

At The Feet of Jesus – Part 3

What Will You Do With What You Have?

Introduction:

We've been looking at the subject of Lordship over the last couple of weeks, if you've missed that, the messages are available on our website. This morning I want to continue with a topic that's dear to all of our hearts – money. Once again, we're going to look at Jesus' own words as we look at this subject. As I begin, let me just share something I've learned in my life: I can live much better on 90% of my income with God's blessing than 100% without it.

Last Sunday we looked at the parable of the talents and saw that God has given us all that we have and has made us managers over those things – gifts, talents, abilities and resources. We also saw that God will hold us accountable for what we do with what He's given us. What all does God own?

1. He Owns Me

Why does He own me? - Because He created me, and because He redeemed me. If you haven't settled this one thing, you are, at best, a very immature follower of Christ. He can do whatever He wants. He's God, and we're not.

Jesus called the man a fool who said he had so much that he had to build bigger barns. He called him a fool because he didn't realize that God owned him - just like that - it's over.

2. He Owns All My Possessions.

There's a Dennis the Menace cartoon. In it, Dennis and his family are leaving church one Sunday. His mother and father have this horrified expression on their faces as Dennis looks up at the pastor and asks, "*What are you going to do with the dollar my dad gave you today?*"

Dennis is like us, he thought the money was his dad's. We treat God a lot of times like He's a waitress - "Good service, God, here's a five."

You don't tip God. Some Christians have such a hard time with tithing. 10%, wow! That's a lot. Immature, non-growing believers have a hard time admitting that 10% is God's. I've got some startling news for you - it's all God's - 100%.

How long will we fight about this issue of God having the nerve to give us everything in life and then demand 10% of our finances back. The gall of Him to ask that. Who does He think He is? God?

*“Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord,
shall enter the kingdom of heaven,
but he that does the will of my Father
which is in heaven.”*

- Jesus

In Juan Carlos Ortiz' book "The Call to Discipleship" he says:

“The Bible says the kingdom of God is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of real worth, he sells everything he has to buy the pearl. I understand that Jesus is the pearl of great price, and we, as humans, are the merchants. So when we find Jesus it costs man everything. Jesus has happiness, joy, peace, healing, security, eternity. Man marvels at such a pearl and says ‘Oh, I want that pearl, how much does it cost?’ The seller says ‘It costs dearly.’ ‘Well, how much?’ ‘It’s, it’s very expensive.’ ‘Well, do you think I could buy it?’ ‘Well, of course, anybody can.’ ‘How can anybody buy it if it’s expensive?’ and the seller said, ‘It costs everything you have, therefore everybody can buy it. They just have to give God everything.’”

The money you have in the bank - it belongs to God. The money in your wallet - it's God's. Your house, your furniture, your car, your clothes, your family - and yourself - they're all God's.

But Jesus says we can use these things, but remember, they're mine, He says. If I need them to fulfil my purpose you must give them back because I own them. And be careful how you spend my money.

What is the greatest test of Lordship? What you do with your possessions. Is that why God said in Malachi 3:10 "Test Me in this"?

You've probably heard of Ivan the Great. He put together an empire in the 15th century in the area of modern-day Russia. He was a great warrior. He conquered kingdoms, and was so busy fighting that he didn't care about finding a wife and having children; producing an heir. His lieutenants became concerned about this and told him. He said, "I'm too busy to go find a wife - you find one for me." So they did.

They went to Greece and found the daughter of the king of Greece - a beautiful young lady. They told him, "We've found a wife for you, but there's one problem." They said "If you're going to marry her you have to be Greek Orthodox. Ivan says, "Well, if you think she's right for me that's no problem. I can be Greek Orthodox."

The king of Greece was thrilled because it would mean Ivan the Great wouldn't be coming after him. So he sent tutors up to teach not only Ivan, but also the 500 men in the Imperial Guard because Ivan wanted them to be Greek Orthodox as well.

Finally, they all went to Greece for the marriage, but first they had to be baptized into the church. It must have been an incredible sight to see Ivan the Great and all his soldiers being baptized - thousands stood and watched at the shore of the Mediterranean. All of a sudden the king of Greece stopped the group, as they were in the water and said, "We have a problem." "You cannot be a member of the Greek Orthodox Church and be a warrior."

So they had a hasty diplomatic meeting while everybody was in the water. They came up with a simple answer. All of the soldiers drew their swords and held them above their heads and, as they were baptized, everything went under the water but the swords. They had what history calls "the unbaptized arm."

It's a great illustration. How many unbaptized chequebooks are in the church this morning? How many unbaptized wills? How many unbaptized relationships? What is it that you're holding back from God?

This morning I want to challenge you to accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life. I want to ask you to surrender it all to Him. What does that mean pastor? It means that from this day forward what God wants from you, He gets. It means that you're willing to follow Him to South America if that's where He leads you. It means that you acknowledge that the resources God has given to you are to be used for His glory. It means that you will present yourself as a living sacrifice to Him to use as He sees fit. It means you trust Him.

"Four Signs of a Sensible Steward" - Luke 12:13-48

Jesus, in Luke chapter 12, illustrates the principle of stewardship. You see, stewardship is never a problem once a person understands the Lordship issue. Stewardship is simply a child of God taking and managing what God has given him.

We do a better job of handling God's things when we understand that He owns them. *When He becomes Lord of my life... I become a sensible steward!*

1. A sensible steward will be responsible. (Luke 12:16-21)

“And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”” “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

Jesus first gives us an example of bad stewardship.

(A) He was irresponsible to himself.

He thought life consisted of just material things. (v. 19)

Rudyard Kipling was speaking to students at McGill University in Montreal in an address concerning material wealth. His thesis basically was that if a person's values were based on material wealth, that person would have difficulties all of their life. He said; *“Do not pay too much attention to fame, power and money. Someday you will meet a person who cares for none of these things, and then you will know how poor you really are.”*

(B) He was irresponsible to others.

He didn't realize that God's blessings meant he should help others. (vs. 17-19) Notice how many times he uses the words “I” and “me” in verses 17 and 18.

We are to be channels, not clogs; we are to be rivers, not reservoirs. Some whose gift it is to make money should make all they can and channel it into effective ministries for the kingdom of God.

(C) He was irresponsible to God.

He didn't realize the uncertainty of life and the certainty of judgment. (vs. 20-21) Many Christians are functional atheists. What that simply means is, while claiming to be Christians, they live their lives as though God did not exist.

To be rich toward God means to spend your life and your time and your possessions on things eternal. Colossians 3:2 says, “*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*” A steward takes the responsibility for what God has given him or her; provides for their family and ministers to those around them. - A river, not a reservoir.

2. A sensible steward is relaxed. (12:22-34)

“Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.””

Jesus wants us to understand worry. *We worry, not because of our possessions or lack of them... we worry because we fail to focus on God.*

Jesus here tells us that there are two types of people: those who worry and those who don't. Then He goes on to tell the difference. The difference is Lordship.

If you have made God the Lord of your life and proclaim Him to be Lord of everything, not just saying it, but meaning it, here's what happens. God becomes responsible for your life. When God really is #1 it's His problem; you can trust Him.

But when I'm in charge of my life and my resources and I run into a problem, I can't run to God and say “God help me!” God just says, “Help yourself, it's your problem.” God is responsible for what you give Him. If you don't put God first in your finances,

don't pray about them. He doesn't want to hear from someone who's stealing from Him. In Malachi 3:8 God asks, "*How have you robbed Me?*" He answers, "*In tithes and offerings.*"

Jesus demonstrates in this story what worry does.

(A) Worry is destructive. (vs. 22, 29)

The scripture says "do not worry". In the Greek that word worry means "torn apart". It means to feel anxiety, it comes from an old English word, "wrygan", that means to strangle, to choke, to tear at the throat with teeth. Worry has a way of strangling the life right out of you. Corrie Ten Boom said, "*Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrows; it empties today of its strength.*"

(B) Worry is deceptive. (v. 23)

It gives us a false view of life. (v. 23)

- It messes up our perspective.

It gives us a false view of God. (vs. 24, 27, 28)

- Worry focuses on the wrong things. We focus on the temporal rather than the eternal. Worry says "God is not able."

It gives us a false view of itself. (vs. 25-26)

- Some people love to worry. If they have nothing to worry about, they'll make something up. Is worry helpful? (Vs. 25-26)

(C) Worry is distracting. (vs. 30-34)

It causes us to seek the wrong things. Note vs. 32.

God's pleasures and our treasures must go together!

3. A sensible steward will be ready. (12:35-40)

Jesus here shifts the emphasis from the present to the future. A sensible steward will understand that Christ's return is our hope, not our wallets. Read Luke 12:35-40

"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be

good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

This readiness is also important for our service. Are you ready to seize the moment when it is open to you? Don't be a someday person. Don't postpone life.

There was a Quaker in the mid-1800's by the name of Stephen Grellet. He said: *“I shall pass through this world but once and any good that I can do, or any kindness that I can show any human being, let me do it now and not defer it, for I shall not pass this way again.”*

We see people grab their possessions and squeeze them, hold them for someday. Some day never comes. Yes, provide for yourself; take care of your family, but remember who's given you everything you have. Remember who gave you *“life and breath and in whom you have your being.”* Let God use you and what He's given you - one day it's gone. Remember - you're to be a river; not a reservoir.

4. A sensible steward will be rewarded. (12:41-48)

“Peter asked, ‘Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?’ The Lord answered, ‘Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ‘The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”

In verses 43 and 44 Jesus says that if He can find a man who is faithful in all that He's

given him, He'll keep blessing him with more. If you're faithful, God will bless you.

In verses 45 - 47 Jesus demonstrates that we will be held accountable for what we do with God's goods.

In verse 48 Jesus says, "*From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*" One thought that I've often pondered is where we fit in that statement. We live in the most advanced age in recorded history. We live in a time when there are more goods and options available than at any time in the history of the world. We also live in the richest continent in the world with the highest standard of living. In fact, we live in a country consistently ranked in the top ten in the world as far as standard of living goes.

But this scripture was aimed first at Peter, who had asked, "Is this for me?" Peter knew Jesus as a friend - he'd spent three years with Him. Was he expected to be obedient? "*From the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*" Peter died a martyr's death, crucified upside down.

CHALLENGE: be a Sensible Steward

Weigh your responsibilities in light of your blessings. (vs. 13-21)

Wait on God to meet your needs because you have put Him first. (vs. 22-34)

Watch for the Lord's return because your values are based on eternity. (vs. 35-40)

Work until the Lord returns because you are faithful to His commission.

I guess the question today is this: "Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life or not?"

THE LORDSHIP LADDER

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|-------|-----------------------------|
| _____ | Peace |
| _____ | Total Surrender |
| _____ | Hunger - Desperation |
| _____ | Partial Surrender |
| _____ | Wrestling Stage |
| _____ | Seek God |
| _____ | Double-Minded |