



Life Group Sermon Notes

"The Blessed Life: Breaking the Spirit of Mammon"

Ps James Lowe - February 7, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- What is a skill you have that can help others?
- Has someone ever given you a gift that endeared you to them? What was it?
- Have you ever been torn between two conflicting relationships? What was the outcome?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Deuteronomy 8:11-20 (ESV) "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God."

- God is the ultimate source of all of our blessings, including our material possessions. God's intention is to bless us, including empowering us to produce wealth. God cares about the whole human condition. His salvation touches every area of our lives, and his promises speak of all-encompassing blessings.
- The great danger we face, however, is that as God blesses us, we may forget that it is God who made it all possible and continues to make it possible. Wealth or material prosperity has a potentially deceptive influence on our hearts. If our hearts turn away from God and we begin to forget him as we boast and take credit for our prosperity, or as we begin to love our wealth more than God, then God will discipline us, and rightfully so. In God's eyes, such a turning of the heart is a great offense to him. Furthermore, it will corrupt our soul and begin to damage and eventually destroy our relationships with others as well.

Matthew 6:19-21, 24 (ESV) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth

nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...

“No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.”

- Jesus warns us in a similar way to Moses. God rightfully requires full devotion from us to himself. Those who love money essentially love themselves, because money gives them the ability to acquire many things they may desire. God, however, is far greater than money or even ourselves. He designed us, created us, blessed us, and continues to pursue us in spite of our sin.
- It is a foolish decision to make an idol out of material things or wealth or power. It is just as foolish to think that we can live with a split commitment between God and money. A divided heart only ends in ruin.

Luke 16:1-9 (ESV)

“He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’ And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’ So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.”

- Jesus is not praising the deceptive, self-serving conduct of the shrewd manager. Instead, he is saying that those who seek God’s kingdom need to be as wise and deliberate in matters concerning money as the shrewd manager, but with the values and character of God’s kingdom. The point is to recognize that our relationships are eternal and extend beyond the grave because of God’s gift of everlasting life. Therefore, our relationships are more important and valuable than our possessions. Because of this should use our wealth, our money and possessions, to build and bless our relationships instead of using it to simply serve our own self-seeking interests.
- By application, we can also say that this principle or value should compel us to also use our money and possessions to reach others with the Gospel. We should give to support our church’s ministries, to support missionaries, to support ministries that serve the under-privileged or oppressed. We should use our money and possessions to build friendships with those who don’t know Christ. This isn’t about being manipulative, but about caring about people enough to show them concrete love.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- Do you find yourself forgetting that it is God who gives you the power to produce material wealth?
- Do you ever find your heart divided between God and material things or money?
- Are you using your wealth to value relationships above material things?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Pray and thank God for blessing us with all we have and with the power to produce wealth.
- Pray about any division or compromise you may sense in your heart between God and money or material things. Confess any sin and repent of it, asking God to help you change.
- Pray and ask God if there are any relationships (Christian and non-Christian) he wants you to literally invest in.