

Today we begin a summer sermon series called “Hearsay or Heresy.” Each week we will consider an urban legend, a phrase or an idea that has become widely accepted in popular culture that sounds biblical but is anything but. These misquotes can be small deviations or blatant omissions to the words of scripture. They may or may not even be found in the Bible. It’s hearsay. When these ideas find their way into the church as a sort of midrash or supplement to the Bible we inadvertently promote heresy. The one we are going to consider today is a common misquote of 1 Tim. 6:10. You may have heard it said that, “Money is the root of all evil.” The Bible doesn’t say that. Here is what the Bible actually says, “For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” 1 Tim. 6:10

Why is the love of money considered the root of evil? There are some other pretty good candidates out there – pride, lust, envy? Why money? What Paul is saying is that all the evils in the world come from a certain kind of heart, namely, the kind of heart that loves money. If we love money, we suffer from misplaced devotion and misdirected affections. We are seeking the satisfaction of legitimate needs from an unreliable source. We are putting the weight of our devotion on something that wasn’t designed to bear it. No one is immune to a very common disease here in Dallas – AFFLUENZA. Let’s see what the Bible says about how to cure this common ailment. Let’s begin with the problem and then move to the solution.

1. We don’t have a money problem, we have an awe problem. Every one of us is hard-wired for awe. The awe of something is the motivation for everything I do. And God has created awesomeness. You want to take a vacation to go and see something God has created. You want to eat a good steak because God has given you tasted buds. You work hard because you find satisfaction in achievement and recognition. The problem is not that I want to be recognized or that I love a good steak, the problem is that these things will never ultimately satisfy the longing in my soul. They were no intended to. They are merely signs that point me heavenward.

“As it is true of a street sign, so it is true of every jaw-dropping, knee-weakening, silence producing, wonder-inspiring thing in the universe. The sign is not the thing you are looking for. No, the sign points you to what you are looking for. So, you can’t stop at the sign. For it will never deliver what the thing it is pointing to will deliver. Created awe has a purpose; It is meant to point you to the place where the awe of your heart should rest. If awesome things in creation become your god, the God who created those things will not own your awe. Horizontal awe is meant to do one thing: stimulate vertical awe.” Paul David Tripp, *Awe*, p. 21.

The heart that loves money pins its hopes, pursues its pleasures, and puts its trust in what human resources can offer. And sadly, the result is always disappointment. It’s possible that the love of money is a partial explanation for the epidemic of depression that plagues one of the wealthiest countries in the history of the world. A medical sociologist named Janice Egeland decided to study depression among the Amish. Apparently, sociologists are running low on subjects to study. Turned out she learned something very interesting. She found that incidents of depression among the Amish are significantly lower than the general population. Think about that. The Amish work hard, wear strange clothes, paint everything black and go without modern conveniences. Sounds like a formula for depression! Apparently, it is not. On the other hand, evangelicals like us experience depression equal to that of the general population. There is no

difference in the incidence of depression between God-fearing, church-going, born-again believers and the general population. Why? Is it possible that we have bought into the American dream at the expense of our own mental health? In Dallas, we have an epidemic of 30k/year millionaires who are going to discover that all they are going to get with their money is disappointment, divorce and despair. Is there a cure for affluenza?

2. The only cure for the love of money is the love of God. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” 1 Jn. 2:15-18. There is not enough room in our hearts to love God and to love the things of this world.

What we do with our money reveals our spiritual condition. My financial life is a reflection of my spiritual life. Jesus didn't separate the two. We cannot be irresponsible financially but responsible spiritually. Luke 16:11, “If you cannot be trusted with worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” God views money and possessions as a test. The use of stuff is a practical barometer of our spiritual condition that God monitors to determine our spiritual health. Our connection to God and our connection to money are inextricably linked. The hard truth is that our bank statement is a doctrinal statement.

“Our perspective on and handling of money is a litmus test of our true character. It is an index of our spiritual life. Our stewardship of money tells a deep and consequential story. It forms our biography. In a sense, how we relate to money and possessions is the story of our lives.” Randy Alcorn (Money, Poss. And..., p. 18)

This explains why people get so touchy when we talk about money in church. It is so very personal. If you have ever thought, “The church only wants me for my money.” Let me set the record straight. I don't want your money – I want way more than that. I want your money and your time. I want your money and your time and your talent...and your heart, and your soul. That's all I want. I want to see men and women full of wonder, so captivated by the Kingdom that they are willing to exchange what they have for a greater value. I want that because that's what God wants. God is not looking for donors He's looking for disciples. The Great Commission is not, “Go, make donors of all people.” He's not impressed when we drop a little surplus income in the basket and then write it off on our income tax. He wants us so full of awe that we would empty our pockets in pursuit of our God-given purpose in Christ every day.

3. Giving is how we express our love for God. That is how Jesus demonstrated His love. Jesus gave His life willingly as a result of His love for the Father and His love for us. Just think of all the verses that tell us giving and loving are practically synonymous:

John 3:16 ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He *gave* His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 ⁵ For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who *gave* Himself as a ransom for all,

Eph. 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and **gave** Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Galatians 2:20 ²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and **gave** Himself up for me.

When we sing, "Jesus Paid It All," we are saying, Jesus picked up our tab because we couldn't afford to pay the bill. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, by his poverty, might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9). Giving is what love is all about.

4. Generosity is marked by willing enthusiasm. To give like Jesus is to give not because we have to but because we want to. The Macedonian Christians (cities north of Corinth i.e. Philippians, Thessalonians, and Bereans) "begged" to give. (2 Cor. 8:1-5). Reminds me of the Crabapple School in Fredericksburg, the first school built by the German immigrants that settled there. They held a foot race. The winner gave his property. The Macedonian churches gave not out of guilt or manipulation, they gave because they had experienced the grace of God and giving was like breathing. Grace in – grace out. "Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7)

Money is NOT the root of all evil. Money is good. Money supports ministries like the work of this church. Since this is the final month of our fiscal year, let me give you some facts about where your contributions go here at FBCD...graphs.

5. If you want to change the direction of your heart, change the direction of your money. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Mt. 6:21. You would expect the opposite – where your heart is, that is where your treasure goes. Isn't it interesting that Jesus turns this around to say that wherever you put your money, your heart will follow. You want to care more about the poor? You want to care more about world missions? Give some money to the poor. Give some money to missions. Your heart will follow. As Randy Alcorn says, "As surely as the compass needle follows north, your heart will follow your treasure. Money leads; hearts follow."

Your heart moves toward what you cherish, value, treasure. God wants, above all, for us to move toward Him. If you want to have a heart that's more focused on spiritual and eternal things, then reallocate more of your money away from material and temporal things to support God's work...where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Next time you look at your bank statement, scroll down through your expenses and ask yourself this question, "How much of my spending has eternal implications? What am I investing in that that will reap eternal benefits? Then make some hard decisions about how you spend your money because if you can control your spending, you can control just about anything.