiar people are with the message of the Bible.
  - Previously, the church could encourage people to receive Jesus as Savior. Most people were familiar enough with the story of Jesus, Sin, and the Cross that they just needed to be persuaded to accept Jesus into their lives.
  - Unfortunately, the story of the Bible, for example the origins of creation and sin are now taken for granted, and when the church talks about Jesus, the world struggles to set Jesus apart from any other religious leader, and Christianity apart from any other religion.
- I would suggest, that a similar issue has occurred with money.
  - Pastors have not taught about it properly
  - Christians have struggled with reconciling their faith and finances
  - All while culture has set the bar on achievement and success on what we have or own
- What I would like to do, as we discuss Christ at the Center of Our Finances, is approach the topic by connecting 3 points that we have addressed over the past couple of weeks to our finances.

- Identity
- Eternal Perspective
- Control
- As we tackle these three points, I think it will help us to make Christ the Center of Our Life.

## Identity

- Picture on bills-An identity to a bill (Trivia)
  - \$1- George Washington
  - \$5- Abraham Lincoln
  - \$10- Alexander Hamilton
  - \$50- Ulysses S. Grant
  - \$100- Benjamin Franklin
- While none of us will have a bill with our picture on it; we all look for our name on a check that has value to us.
- Society is often defined by money: lower-class, middle-class, and upper-class. These definitions may say something about the value of what we own, but not the value of who we are.
- **1 Timothy 6:6-10**
  - Paul is addressing an unhealthy pursuit of money. He is not saying that money in and of itself is bad.
  - Acquiring money is not a bad thing.
  - It's the craving and pursuit of money that is the root of evil.
- Going back to the beginning
  - Adam and Eve had everything in the Garden
  - Money wasn't even a temptation, because there was nothing that Adam and Eve needed. Everything was provided for them.
  - HOWEVER, the temptation they experienced was the desire to have more than what God had given to them.
  - The craving or pursuit to want more than God, led to their destructive behavior.
- **1 Timothy 6:4**
  - The pursuit of money is a dead-end
  - We were not created for this pursuit!
  - Instead- **1 Timothy 6:11-12**
    - Pursue the things of God
    - Reflective of the image of God
    - Essential to our being
- Whatever our life revolves around (or pursues) is what defines us
  - Like last week, this is not an issue of good or bad
  - Money is not bad
  - What becomes destructive, is when money becomes the center of our life (just like any of the other topics we have discussed), rather than Christ.

## Eternal Perspective

- **Luke 18:18-23**
  - The incorrect interpretation of this passage, is to assume that to follow Jesus requires that we sell all our possessions.
  - The point of the story is not about money!
  - The point of the story is: “What is at the center of your life?”
  - The rich ruler asked the right question: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”
    - His approach was wrong
    - He thought he had lived a perfect life; maybe because he was arrogant or because of what he possessed
    - In his mind, he could obtain anything with his wealth, so what was necessary to obtain eternal life?
- An Eternal Perspective
  - Last week, Time based on linear vs eternal
    - Beginning and end
    - Always being
  - The pursuit of money can play the same part as the linear perspective
    - “Money makes the world go around”
    - Money plays a necessary role in our life
      - Pays the bills
      - Necessities (food, clothing, shelter, etc.)
  - Step back from the linear perspective for just a moment
    - “Who really makes the world go around?”
    - The rich ruler had become so dependent upon his wealth, that he was unwilling to give it up.
  - Eternity is not something you can purchase
    - Eternity is accepting God’s rule in your life verses the temporary values of the world.
    - This is how happiness, contentment, peace is found.
    - You can’t buy those things!
- The Pursuit of Eternity
  - **Luke 18:21-22**
    - The rich ruler thought he had done everything to acquire eternal life
    - “One thing you still lack”- connect to “Only one thing is necessary” (**Luke 10:42**)
    - Follow Jesus-the pursuit of righteousness
    - **1 Timothy 6:11, “But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”**
    - The rich ruler did not keep the basic commandments
      - Have no other gods before GOD
      - Do not covet
  - If Christ is not at our Center, we will stumble and fall!
- Having an eternal perspective will help us to keep money in it’s proper place in our life.

## Control

- Kids and Chores
  - Began with tooth fairy; a way to earn money
  - Always needing something-and our response has been, “When you get your own money you can buy whatever you want.”
  - So, when we began chores, the kids didn’t like doing them, but the reward added motivation.
  - Now, they want to do things outside of their chore list only if they can make money
  - Like, doing something nice, “Do I get paid for that?”
  - Kids are trying to control the parents. They have missed the point!
- **Luke 18:24-30**
  - To go through the eye of a needle is impossible for anyone, which was Jesus’ point.
  - The crowds picked up on Jesus’ point.
  - Then, Jesus was able to really hit them, by explaining that only God can provide entry into the Kingdom.
  - It can’t be earned, or bought; there’s no allowance system!
- Last week’s example of Martha was that she tried to control time, and the more she did the more time seemed to slip away
  - Money works the same way
  - The more we pursue it, the more it controls us
  - It begins to consume how we live our life, and the decisions we make.
- If God’s kingdom principles don’t function according to the world’s perception of money, then how can we reconcile our life in the world?
  - “What is impossible with man, is possible with God.”
  - Don’t you always get frustrated when you ask your kids to do something, and they ask, “Why?”
  - It doesn’t matter “why.” It matters that I asked you to do it!
  - It’s not about what you get out of it. It’s about doing what I told you to do!
  - God’s will works the same way.
    - Reconciling God’s principles according to the world is never going to make sense.
    - You will walk away sad like the rich ruler
    - If Christ is at the Center of your life, you place your faith in him to work the impossible...including your finances!

## Conclusion

- I am no ways near rich, but neither am I righteous
  - I struggle with the desire to have more and reconciling the peace of contentment
  - Bills, house payments, insurance, groceries, clothes, vacation, etc. The dollar signs add up; It’s part of living in this world.
  - BUT, I want to remind you that you were made for so much more!
    - In Christ, you can find every necessary need

- In Christ, you can find your true purpose.
  - Your value is not based on what is in your checkbook or your paycheck
- If we really get to the heart of things, finances are not the heart of the issue, we've just misplaced our concerns with money
  - For example
    - The more money you have the happier you will be, however I've met a lot of rich people who are miserable and a lot of happy people who have very little.
    - The more money you have, the less problems, however I've met a lot of rich people who acquire more problems as they gain financially.
    - The more money you have, the fewer needs you will have. Yet, I've seen people who have a lot of money, but just can't seem to get enough stuff.
- Is Christ the Center of your Finances?
  - Identity
  - Eternal Perspective
  - Control