



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“1st Things 1st: Dedication to Kingdom Lifestyle”

Ps. James Lowe – Jan. 19, 2014

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

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

- What's one of your most valued material possessions?
- What's one of the best gifts you've received from either your parents, spouse, or a loved one?
- If money were not an issue, what gift would you like to give to a parent, spouse, or a loved one?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at bethelbrentwood.org/media.

We are called to submit to God in all things. Biblical submission is to willingly yield oneself to God with a good attitude. This is to be done in every area of our lives. God's will must be preferred to our own will.

Luke 18:18-30 (ESV)

And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.” When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.” And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

God's perspective of us is not necessarily the same as our perspective of ourselves. Some are content to evaluate and exonerate themselves in their own eyes. But a person can live an outwardly moral life, and yet still be unrighteous before God. Anything that we love or value above God is an idol and makes us unrighteous before God. Jesus confronts us in truth and in love, challenging us to give up anything and everything that stands in the way of our unconditional faithfulness to God.

Americans in general live in one of the wealthiest nations the world has ever known. Even the majority of the poor in America live better than many in the rest of the world. Many people around the world live on only a few dollars per day. Jesus' message to the rich young man is relevant for us! There are many in America who believe in Jesus, who nevertheless are not willing to yield their whole life to him, especially their money and their choices for how they wish to use their money to live the way they want. But following Jesus means he is Lord of our lives, every area. Jesus said we cannot serve God and money.

We must settle it forever: Jesus is the final authority of our entire lives, including our money and material possessions.

We must beware that we do not fail to do what we know is right in the eyes of God. We must not become deceived into thinking God approves of us, and yet we fail to do what we know pleases him. If we prosper in spite of sin and God does not punish us, it is only because of his mercy, not his approval. But God calls us to live for his approval. Material blessings may or may not be a sign of God's approval. They may only be due to his mercy. Do not presume upon God's mercy. Instead, recognize the Lord's lovingkindness is meant to bring you to repentance, so that you may instead please him and be approved by him.

Matthew 6:1 (ESV) *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."*

God cares not only that we do what is right, but that we do it from the right motives. This is true about all choices and actions in our lives, including how we use our money.

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 isn't saying that being prudent and saving for the future is wrong. He is saying that all we do with our money must be motivated by our commitment to God above all things. His values should govern our money choices. His counsel should be sought in prayer for how we dispose of our money. God must be first in our lives and in our hearts.

In Matthew 6:25-33 Jesus teaches, encourages, and exhorts us to not be anxious about all of our material needs. Instead, we are to put our relationship with God and the advancement of his kingdom above all of our other concerns. Jesus promised God will provide for all our material needs, if we will do this: *"(S)eek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you"* (Matt 6:33).

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

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

- What difficulties, if any, have you had in surrendering your whole life to Jesus, including your money and material possessions?
- How is God challenging you at the present time to trust and obey him in the area of money and material possessions?
- How has God been faithful to provide for your material needs as you have sought him, his righteousness, and his kingdom first in your life?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

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

- That God would help us assess our own hearts with respect to money and material things in the light of our relationship with him.
- That God would convict us, guide us, and counsel us to dispose of our money and material things according to his values, wisdom, and will.
- That God would strengthen our faith and trust in his good character and great power to be faithful to fulfill his wonderful promise to provide for all our material needs as we prioritize him and his kingdom.