

HOW TO HANDLE MONEY

BY PHILIP HUNT, NOTES FOR A SERMON FOR ST PAULS: 12TH JUNE 2005

Readings: Matthew 6:1-4, 19-24

MAT 6:1 "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

MAT 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

You cannot serve both God and Money.

TOPIC: HOW TO HANDLE MONEY

In fundraising...

We want lots of money to pass through our hands,

We want none of it to stick to our fingers.

A young man was talking to God. "How long is a million years to You?" he asked.

"A million years to Me is like a single second to you," God replied.

"How much is a million dollars to You?" the young man asked.

"A million dollars to Me is like a 5 cent coin to you," God replied.

"In that case," the young man ventured, "Could I have one of Your 5 cent coins?"

"Certainly, My Son," God replied. "Wait a second."

"The Bible talks more about money than anything else!"

I was offended. God's love and faithfulness.

90 mentions of money/riches/wealth in the NT

200 mentions of love.

Even so, an important topic.

St Paul writes a fundraising letter in 2Cor 8&9

A model letter—Eternal principles—my seminar

But what exactly does the Bible teach us about how to handle money?

Many focus on the story of the rich young ruler.

The story goes that as Jesus went out into the street, a man came running up, greeted Jesus with great reverence, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to get eternal life."

Well Jesus says, "Keep God's commandments. You know, don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, etc."

And the young bloke says, "Teacher, since I was a little kid, I have kept them all."

Then Jesus looks him in the eye—and his heart went out to him. And Jesus said, "There's one thing left: Go and sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will be heavenly wealth. And come and follow me."

Lots of people think this call to voluntary poverty and obedience is for everyone. Poverty is next to godliness.

Actually it's cleanliness... Wesley, not Jesus.

Jesus does rail against wealth when you get by evil methods. He made Zaccheus pay back the tax money he stole. 4 times over.

But only to this one young man, does he tell him to get rid of the lot. And you remember what happened.

The man's face clouded over. This was the last thing he expected to hear, and he walked off with a heavy heart. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go.

Was he holding onto his money, or was his money holding onto him?

You cannot serve both God and Money.

4 ways Jesus talks about Money

1. It's OK to have money

Yet there were plenty of people around Jesus who had money.

When Joseph of Arimathea goes to Pontius Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus, Matthew describes Joseph as “a rich man ... one of the followers of Jesus.” Evidently, Jesus hadn’t asked him to sell up everything to follow him.

And it is generally thought that Nicodemus, the man Jesus said needed to be born again, was also rich. Jesus did not tell him to sell all his possessions and THEN be born again.

Jesus knew the importance of money to his ministry, and he used it. Wealthy women supported him and his disciples. Luke names three of them. Mary Magdalene (not a prostitute, by the way), Susanna and Joanna—wife of the CEO of the king’s palace. Bet she had a dollar or two.

1. It’s OK to have money
2. It’s OK to make money.

Jesus supports the idea of investing, of generating wealth. Read the parable of the talents. 10/5/2. *According to their ability.* Jesus praises the servants who invest wisely and make a profit for their master.

1. It’s OK to have money
2. It’s OK to make money.
3. It’s OK to save money

And Jesus approves of saving.

Jesus saves – at Westpac.

Jesus makes it clear that putting money aside for the right reasons is important. Right reasons? Mark 7 “Look after your parents” Do that, BEFORE you give money to the church. Or, don’t use your church giving as an excuse for failing in your responsibilities to your family.

1. It’s OK to have money
2. It’s OK to make money.
3. It’s OK to save money
4. It’s OK to enjoy the things money can buy.

NB: NOT enjoy money, enjoy its benefits. These are from God.

God gives good things. Enjoy them.

1Ti 6:17 Tell those who are rich not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone, but their pride and trust should be in the living God who always richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

So ENJOY. Jesus did. He accepted invitations to dine with rich people. We read about one such incident in Luke 11. I think the rich pharisees and legal experts who laid on the meal ended up regretting that they invited Jesus, but that's another story.

When Jesus went to a wedding in Cana and the wine ran out, he improved things considerably. Don't you wish you could lay a hand on that vintage? What would wine made by Jesus taste like? Now there's a life group topic one could explore quite seriously. Explore the relationship between the wedding feast wine and the wine of the Eucharist. Mission creep.

And you know if *New Idea* had been around in Jesus' time, they would have jumped on the bandwagon of Jesus bad PR calling him *a glutton and a drinking man, and hanging around with the worst sort of sinners!*

Jesus is not worried about money. He's bothered about the LOVE of money.

You cannot serve both God and Money. But if you have money, you can use it to serve God.

And that's how St Paul deals with How To Handle Money.

1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

The LOVE of money ... all KINDS of evil.

Love of money draws you away from the faith.

Tell those who are 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 imagine—to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous: If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.

So, if you are rich, get your priorities right. God first. Then use your riches to do good, help others, be extravagantly generous.

There was a man who had worked all of his life, had saved all of his money, but he was a real miser when it came to his money. Just before he died, he said to his wife, "When I die, I want you to take all my money and put it in the coffin with me. I want to take my money with me when I go."

And so he got his wife to promise him with all of her heart that when he died, she would put all of the money in the coffin with him.

Well, he died. He was stretched out in the coffin, his wife was sitting there in black, and her friend was sitting next to her. When they finished the ceremony, just before the undertakers got ready to

close the coffin, the wife said, "Wait just a minute!" She had a box with her, she came over with the box and put it in the coffin. Then the undertakers locked the coffin down, and they rolled it away.

So her friend said, "Girl, surely you weren't fool enough to put all that money in there with your husband." She said, "Listen, in the first place, my name's not Shirely and secondly, I'm a Christian, I can't go back on my word. I promised him that I was going to put that money in that coffin with him." "You mean to tell me you put that money in the coffin with him!!!!?"

"I sure did," said the wife. "I wrote him a cheque. If he can cash it, he can spend it."

A great sermon was preached a long time ago by a great Anglican Evangelical. Sermon #50 by John Wesley is titled "The Use of Money." On the Web.

Let me summarise:

Make as much money as you can

Save as much money as you can

Give as much money as you can

Wesley said, The right use of money is of the utmost importance to the Christian, yet it is a subject given too little attention. Wealth has often been regarded by poets and philosophers as a source of evil and yet the fault lies, not with money, but with those who use it. Indeed, money should be regarded as a gift of God for the benefits that it brings in ordering the affairs of civilisation and the opportunities it offers for doing good. In the hands of God's children,

money is food for the hungry,

money is clothing for the naked and shelter for the stranger.

With money we can care for the widow and the fatherless,

With money you can defend the oppressed,

With money you can meet the need of those who are sick or in pain.

So,

Make as much money as you can

Save as much money as you can

Give as much money as you can

Now, according to Wesley, there are some conditions to be observed—some limits to be placed on making, saving and giving.

First, we shouldn't make money at the expense of life or health. Too many workaholics. Early/late. Stress. Heart attacks. Early deaths from making money.

Second, we shouldn't make money at the expense of our mind. Don't do work for which we are unsuited. The stress will kill you. Wesley's illustration—mathematics will addle your brain!

Thirdly, it is wrong to make money by injuring others. Here Wesley takes a swipe at gambling and brewers and pawn-brokers. We can substitute our own no-go occupations.

But within these limits, make as much money as you can.

Make as much money as you can

Save as much money as you can

Wesley says that the opposite of saving is wasting it on trivialities. He talks about fancy clothes and gluttonous feasts, and spoiling your children. But that was 1770. I wonder what his list would be today?

Make as much money as you can

Save as much money as you can

Give as much money as you can

The first two rules are not enough. Saving without using is throwing it away. Having made and saved all you can, give away all you can.

Wesley says it this way:

First provide sufficient food and clothing for yourself and your household. If there is a surplus after this is done, then use what remains for the good of your Christian brothers and sisters. If there is still a surplus, then do good to all people, as you have the opportunity.

Wesley set the example himself, although he is too modest to mention it in his sermon. He worked out that he and his family could be provided for with an annual income of £28. This was when his annual income was £30, so he gave £2 to the work of the church. Less than a tithe, you might notice. But later, when he was well known, his annual income rose to £60. He still lived on £28 and gave the rest away.

As usual, John Wesley is not far off the mark in understanding how God wants us to think about money. Within the limitations imposed by acting Christianly, we must:

Make as much money as we can

Save as much money as we can

Give as much money as we can

Finally, a story from Steve Bradbury, National Director of the aid agency TEAR.

Steve tells the story of being in the boys' choir in his Anglo-Catholic church.

One day they were taking up the offering and after receiving the bags containing the collection money, the vicar's next task was to carry them on a large golden platter up the steps into the chancel. This he accomplished with his usual dignity. Then, all he had to do was hold the hopefully heavy plate aloft, say a prayer and place it on the altar.

Normally all this was accomplished without a hitch. But on this occasion the gloriously unthinkable happened. In the act of raising high the plate the reverend gentleman's trousers fell down. Steve and his insensitive choir boy companions, were beside themselves with mirth. Fortunately for the vicar, this was a church where the clergy wore cassock and surplice, and so the congregation in the distance, unlike the choirboys, were unaware of the gravity of the situation.

Well, the vicar may have lost his trousers but he certainly hadn't lost his marbles. And so with commendable presence of mind he quickly dropped to his knees in what looked like spontaneous prayer, fumbled under his cassock until he had a firm hold of his trouser belt, and then, in one movement, stood while dragging his trousers up at the same time. His relief was matched only by the choir's disappointment that the situation had not deteriorated further.

Steve goes on to say that when it comes to money and the church, stress is more common than mirth. By and large money is still seen as very much a private affair.

But, Steve says, the Bible does not run away from the subjects of money, wealth and poverty. Indeed, few issues are given more comprehensive coverage in its pages, and if we are to treat the Bible with the respect it deserves as the authoritative word of God and our manual for living, then it is essential that we allow it to scrutinise our handling of money.

If the way in which all Christians created and used wealth was determined by biblical principles, the impact upon the poor would be phenomenal. For a start, there would be no poor within the world-wide community of the Church, which means that for more than 200 million Christians the struggle against poverty would be over. Moreover, the Church's capacity to respond to the needs of the poor outside the Church would be multiplied beyond recognition, and for countless millions the gospel message of God's love would be powerfully demonstrated.

For this to happen we need to follow the urgent advice of Paul. That is, focus our ambitions on building up treasure in heaven rather than on earth, be rich in good deeds, and generous and willing to share.

Or, as Wesley said,

Within the the limits placed on us to live Christian lives,

Make as much as you can

Save as much as you can

Give as much as you can.

A-men