



Gospel generosity Study 1

Over the next three weeks, we're going to be considering what Jesus teaches regarding money and possessions. We might be surprised by how much it comes up. More than prayer and faith, more than heaven and hell, Jesus addressed the topic of money and material issues more than any other. Just consider how many of Jesus' parables include money and possessions.

- The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19 and Luke 18)
- The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8)
- The hidden treasure and the pearl of great price (Matthew 13)
- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10)
- The Prodigal Son (Luke 15)
- The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16)
- The Parable of the Talents (Matt 25 and Luke 19)
- The Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18)
- The Dishonest Manager (Luke 16)

On top of this, there are many moments when Jesus taught his disciples or had encounters with the rich and the poor where the attitude people had towards wealth and possessions was explicitly tied to one's spiritual condition. In other words, this issue matters.

Further, as believers in the Gospel, we believe that spiritual change occurs when we trust and follow the Lord Jesus. As we grow in our understanding of how generous God has been to us in Jesus, this surely has to impact our hearts so that we too are moved joyfully to gospel generosity.

This series will likely be confronting for us, as it was for Jesus' original hearers. Make no mistake – we cannot serve both God and money. But if we appreciate what Jesus and the New Testament is teaching, it will be a liberating confrontation, one that is essential for both our spiritual health and eternal joy.

Please be praying for our groups, our church and ourselves, that we hear and pursue the best financial and material advice ever given.

Opening questions to discuss:

What do you think most Christians would be more comfortable with and why?

- 1) Sharing how their prayers are *really* going.
- 2) Sharing how their spending is *really* going.
- 3) Sharing how their Bible reading is *really* going.

What would you be least comfortable with sharing and why?

- 1) Your entire online and phone usage history over the last month?
- 2) Your health habits (the good and the bad) over the last month?
- 3) Your entire spending and giving history over the last month?

I'm sure we would all find such questions, especially as they relate to money and possessions confronting, perhaps even annoying. What reasons might we come up with to *not* be willing to share such things?

Are they good reasons to give as a growing follower of Jesus?

Read the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) and discuss the following:

- 1) Why do you think Jesus refuses to answer the man's request in v.14? (Is it not a reasonable request given how much Jesus speaks about money?)
- 2) What do you make of Jesus' strong warning in v.15?

What is wrong with covetousness?

What is covetousness? (see Exodus 20:17)

Why is covetousness (or materialism) essentially a spiritual problem?

- 3) Up until v.20, this rich man's financial plan seems entirely reasonable. But with God now in the picture, how does that all change?
God doesn't often call people fools in the Bible, why is this so fitting?
- 4) Why is laying up treasure a deeply spiritual issue? What does it reveal about the power and promise of money?
- 5) How do Jesus' words immediately following the parable (vv.22-31) both reassure and challenge us? 6) What do you think the life that is rich towards God (v.21) looks like?

Application questions: pick one or more of the following for your group

- One of the great goals and dreams in our culture is FIRE (to be financially independent and retire early). How are we to consider this in view of Jesus' words in this chapter?
- What does being on guard against materialism mean for you and others? What is going to help us such that we are not judged as fools?
- In what ways does this passage challenge our beliefs and assumptions? What does it say about our hearts?

Pray together:

- That we would understand all the more the riches we have in Jesus?
- That this series would increase our trust in God when it comes to our material needs and our future.

• That we'd be freed up to enjoy a godly approach to money and investment.