

## Redeeming Wealth

*Luke 16:8-9*

February 23, 2020

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Explain what is meant by the title: not wealth as the object of the verb redeeming, but redeeming as the adjective modifier of the word wealth, i.e. wealth that redeems

- As Christians we are not quite clear as to what is the mature way to talk about wealth?
  - The Bible gives us many warnings about riches and about being wealthy:
    - Jesus in the parable of the rich fool
    - Jesus in the story of the rich man and Lazarus
    - Jesus after the young rich man decides not to follow him: *How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God!*
    - Paul to the rich in 1 Tim: *Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God*
    - From James: *Come now, you rich people, weep and wail over the miseries that are coming on you. <sup>2</sup>Your wealth has rotted and your clothes are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up treasure in the last days.*
  - A casual reading of scripture might suggest that wealth is at best a spiritual risk and at worst a spiritual curse. Much of the Bible's teaching condemns trusting it or our finding security in it:
    - Jesus: *You cannot serve God and money*
    - Paul: *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*
  - Seems like the only holy way to talk about wealth is to warn about wealth!
- Now saints, last week we talked about work: a theology of work that God is a worker & since you are made in **his** image, he created **you** to be a fruitful and productive worker
  - God created you to **share in** and **even complete** his work
  - That in our work, we not only serve one another, but **we mainly serve God**
  - That our work points us to be a steward of God's creation, not exploiters of creation
  - That we should work with **excellence & effort**, doing so pleases and honors God

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- But saints, can we talk about work and not talk about wealth? Everyone who works produces and possesses wealth (and some who don't work)
  - But we all have wealth, maybe a lot or a little. We may spend it all or we may hoard it, but we all have it, and there must be a way to praise God with it
  - Most who have heard this kind of talk before assume it's about "stewardship" and I think that's right. But often when we say stewardship, we often mean managing money, typically not spending it unwisely, budgeting, etc. And that is good.
  - But when we Jesus speaks of stewardship, he doesn't so much mean managing and not losing it, indeed in the Parable of the Talents, Jesus calls simply giving back the master what he gave you "lazy and evil." Jesus defines stewardship as your investing what he has given you for a kingdom dividend. The more he has given you the bigger dividend or return he expects from you.
  - Let's be clear: when God gives you \$ and ability, he wants to see more from you than just that you & your kids are sheltered, clothed, fed, & educated, his expectations of you are higher than that. He needs a greater commitment and partnership from you!
- God has a family vision for your life and a kingdom vision for your life, & these are connected. Though when we think of stewardship we talk family budgeting, etc. but today we're going to look @ God's expectation for your wealth & wealth-producing ability through the lens of his kingdom priorities as Jesus talks about it here in **Luke 16...**
- Our approach, three things:
  - a) Mainly, interact with and reflect on this provocative & unsettling text that could only be said to us by God himself, our Lord Jesus Christ
  - b) Then briefly, the principle of this text, we want to construct a call to action for us, Living Faith and other mission-minded m/e, m/c, m/g churches
  - c) Open it up for Q&A

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### 1. The Text, Luke 16:8-9 [slide]

- Recap and explain v.1-7, some observed & reported the manager's ineptness (squandering), the master confronts and fires him.
  - A reminder that holy accountability is an important part of following Jesus.
  - The inept manager does not sulk in his new condition but responds w/action
  - The manager saw the urgency of his situation and acted cleverly & boldly to protect his interests
- The master's response in v.8a shows he's not mad about what the manager did, he's impressed! Why?
  - The manager acted shrewdly. Shrewd = astute, clever, cunning, ingenious
  - He used the rules of the game to his advantage. He acted maturely, not naively. In basketball, people talk about "grown man moves" as opposed to small weak moves. This was a big boy, big girl move. That makes you say "man!" "dope!"
  - He was brilliantly calculating and was able to create a win-win situation for both his master and the master's debtors!
- Jesus gives an ethical assessment in 8b [slide]
  - There's no condemnation for cheating, by mentioning the master's comment, there's tacit approval
  - Then the big statement: Children of this age > children of the light... dealing w/their own people means people of this generation. They understand as Solomon says in Ecc.10:19 that "money is the answer for everything" or ESV: "money answers everything", money has the power to win favor; in this world, money has the power to create advantages, it opens doors, it changes the way people feel, i.e. money can reach hearts that words can't reach. Money can do what good looks can't.
  - Jesus is explaining that children of the light often forget this or don't think it's relevant. We would rather give a miracle testimony than give a wealth-work testimony. Jesus is saying, not so fast: God is in the miracle biz, but that's not his

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- only biz! He does a miracle when it's needed. Yes, God is glorified when he does what only he can do, but he is also glorified when he educates and empowers you to navigate this world on the world's terms and obtain a profit for the kingdom.
- I was tempted to call this “image-up!” [slide], Like man-up, step up and be an image-bearer! Let me show you this amazing text, Deuteronomy 8:16-18 [slide]
    - Firstly, God does miracles for his people to humble so they will always be dependent upon him. Miracles are not meant to be the norm, but are to guard us against pride when he works in us through the norm.
    - He gives the power and ability to create wealth. Again, God creates wealth and he helps us, as one writer said, to take his wealth and make it wealthier!
      - Oil -> Gasoline, Diamonds -> Jewelry, Iron+Coal -> Steel, Cotton -> Clothes
      - God's raw materials (wealth) + human design and labor = economic value (greater wealth). We create wealth because God creates wealth!
    - This is how God confirms his covenant to us, not by raining down miracle after miracle, but by his blessing our labors and sacrifices and ingenuity to create purposeful wealth! The balance of expecting God to do the impossible and our dogged pursuit of the difficult is grown-man faith!
  - This is what Jesus is speaking to in v.9 [slide]
    - “And I tell you...” is Jesus' way of explicitly connecting what comes next to how children of this world act in this age or generation. There are three big movements in this verse:
      - Winning people
      - The use of worldly wealth
      - Eternal results... for you, the user of worldly wealth
    - The context makes clear he is not just talking about generosity, i.e. giving out of your wealth. That's not shrewd. The context points to the clever or ingenious use of wealth and wealth-making (your stewardship) to advance the kingdom's work to save people in this world. You are called to ensure \$ is not only not a

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- blocker to the kingdom's business of saving & sanctifying people, but to use money and money-making as an advantage to the kingdom agenda.
- “so that when it fails”, meaning use worldly \$ in way so that when it is no longer valuable in itself, it is still valuable to you in the kingdom. When you stand before Jesus and are welcomed into the kingdom, your money and money-making ability will be useless, ask the Egyptians, but how used money for the kingdom will be deposited into your kingdom account as kingdom currency!
  - When you read books or listen to messages on FWE, there is often talk about the intrinsic value of work and the benefit you provide to others through your work, which is good and God's plan and purpose for you. That's the cultural mandate. But the gospel mandate takes that further by coopting the cultural mandate for kingdom purposes. That's Jesus' point in Luke 16:8-9

Some action items for us in our use of wealth [slides]:

- 1. We want to see an emergence of a generation of kingdom-builders through wealth development and wealth deployment**
  - a. Operation 2035 – 15-year vision for vocation and stewardship-based discipleship, entrepreneurship with a strong gospel and kingdom mindedness: mature businesses and investment in kingdom
  - b. Vision 2025 – what milestones should we see in 5 years
  - c. Target 2045 – A level of kingdom pursuit capacity that allows kingdom vision to be met with kingdom capacity, so we're not required to always beg others for money
- 2. We want to see the “flourish” gap closed for Black and Brown families / communities**
  - a. Biblical discipleship & embracing Wesley's: Make – Save – Give
  - b. Discipline, hard work, saving, and generosity as a cultural marker. Beat consumerism!
  - c. Evangelism & restoration as the mark of gospel mission
- 3. Close flourish gap for seniors living at subsistence level or below as a demonstration of the love and power of gospel community (Save seniors by \$ & presence!)**