

**Date: October 14, 2018**

**Scripture: Mark 10:17-30**

**Title: THE DRIVE FOR MONEY**

People are still foolish today, when it comes to money. I say this as we hear today's scripture, where a man ran up to Jesus, and fell on his knees in front of him. He asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered, "Why do you call me good? No one is good, except God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" He declared, "Teacher, all these I have kept since I was a boy." Jesus looked at him and loved him. Then He said, "One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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."

**Is there anyone here today, who truly believes that all your problems will be solved, if you just had a little more money? O.K., how about a lot more money?**

One guy said, "I'm planning to retire and live off my savings. What I'll do the second day, I have no idea."

We know that more money will not solve all our problems, but it can be uncomfortable if we have little money or we're running out of money. Some of us may be having a difficult time financially. We don't want to minimize this difficulty.

Still, we need to confront the fact that Jesus warned time and time again against the danger of materialism, of loving money more than God. He says in this passage, a rich man will have a hard time getting into heaven. On another occasion he talked about a rich man who built barns to hold his surplus crops and then died in the night. Jesus called him a fool because he hadn't laid up treasure in heaven.

In another story he describes a man who woke up one day in hell because the man had great wealth and he ignored the needs of a beggar who lay at his gates. On another occasion Jesus told his disciples not to be anxious about what they should eat, or what they should drink, or what they should put on. We're not to worry about these. We're to trust in God, not in our bank account. Jesus warned time and time again about reliance on money.

Now notice, he didn't say that it's impossible for a rich man to get into heaven. There are many wealthy figures in the Old and New Testaments who were good people and who were not condemned. But again, to be fair to our religion and fair to our

responsibilities, we need to be reminded from time to time of the dangers of the drive for wealth.

**The drive for wealth is dangerous, if it causes you to neglect people you love.** You could be neglecting your spouse. It could be your children. It could be your aging parents. It's not my intent to make anyone feel guilty about the hard choices you make concerning your responsibilities to your employer and your responsibilities to the people you love. It's simply to say, that some families have a real problem finding a work/life balance.

It caused some people to do a double-take a few years ago when it was reported that a different kind of rental agency had opened up in Japan. This agency didn't rent automobiles or tools or homes or any of the other items that are usually offered for rent. Instead, this agency was called, "Rent-a-Family." This service catered to elderly people who are alone. Most of them have genuine families, but those families are too busy to give them much attention. This agency offers a stand-in family that visits these lonely elders for a few hours and acts like "real" family. Reports tell of customers paying more than \$1,000 a visit for the service.

The president of the "Rent-a-Family" agency explains, "There are lots of people who feel lonely because everyone is chasing money and no one pays attention to the human need for love and acceptance." Mrs. Suzuki, a retired doll-maker who rented a family, wrote about it: "From the bottom of my heart, I felt as though they could be my family. I know they're not my real family, but there was a real feeling of warmth." In many cases, the biggest loser turns out to be the one who does the neglecting, because he or she one day, may finds themselves alone due to their neglect of the people closest to them. The drive for wealth is dangerous, if it causes you to neglect people you love.

**The drive for wealth is also dangerous, if it causes you to get your values out of whack.** We often say, this is a free country and you can spend your money any way you please, but not every expenditure is a wise one, and some people do very foolish things with their money.

Each year, thousands of people visit Hearst Castle, which was the home of the wealthy William Randolph Hearst. Pastor John Ortberg notes that Hearst accumulated "3,500-year-old Egyptian statues, medieval Flemish tapestries, and centuries-old hand-carved ceilings, and some of the greatest works of art of all time, most of which came from Sweden. He built a house of 72,000 square feet to put his stuff in. He acquired property for his house: 265,000 acres; he originally owned fifty miles of California coastline. He collected stuff for eighty-eight years. John Ortberg asks, then you know what he did? He died." He died. You know how much William Randolph Hearst left behind? All of it.

Jesus said in one of his parables, "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? Jesus concluded, this is how it will be, with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:13-21).

Do you take Jesus seriously? It’s a serious question. Now you and I will never be as wealthy as William Randolph Hearst, but the same principles apply. Are we neglecting people that we love, because of our chase of the almighty dollar? Are we using the resources that God has given us wisely? Are we generous with those who aren’t as fortunate as we are? Are we laying up treasure in heaven, as well as on earth? These are sensible questions we need to ask, regardless of our income.

Why is this so important? **It’s because, money has a way of distancing us from God.** It’s an unusual person, who can balance possession of great wealth, with the call to follow Jesus.

A man named Richard Koch recently wrote a book titled, *Living the 80/20 Way: Work Less, Worry Less, Succeed More, Enjoy More*. In it, he cited a recent survey of people who were asked how much more money they would need, for them to be free of worrying about money. It turned out that those with incomes over \$100,000 thought they needed far more money than those with incomes under \$40,000. The high earners were five times more likely to say they needed at least another \$90,000 annual income in order not to worry about money.

Does that make sense to you? Shouldn’t a person making only \$40,000 dollars a year, worry more about money than a person making \$100,000 a year? But that’s not how it works. Invariably the more money you have, the more money you need, to make you happy.

There can come a point where money becomes so important in your life, that it not only distances you from God, it actually becomes your God. That’s why Jesus was quite direct when he said in Matthew 6:24, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

A man ran up to Jesus one day and fell on his knees in front of him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” . . .

Jesus looked at him and loved him. He said, “One thing you lack, Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. This is a sad story. This man’s money had become more important to him than following Jesus. How about you? How about me? We all need to examine ourselves and ask if material wealth has become too important in our lives, so that it affects our

relationships with others, so that it's affecting our satisfaction with our lives, and most important of all, so that it's creating a distance between ourselves and God? In all things with our lives, especially money, Trust, Believe, and have an Active Faith in God making disciples of Jesus Christ in the transformation of the world. Amen.