

ON THE MOVE: Kingdom Investors, Message #4 Money On the Move, Luke 12:13-34, November 10, 2024

It's 160AD in Rome, and this new movement called Christianity is catching fire throughout the empire despite the best efforts of the Emperor to stop it. And a member of the noble class named Diognetus is curious, he's trying to make sense of Christians because the way they live is so strange. And he writes a letter to his friend and here's just an excerpt of how he described them. "They share their table with all, but they don't share their bed with all. They are poor, yet they make many rich; they are completely destitute, and yet they enjoy complete abundance."¹

Wow, what an incredible description of the early church! The early church developed a reputation of being radically generous. Opening up their homes, leveraging their possessions to serve others. And even though they weren't rich compared to nobles like Diognetus, they joyfully gave to support the work of the gospel. This is one of the key reasons the gospel was so contagious in the first three centuries despite persecution. Now where did the early Christians get this kind of generous perspective of their money and possessions? They got it from Jesus! People tend to grumble when churches preach about money, (we actually haven't done a series on money for over 6 years), but as we've seen in this series, Jesus had no problem addressing the topic. Because money, on one hand, is one of the greatest obstacles between people and God. And on the other, one of the greatest opportunities to reach the lost and build the kingdom of God.

That's what this series is all about, becoming Kingdom Investors. We are in week four and today we are going to examine our fourth parable, the parable of the "Rich Fool" in Luke 12. Let's first set up the context. Jesus had been teaching large crowds all day on a variety of topics, it was like a hillside Bible college, and some guy busts into the middle of this teaching... **13** "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." What's going on here? In those days, if there were two children, it was common for the older to receive $\frac{2}{3}$ of the family estate and the younger brother $\frac{1}{3}$. So we don't know exactly what the dispute was, but the younger brother isn't happy with how things are being divided. My sense is that this man is requesting a sermon on money that Jesus was so famous for, so that it would be targeted at his brother, likely there in the crowd... HE needs it, not me. Surely, none of us have been listening to a sermon and thought- "I don't need this but I know who does!" But Jesus sees his wasn't in his heart... **14** Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"

15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." This man in the crowd didn't think he was greedy, he thought it was his brother who was greedy, but his greed was disguising itself as "deserving my fair share." We tend to either justify greed or deny greed. Most people don't think this is a sin they struggle with- but we all know OTHER people who do. And the problem is, when we justify or deny it, what happens is greed gives birth to all kinds of other destructive sins. That's why **1** Timothy 6:10 says that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Greed can make people

¹ https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/epistle_to_diognetus.htm

neglect their loved ones by becoming a workaholic, or compromise their integrity (lie, cheat and steal) to get more of it. It can make us envious and judgmental, resentful of those who have more than us. Having money can make us controlling or miserly toward those who have much less than us. And certainly it can make us too comfortable, self-sufficient, and proud where we don't think we need God. The C-suites in Wilmington contain some of the hardest to reach people. Jesus knows our hearts, our tendency to justify or deny greed. He knows our tendency to be gripped by our money or chasing money, and he wants something so much better for us! He wants us to learn what life truly consists of and how to truly become rich according to God's definition, not the world's. So he tells this parable.

¹⁶“The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’”

¹⁸“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.’”

¹⁹“And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”

²⁰“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’”

21 “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” Jesus is meek and mild, but he doesn't hesitate to call this man a fool. Isn't this a little harsh? After all, it seems this parable is about the American dream, isn't it? Isn't this what we consider success? Early retirement! My future is secure! I've worked hard, now it's time to relax, never put on a suit again, sleep in, enjoy life, work on my backswing. What's so bad about this? But remember, just like the man in the crowd, greed was disguising itself in this man's life, and it's why Jesus called him a fool. Two foolish things he did that reveal a heart gripped by greed.

1- He cut God out of his financial decisions. Notice his “self talk.” 12x in v.17-19 he refers himself. “I” and “my.” He was his own financial advisor. When his abundance and wealth came, there was no talk about what God would want him to do with this. Remember what we said last week, Kingdom Managers live by the mantra, “God owns it, I manage it.” Well this guy lived with the fool's mantra- “I earned it, I deserve it.” This man justified his greed by his hard work and the blessing of abundance. See the problem is not that he was wealthy, or that he took an early retirement, or even that he wanted to enjoy some of the reward of that hard work. The problem is he didn't see that it was from God's hand, and he never bothered to consult God about what to do with it. Friends: Jesus loves us, but he will not hesitate to call us a fool when we don't acknowledge his blessing and when we make financial decisions without him.

2- He defined riches by what he HAD instead of what he GAVE.

21 *"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."* This man bought into a still relevant and modern lie- *"The Good Life is Defined by Wealth."* I was talking with a financial advisor friend who has a number of very wealthy clients, and he told me that they are some of the most miserable, sad people he's ever met. Now that's not always true, but we shouldn't be surprised that it's often true for people who make wealth their goal. **Ecclesiastes 5:10** *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money nor he who loves wealth with his income.* Solomon, one of the richest people who ever lived says, take my advice- Money won't make you happy and you will never feel like you have enough. Most of us remember the name Bernie Madoff, who was the criminal mastermind behind the largest ponze scheme in history. But did you know that Bernie Madoff actually ran a very successful company and was very wealthy prior to his criminal enterprise? And yet it just wasn't enough.

"Money will buy a bed, but not rest; education, but not wisdom; companions, but not friends; a house, but not a home; amusements, but not happiness; conveniences, but not peace; insurance, but not security." -JD Greear. We all know this and yet we still all want to find out for ourselves. Jesus says, watch out! Be aware, I'm trying to save you from the grip of greed!

Jesus flips the definition of success and riches. You want to be truly rich? Be rich toward God. He goes on to describe what this looks like- **31** *But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.*

32 *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*

33 *Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out,*

a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

34 *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* Possessions aren't eternal, but people are. That's what we should be investing in: loving people and sharing the gospel, financially investing in the eternity of people, which is exactly what Jesus came to do.

How are you defining wealth? What you HAVE or what you GIVE? Most people have heard the preacher George Whitfield who was instrumental in the Great Awakening of the 18th century, he may be the greatest evangelist in history outside of the Apostle Paul. But the name you might not be as familiar with is Lady Huntingdon. Lady Huntingdon was a wealthy member of England's aristocracy and also a devout woman of faith. After hearing George Whitefield preach, she wrote him a letter and said, *"God chose me to be a member of England's nobility, and now I am ready to use my position for Jesus' sake.* Galatians 2:2 says that Paul preached privately to those who seemed influential in Jerusalem and I have a burden for the influential in England. They won't go out to the fields to hear preachers, but they will come to my home for you to bring the gospel to them." And that's what she did. She held massive parties in her home, all out hospitality, at an enormous cost to her fortune, and invited prominent politicians, actors, lords and ladies, and even a few members of the royal family. And there in her home George

Whitefield preached a powerful gospel message. Even so bold as to say, “My only aim is to bring you to Christ, to deliver you from your false confidences, to raise you from your dead formality, and to revive real Christianity! Even to you that are rich do I now freely offer salvation by Jesus Christ, if you will renounce yourselves and come to Jesus Christ as poor sinners.” Because Lady Huntingdon was so admired and respected among this crowd, it opened their hearts to hear the gospel, many came to faith. Thirty years later, Lady Huntingdon returned to her hometown of Bath, a place much like North Wilmington, an upwardly mobile area where there were few Christians and few Gospel preaching churches. And she decided to use her fortune to build churches. Many people scoffed at her, telling her she was wasting her money, but she said, “When I gave myself up to the Lord, I likewise devoted all my fortune to Him. Many benevolent persons who have no religion care for the poor.”

But few, even among professing Christians, have a proper concern for the awful condition of perishing souls.” Within a few years she was responsible for building 116 churches throughout England’s cities and towns and a seminary to train more preachers.²

Wow. Lady Huntingdon was certainly rich, but not because of what she HAD but because of what she GAVE. Does that inspire you? What if all of us, whether we had a lot or a little, thought about the resources of our time, talents and treasures like she did? It’s not about equal amounts, it’s about equal sacrifice. He’s the one who can multiply our few loaves and fishes.

And here’s the thing. Sooner or later, this life ends just like the rich man in the parable. ²⁰ *Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”* One of my all-time favorite movies growing up in the late 80s, early 90s was *The Goonies*. Now if you haven’t seen *The Goonies*, it’s a story about a group of kids who find a map that leads to the hidden treasure of the pirate One-Eyed Willy. So they take off on this wild treasure hunt filled with booby traps being chased by the Fratelli crime family. I mean, does it get any better of a plot? After nearly escaping death several times, they find a hidden cove with an enormous pirate ship, and hidden in the hull of the ship are the skeletons of the pirate crew sitting around a table surrounded with all kinds of treasures: precious jewels, golden coins, jewelry. And there at the head of the table is the skeleton of One-Eyed Willy still gripping his treasure. While it’s an iconic 80s movie scene, it’s also a haunting image of what Jesus is saying about greed. The skeleton remains remind us that life clearly doesn’t consist of the abundance of possessions. They had a fortune and yet, the treasure is here and they are gone, and a bunch of goonies are going to get it. But generosity breaks the grip of greed.

Andy Stanley likes to say, “Do your givin’ while your livin’, so your knowin’ where it’s goin’” What Jesus tells us is that the only antidote for greed is generosity. Randy Alcorn, *Treasure Principle* says “Generosity breaks us out of orbit around our possessions. We escape their gravity, entering a new orbit around our treasures in heaven.”

² John Reinhart, *Gospel Patrons*

We have two bank accounts, one temporal and one eternal. Throughout your life you are making deposits in one or the other. Every act of obedience with money to God is a deposit in eternity. Every act of helping others, giving to the work of God, for the advancement of his kingdom. This is what Jesus wants for us, he wants us to be rich for eternity!

Commitment Card. Now I said that this is week 4 of 5 in our vision series ON THE MOVE: Kingdom Investors. Next week is Commitment Sunday. I want to just speak candidly as your pastor, from my heart to yours. If you have your card on you that's great, but it's really meant for your prayers. Three quick things about this card.

1- **This is a spiritual decision and a spiritual process.** And I totally get it, the cynicism in our world runs high, and you might feel like, "Yeah, it's actually a money decision, and that's what we're talking about. And yes, there is a financial commitment. But it's much more deeply a spiritual process and decision. And what I've been praying for, and talking with you about is that my hope is that every person and every household who calls Brandywine their church home would engage in a prayerful, spiritual catalytic encounter with God as it pertains to where our money and our treasure is. Many of you have already gone through a moment like that and you get it, you have been forever changed from it. And that's what the Spirit is doing in my heart again through this process.

2- **It will take all of us.** True financially big and small. But the reason isn't just to fund building renovations, it's to build resilient disciples which requires life on life investment, and to reach our community with the gospel which requires us to use our own circle of influence which is uniquely yours.

3- **If you hear a voice in the back of your head** that says, "My contribution to this campaign is insignificant and unimportant." I want to encourage you to not listen to that voice. You might say, 5.5M that's a huge amount of money, I'm not a heavy hitter. Mine could only be a drop in the bucket. That's not true for two reasons. Even on the simplest level, financially. Even a single light bulb that will be installed is going to shine on somebody. Every patch of flooring in our Kids wing is going to be tread on by some child, who may hear the Gospel or that they are loved for the first time. Every cushion or chair in our Cafe will be sat on for meaningful, potentially life transforming conversation. But more importantly, there is no way this process can be insignificant to your relationship with God.

So next Sunday is commitment Sunday, it's a massive moment in the story that God is writing in our ON THE MOVE journey. I hope you will come. The easy work will be filling out the commitment card. The hard work will be the prayer and discernment process with the Lord.

To give you a sense of what this will look like. Next week we will fill out our card and bring them forward and put them in boxes in the front which we will pray over and dedicate to the Lord. Don't be intimidated by that, these are not legal contracts, these are commitments before the Lord that we are making.

