



31st July 2022

Money Talks! What's it saying to you?

Main Point:

Jesus confronts a man who interrupts his message, revealing how the man's love of money and greed had taken hold of his life. Jesus reveals how greed can quickly cause us to find our security and confidence in money, rather than trusting in God and our relationship with Him.

How many times have you viewed the following scene in a movie?

An investigator is trying to get some information, but he's having a hard time getting anyone to talk even though he's sure they have the information he wants. So, he pulls out a \$100 bill and waves it around. In a matter of seconds, he has the info he's looking for. Money talks!

Or what about this scene? A woman arrives at a fancy restaurant without a dinner reservation. She's about to be turned away when she slips the host a \$100 bill and asks him to look at the reservation book again. The host responds, "Oh, I see we just had a last-minute cancellation. Follow me." Money talks!

Yes, money talks, so what is it saying *to* you? And what does it say *about* you?

Today's passage shows us that our attitude towards money says something about our attitude towards God. It also provides a window of insight into determining whether God considers us wise or foolish. So, let's step into what's happening as Jesus was teaching.

A crowd of many thousands had gathered to listen to Jesus (Luke 12:1). As soon as Jesus paused to draw breath, a man yelled out: "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me" (Luke 12:13).

Yes, even with his powerful presence, Jesus still needed to deal with hecklers.

Well, as it is often with hecklers ... what they say often reveals more about them, than it does the person they're interrupting. What drove this man to rudely disrupt Jesus while he preaching? Money. This man felt certain his brother was cheating him out of the family inheritance and he wanted Jesus to do something about it.

Yes, money talks! It may not have a mouth, but it is sure able to get those who do to give it a microphone.

What was money saying through this guy?

"you are more concerned about getting your portion of the inheritance, than preserving the peace in your family." It also shouted, "I so control this man, that he'll use any means he can find to get more of it." I wonder what money would say about us?

Are we so driven by getting our fair share that we would let a dispute about money tear a friendship, or our family, or our community apart?

And do we see Jesus as nothing more than our servant who should do what we want him to do, rather than seeing him as our Lord whom we are to serve?

If so, then listen to Jesus' response. *"Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you? Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."* (Luke 12:14-15).

This man wanted Jesus to judge his brother. Instead, Jesus judged him and pointed out a heart that was motivated by greed. In order to drive this point home, Jesus went on to tell a parable.

There was a farmer who was blessed with an abundant crop. He wondered what to do with it because his barns weren't big enough to hold the grain. So he decided to replace his barns by building bigger ones. After that he was certain he could retire to a life of ease. But that very night God said his life would be demanded of him and he wouldn't get to enjoy all those blessings he was storing up for himself.

Now as we read this story, we may be thinking, 'I don't think this farmer is foolish! He sounds like a wise businessman to me.' His farming enterprise is thriving, and any wise farmer knows they need to put aside their profits from one season to tide them over in lean years – years shaped by flood, drought, disease and plagues.

Isn't this what we are encouraged to strive for? Isn't it wise and responsible to save for the future? He had worked hard and saved wisely. Now he can sit back, relax, and enjoy the fruits of his labour. He can retire early and enjoy his golden years. What's wrong with that?

Why then, did God call this businessman a fool?

It wasn't because he was wealthy, nor in fact, because he was saving for the future.

Rather, it seems it was because his sights were fixed solely on himself, and because he had placed his confidence and security in his bountiful bank balance, rather than in his relationship with God.

Listen to how the rich man talked:

"What should **I** do, for **I** have no place to store my crops?" "**I** will do this: **I** will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there **I** will store all **my** grain and **my** goods. And **I** will say to **my** soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry'" (Luke 12:17-19).

Are we like this fool?

Do we speak of "my house, my car, my boat, my savings" forgetting that all these have come from God?

Even if we have worked hard to get them, it is God who gave us the energy and the skill to accomplish what we have.

It is so easy to forget this.

That is why God warned the Israelites of this danger when they were about to enter the promise land:

"You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."¹⁸ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today." (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

When we start to think that our blessings belong to us, we assume we alone can determine how they are used in the way *we* see fit.

We don't need to wonder how God desired the rich farmer manage his surplus crops.

For God had already told his people, *"your surplus is to be left for the poor."* (Leviticus 23:22, also see Proverbs 22:9)

However, that thought never occurred to this farmer, because he had already decided that his blessings were for him, and for him alone.

But can you really blame the guy for storing away the grain for himself? I mean how is that different than putting money into a retirement savings plan?

Ah, now we're hitting close to home, aren't we?

Jesus told us to "Continue to be on guard against all kinds of greed, life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." (12:15)

I wonder how Jesus' warning fits with our understanding of retirement.

If we listen to Jesus' advice our priorities in retirement will be very different from how the world defines it. While the world may tell us retirement is all about cruising the seven seas, and playing golf until sunset, the Bible describes our golden years more as 're-purposement' rather than 'retirement.' After all, Moses was 80 years old when God called him to appear before Pharaoh. I wonder how God would have responded if Moses had answered, 'Sorry God, I'm booked on an extended cruise down the Nile for the next few weeks!'

God has plans for our entire lives, not just the first 65 years. So, God-shaped retirement is about serving God in a new way, with a new purpose, with all the investments we have accumulated in our earlier years. But some of us here are not yet in retirement. So, what do we all have to invest? Time, Talent and Treasure.

We are all allotted the same number of hours each day – how will we invest our time?

We all have unique **talents** and skills, and are called to develop these over the course of our life.

And we all have the opportunity to accumulate **treasure**.

Some choose to accumulate earthly treasure and riches. But we all know how quickly these can disappear. Others choose to invest in spiritual treasures, so they have riches stored in heaven that cannot be taken away from them. How we invest our treasure will depend upon whether or not we are following Jesus' instruction to "*Be rich towards God,*" (Luke 12:21).

I think that expression can be hard for us to understand.

Remember Jesus said,

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21)

So, how do we make deposits into our heavenly treasure house?

As we nurture our relationship with God, and treasure or value spiritual things like the wisdom of God's Word, we make such deposits.

We also make deposits when we invest our time and talents in serving God's kingdom and furthering His mission in our neighbourhood.

So, yes money talks.

But, when money screams at us, "without me you're nothing, and you're going nowhere" - let's not just try to ignore its cries. Rather, let's us be like Jesus who spoke to the mountain and the trees, and speak to it, saying:

"No money you are not my master. I set my heart and my mind on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, not on earthly things. I seek first His kingdom, knowing my needs will be met by my loving Father. For I have treasure in heaven where no thief can steal or destroy it. (Luke 12) Therefore, I let the peace of Christ rule in my heart, and I am thankful. And whatever I do, I do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:15-17)