

“KEYS TO THE TREASURE (#2):
THE PURPOSE OF MONEY”
(1 Timothy 6:17-19)
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[East Cobb U.M.C.; 4-26-09]

-I-

1. [Traditional Service 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 MBA, 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 this way to you?... a rat race to accumulate “stuff” that you don’t really need anyway?

A–Well, to help with this, we began a series exploring biblical principles to help unlock a few “Keys to the Treasure” of money and possessions.

B–Last week we talked about what happens when money and possessions are *not* in their proper place – when we look to *them* for security and certainty in life, resulting in a world hurt (as the events of this past nine months reveal!).

C–Well today, I want us to turn our attention to what happens when they’re *IN* their proper place – when we understand their purpose according to scripture, and use them the way God originally *designed* – ...

D–...Because when we do that, I think we’ll find that money and possessions – understood and used *properly* – can be a powerful tool for good and for joy in life. ²

–II–

4. Still, to appreciate this *proper* place, we first need to understand when/where money and possessions are *out* of place.

A–And we find at least four of these in Vs. 17 of today’s scripture from 1 Tim.6: (MSG) “*Tell those rich in this world’s wealth to quit being so full of themselves, and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage*”; (NRSV) “*As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*” – so, here are the four, found in your bulletin Sermon Notes ...

B–First, money and possessions are out of place when they’re seen **as an object of our affection** = when we’re “*obsessed with money/setting our hopes on... riches*”; e.g., when we love *stuff* (instead of loving *God*), then it’s out of place.

C–Second, money and possessions are out of place **when they’re a source of pride** in life – when we’re “*full of ourselves/haughty*”, because when we have more money/possessions than others, it *doesn’t* mean we “better” than them, just that we’re “blessed by God; So don’t get smug and cocky about what you have, because it’s all just God’s *gift* anyway.

D–And that leads us to a third way... money and possessions are out of place **as a basis for security** – we said last week that ultimate security is found in God, not in our 401k; that we’re to look to our heavenly *Father*, not to our *finances*, to provide all our needs.

E–And finally, money/possessions are also out of place when we view them **as a measure or source of significance & fulfillment**–we dare not measure our significance/importance as human beings by how materially “successful” we are, because ultimate “success” and fulfillment in life is not determined by how much money we make, or by how many “toys” we end up with when we die. ³

–III–

5. So if these are a few ways that money and possessions get *out* of place, then when/where is it that these things are *in* their proper place?

A–E.G., **for what purpose did God originally design money & possessions** anyway?

B–Well, in your bulletin sermon notes you’ll find a simple answer containing three dimensions that I want to unpack using today’s scripture: “***Money exists to be enjoyed by us as we use it to love God by loving people.***”

6. First of all, money/possessions are created by God **FOR OUR ENJOYMENT** & pleasure.

A–Verses 17 & 19 says that (MSG) “*God... piles on all the riches we could ever manage... [so that we can] build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life*”; (NRSV) “*God ...richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment... [so that we can] store up for ourselves treasure of a good foundation... so that [we] may take hold of the life that really is 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, and taken delight in.

C–The problem is when we begin to *worship* these things *as God*, or (like I said earlier) when we look to them as objects/sources of affection, pride, security, or significance – ...

7. ...Because then we’re not practicing the *second* dimension of money’s purpose, which is that “*[It] exists to be enjoyed by us as we use it to LOVE GOD....*”

A–Verse 17 of today’s scripture says to (MSG) “*tell those rich in this world’s wealth... to go after GOD...*” (NRSV) “*[command] those who in the present age are rich... to set their hopes... on GOD....*”

B–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, or your car, or computer, lawnmower, sewing machine, or even your iPhone as something to use to love and worship God?

2–If you did, it might actually change the way you use it – the websites you visit, who you open your home to, who you pick up in your car, who you sew clothes for, or even whose lawn you cut.

C–And what about the obvious example of the financial gifts we give during the offering time each week in worship?

1–You see, the offering we collect is *not* primarily so we can meet the church budget, or pay church bills (those are fringe benefits, but not the main purpose).

2–No. The primary reason we take up an offering is to give us all an opportunity to *give* to God – to glorify, love and worship *Him* through our financial resources. ⁴

8. But money also exists (thirdly) “*To be enjoyed by us as we use it 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 Verse 18: (MSG) “*Those who are rich in this world’s wealth [are]... to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous....*” (NRSV) “*Those who in the present age are rich... [are] to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share....*”

1–In other words, this third dimension of the purpose of money deals with COMPASSION, which the American Heritage dictionary defines as: “*Sharing the suffering of another, combined with the inclination to give aid or support.*”

2–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.

B–And so Verse 18 is saying that God gives us our earthly wealth and possessions *precisely so that* we can practice *acts* of compassion for others by helping them materially.⁵

1–And when we do that, not only are we demonstrating our love for *God*, but that *that*, in turn, gives *us* a sense of fulfillment, enjoyment, and pleasure, as well.⁶

2–I don’t know about you, but when I give my money or possessions to help someone else, it makes me feel good.

3–I feel close to God, and therefore I enjoy what I’ve given all the more – not because I still *have* it, but because I’ve loved God by *giving it away* to others.

4–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.*”⁷

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

–IV–

9. So then, “*money exists to be enjoyed by us AS we use it to love God by loving people.”⁸*

A– Before we leave today, I want to give us two chances to practice this calling: (#1) First, many of you know that one of the excellent ministries of our Children’s Dept. is with the children and families of the Boston Homes Housing Project near downtown Marietta.

B–Later this summer, though, these homes will be being torn down by the city, and its residents relocated to other projects. Before that happens, we want to be able to present the children that we’ve been ministering to with Bibles of their own.

C–Also, (#2) our church is currently helping to support the education of over 150 children at the Kioni School in Kenya. This summer when Pastor Peter visits, he would like to present Bibles to those children, as well.

D–To do both of these things, we would like to purchase approximately 200 Bibles @ around \$15 apiece (around \$3000 total). So, if you want to help raise these funds (in addition to your regular tithes), please put cash / checks in envelope to “ECUMC: Bible Project.”

10. You see, friends, we may or may not have lots of money or possessions ourselves. But whatever we *do* have God wants us to enjoy as we use it to love Him by loving others – and *that’s* the real “*Purpose of Money.*”
11. [PRAY]
12. [CLOSING SONGS]

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 (daleburke.com).
3. This goes directly against the popular saying, “*Whoever dies with the most toys wins.*”
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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 1ST 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.

7. Shared by Dr. Dale Burke in his sermon “*Money: The Heart of the Matter; Sermon #5: Compassion*”, preached 10/31/04 (daleburke.com).

8. 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.