

November 18, 2012

Funding the Great Commission

Funding the Great Commission Part 2

Luke 18:18-27

Opening words:

The mission statement of the Western Reserve United Methodist Church is to develop disciples who reflect Christ's love through worship, fellowship and deed. In other words, we are in the disciple making business. It is for this reason I refuse to apologize about my newest sermon series, *Funding the Great Commission*. Our personal financials say a great deal about our spiritual maturity. That is why Jesus spoke more about money than any other topic. He knew money affects every corner of our lives.

John Wimber once asked the question, "*I am a fool for Christ, whose fool are you?*" Have you ever felt like a fool when it comes to your personal finances? Last week, I will begin my two part sermon series called *Funding the Great Commission*. During this sermon series we are looking at seven Biblical stewardship principles. Let me state the obvious. The world and God view money in far different ways. The world tells us money is the key to happiness; God understands happiness comes from our relationships. Money can only buy your basic needs and fund your purpose for living. Have you ever tried to buy happiness? My goal in this sermon series is to help you re-evaluate how you view your finances. As your pastor, I want you to live happier lives!

Luke 18:18-27

18 A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'" 21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26 Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

What would you do for \$10,000? That was the question Chicago radio station WKOX asked her listeners in 1980. More than 6,000 people responded. The eventual winner was Jay Gwaltney of Zionsville, Indiana. He said for \$10,000 he would eat an 11-foot birch sapling -- leaves, roots, bark and all. For the event, he donned a tux and dined at a table set elegantly with china, sterling, candles and a rose vase. Armed with pruning shears, the Indiana State University sophomore began chomping from the top of the tree and worked his way down, branch by branch, to the roots. His only condiment was French dressing. The culinary feat took 18 hours over a period of three days. By the way, when it was all over, Gwaltney complained of an upset stomach. What would you do for \$10,000?

Donald Trump once said, *"Those who say money can't buy happiness don't know where to shop."* Can I say two things about Donald Trump? First, I am glad he is not my neighbor. We don't exactly hold the same values. Second, he could not be more wrong. There have been countless unhappy wealthy people. For example, Elvis Presley once said, *"I would give one million dollars to walk through the streets of Memphis alone."* It is as true **today** as the day your mother told you, money can't buy happiness. That leads us back to the poster boy for this short sermon series, the rich young ruler. If you were with us last week then you may remember his story. He has everything this world has to offer, yet he lacked spiritual peace. He is hungry for salvation. So he went to Jesus with the question we have all asked, *"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* The story makes it clear. His money prevented him from walking with Jesus. His money frustrated his spiritual growth. Is your money frustrating your spiritual growth? There is an excellent chance that your answer is, "Yes!"

We are in the disciple making business. It is my goal to make you a little more like Jesus every day. Jesus spoke more about money than any other topic. Did you know one third of every parable Jesus uttered dealt with money? Did you know one in every six things Jesus said was about money? Why did Jesus speak so much about money? It wasn't to support his annual stewardship drive. The answer is simple! Money affects every corner of our life. How you spend your money reveals your priorities. If you want to be a little more like Jesus every day then we must talk about money.

Last week, I began looking at seven Biblical stewardship principles? The rich young ruler was the backdrop. Last week, I looked at the first four. Do you remember them?

- 1. God owns it all!**
- 2. God makes it happen!**
- 3. God trusts us to be faithful!**
- 4. God will hold us accountable in the end!**

This week I want to look at the last three. So if you are ready to begin say, **"Amen!"**

God Wants Us To Earn It His Way!

As you handle your personal finances never forget God wants you to earn it His way! Proverbs 13:11 says, *"Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow."* Proverbs 20:21 says, *"An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end."* Both of those texts mean the same thing. God expects you to earn your money His way, honestly! Is there anyone here who is not earning your money honestly?

In the last 1980's an armored car spilled \$2,000,000 on the freeway in Columbus. Only \$400,000 was ever recovered, the rest disappeared with the throngs of people who stopped and scooped up the cash. Some folks were honest enough to return what wasn't theirs: Melvin Kaiser gave back \$57,000. Those who have studied human personality say that if we know the people who lost the money, we'll generally give it back. However, if we don't know them, 75% of the time we'll keep the cash. Perhaps that explains why some have grown dishonest?

Do you know of anyone who has compromised their honesty? They say their dishonest action is fine because instructions and companies get hurt, not people. Do you know of anyone who shoplifts because the company's insurance will pay for it? Do you know of anyone who only works 5 hours of an eight hour day?

Do you know of anyone who adds an extra deduction or two and say it is part of their stimulus plan. Is there anyone here who is not earning your money honestly? As you handle your personal finances never forget God want you to earn it His way! And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"

God Wants Us To Spend It Wisely!

As you handle your personal finances never forget God wants you to spend it wisely! Philippians 4:12 says, "*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*" How content are you with your life? Is there anyone here **today** that thinks happiness is going to come with the next purchase?

On Christmas Day 2002 Jack Whittaker stopped at his local grocery store and purchased three things, a tank of gas, a breakfast sandwich and a West Virginia Powerball Ticket. That ticket was the big winner. Jack won \$315 million! He decided to take the money in a one-time pay-out of \$113.4 dollars. He did some good things with the money. He tithed the first 10% to several West Virginia charities, including several Church of God congregations. He used \$14 million dollars to create the Jack Whittaker Foundation to help the poor in his state. He bought the woman who sold him the winning ticket a new car and house. However, Jack also made a few mistakes along the way. For example, in **August 2003** Jack spent over \$100,000 at the Pink Pony strip club in Cross Lanes, West Virginia. While he was inside someone broke into his car and stole \$545,000 from the glove compartment. Jack did not learn from his loses. Less than six months later Jack had his car stolen again. This time, the thieves got another \$200,000 from the glove compartment. This is where his story gets darker. He gave his granddaughter, Brandi Bragg, at \$2100 a week allowance. She used it to feed her drug habit. In time, Brandi's best friend, Jesse Tribble, died from drug overdose. Brandi had bought her the drugs as a gift. The money that Jack has left is barely enough to cover his legal bills. He reflected later and said, "*On Christmas Day 2002 I wish I would have just filled my tank and bought a sandwich. That Powerball Ticket has destroyed my life.*" Does anyone here consider Jack Whittaker a wise investor? Does anyone here consider Jack Whittaker a fool?

As you handle your personal finances never forget God wants you to spend it wisely! Do you have a plan as you spend your money? Do you know how much is enough? Do you have the right priorities? Do you know where you stand financially? As you handle your personal finances never forget God wants you to spend it wisely! And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"

God Wants Us To Give It Generously!

As you handle your personal finances never forget God wants you to give it generously! Second Corinthians 9:7 says, "*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*"

I love this story. A wise woman found a precious stone in a stream while traveling in the mountains. The next day she met another traveler who was hungry. The wise woman opened her bag to share her food. The hungry traveler saw the precious stone and asked the woman to give it to him. She did so without hesitation. The traveler left rejoicing in his good fortune. He knew the stone was worth enough to give him security for a lifetime.

But, a few days later, he came back to return the stone to the wise woman. "I've been thinking," he said. "I know how valuable this stone is, but I give it back in the hope that you can give me something even more precious. Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me this stone." What is inside of you? Do the people in your life consider you a generous person? Or do the people in your life consider you cheap? You are a disciple of Jesus Christ! Your theme for living should be generosity! Daily, you are reaping the benefits of Christ's generosity! He gave it all away for you could live abundantly now and in heaven. Without the generosity of Jesus there is no hope of heaven! So let me ask you these questions.

Are you generous with your time?

Are you generous with your faith?

Are you generous with your heart?

Are you generous with your money?

And all of God's people said, "Amen!" Let me end with this piece of history.

In 1928 a group of the world's most successful financiers met at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. They were the Donald Trumps of their generation. There was the president of the largest steel company, the greatest wheat speculator, the president of the New York Stock Exchange, a member of the President's Cabinet, the greatest "bear" in Wall Street, the president of the Bank of International Settlements, the head of the world's greatest monopoly. Collectively, these tycoons controlled more wealth than there was in the U.S. Treasury. For years, newspapers and magazines had been printing their success stories and urging the youth of the nation to follow their examples. In 1928 they were flying high but their success didn't last.

It is cruel. Twenty-five years later, this is what had happened to these men:

The president of the largest independent steel company, Charles Schwab, lived on borrowed money the last five years of his life and died broke.

The greatest wheat speculator, Arthur Cutten, died abroad, insolvent.

The president of the New York Stock Exchange, Richard Whitney, served a term in Sing Sing Prison.

The member of the President's Cabinet, Albert Fall, was pardoned from prison so he could die at home.

The greatest "bear" in Wall Street, Jesse Livermore, committed suicide.

The president of the Bank of International Settlements, Leon Fraser, committed suicide.

The head of the world's greatest monopoly, Ivar Drueger, committed suicide.

All of these men had learned how to make money, but not one of them had learned how to live. They illustrate for us the old phrase: money can't buy happiness! As your pastor I want you to live happier, more fulfilled lives!

That is why I want you to remember these seven Biblical stewardship principles.

1. God owns it all!

2. God makes it happen!

3. God trusts us to be faithful!

4. God holds us accountable in the end!

5. God want us to earn it his way!

6. God wants us to spend it wisely!

7. God wants us to give it generously!