

Message Summary

We know that life is truly all about Jesus. The challenge to all-out devotion is that there are so many competitors. Though these competitors take many different forms, clearly one of the greatest is money. All of us must interact with money to live. There are endless demands on us for our money and endless ways to use our money: to make, spend, save, give, and invest. In all this interaction with money, the line between Jesus and “Benjamin” is often blurred. Money carries an endless propensity to trust it rather than God. Jesus insists on being God rather than money. God does not need our money. Rather, His instructions are aimed to provide freedom from the worship of money for faithful financial stewardship, so that our hearts can be fully God’s. Faithful stewardship begins by disabusing us from the notion that money is ours. All we have is God’s! He created the world and all that it is in it (Ps. 100:3). Our money belongs to God, and has been entrusted to us for His purposes.

In financial stewardship, the faithfulness of our hearts is ultimate. Thus, Jesus is equally concerned with faithfulness in little and large amounts of money. Money tempts us to measure faithfulness by worldly standards and pragmatic outcomes, and discount smaller amounts of money as unhelpful to the kingdom. Jesus insists otherwise. Giving does not free God up to achieve on earth. Rather, it frees us from the idolatry of money and offers us the privilege of being part of God’s work. Because all we have is God’s, he demands faithfulness from large as well as small amounts. Further, our faithfulness in small things indicates our ability to be faithful in large things. If we cannot be faithful in small amounts (such as \$1), why would God entrust to us larger amounts (such as \$1 million)?

Similarly, if we are dishonest in little, we will be dishonest with much. We bend the truth about things we love the most. The Pharisees embodied such fraud. Claiming to be pure followers of the true God, in their hearts they were lovers of money (Lk. 16:14). They issue a warning, for then and for now, to be careful who we listen to and who we become. It is possible to claim and appear to be a follower of Christ, and actually be a worshipper of money. Christ calls us to shift our love from this world’s deceptive currency to loving people with the truth. The God who entrusts us with money calls us to use it as a means to worship God and serve people (cf. Mt. 22:34-40). The eternal joy that comes from investing our money into people far outweighs this world’s riches. Everything the Father entrusted the Son, the Son was faithful with. Christ hung on the cross for our unfaithfulness. The resurrected life He offers us is letting go of the money never ours in the first place, and trusting God enough to invest it in people who will last for eternity.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Why is money such a fierce competitor for our devotion to God? Why are we constantly tempted to trust it rather than God?

Why is Christ concerned with faithfulness in small things as well as great? Why are we tempted to overlook faithfulness in small things?

Read 1 Tm. 6:17-21. What kinds of commands does Paul offer to the rich in this age? In view of Lk. 16:10-15, what does he mean by “take hold of that which is truly life”?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don’t have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. Is money a competitor to your all-out devotion to Christ?
2. Do you still cling to the notion that your earthly possessions belong to you?
3. Are you tempted to think that faithfulness in small things is less important than faithfulness in big things? Are you faithful in whatever life circumstance and possessions God has called you to, big or small?
4. Do your financial dealings represent the integrity of God's truthfulness, or a dishonest heart trusting in earthly possessions?
5. Like the Pharisees of old, are you a hypocrite who publically appears religious but inwardly are a lover of money rather than God?
6. Consider your financial dealings over the past month. In light of them, is money a master or a means to love God and people?
7. Do you find more joy in using money to invest in people's eternal joy, or storing it up to acquire more earthly possessions?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for Christ's faithfulness in all the Father called Him to, and for bearing the guilt and punishment for our unfaithfulness on the cross.
 - Pray that money would not be our god. Pray rather that it would be a means to love God and others, and that we would shrewdly manage it (Lk. 16:1-9) for the glory of God and eternal good of others.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that the Gadsden community would see the futility of trusting money more than God. Pray that people would see in Christ a more worthwhile God to worship, and more valuable joy to pursue.
 - Pray for the dream center of Gadsden, that the Lord would use the dream center to rescue many in Gadsden from love of money and worldly things and point them in eternal direction for their ambition.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for a great harvest of souls in China. Pray that the rapidly developing economy would not create a false god or dependence on money. Pray that financial successes would demonstrate the futility of trusting in money, and leave the Chinese hungry for a more worthy God to trust and worship.