

## REFLECTING ON JESUS AND MONEY 22 November 2015

Luke 12: 22 – 34

**“Do not worry” Rev Dr Brenda Robson**

I have been asked to speak about Jesus’ attitude to money and what I really want to focus on is worship. The reading seems to be about money but it is really about worship.

In our inner being, we treasure God as infinitely valuable, more valuable than anything else in our lives.

What we do in our worship on Sundays – and at other times- are acts that show how much we treasure God above all other things.

All of life is meant to be worship of God because Jesus said that whether you eat or drink or whatever you do in life, you do it all to show how valuable the glory of God is to you.

1 Corinthians 10:31 – **So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God**

Money and things are a big part of our lives and so God intends them to be a big part of our worship – since all of life is to be worship.

So the way you worship with your money and your possessions is to get them and use them and lose them in a way that shows how much you treasure God – not money. And so the text is about worship, not just about money.

We express how much we treasure God in our worship in church – we sing praises, we pray, we hear God’s word, we gather around the Communion table. But at one point in the service I usually say **“Let us continue to worship God with our offering.”**

Each time we collect the offering, this simple phrase acts as a reminder to us that the offering is no intermission, not the interval, not a time to unwrap the sweetie or have a wee chat with your neighbour, but a real time of worship.

Rev. Mark Alan Powell in, *Giving to God: The Bible’s Good News About Living a Generous Life*, spends the first part of the book focused on the offering as an act of worship. “We give out of glad generous hearts as

an expression of love and devotion to God who is good to us," Powell says. "When we do this, we discover the very essence of Christianity; a heartfelt relationship with God in which joy and thanksgiving replace self-interest and guilt."

Jesus knew that we would be anxious about money and preoccupied with things. We would struggle to know how much to keep and how much to give away.

What is Jesus saying to us in these verses to help us get the right balance?

He commands us not to fear when it comes to money and things. Don't worry. "Do not be afraid little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom." These few words say so much. They give us several reasons for treasuring God and tell us how our giving can be an act of worship and how it can glorify God.

If we are not afraid, we show that we treasure God as our Shepherd. "Do not be afraid, little flock." We are his flock and he is our shepherd. And so Psalm 23 applies – "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." So I will not lack anything I need."

If we are not afraid, we treasure God as our Father. "your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom." We are not only his flock, we are his children and he is our Father and as it says earlier at verse 30, your Father knows what you need" .....not what you want, but what you need!

If we are not afraid, we show that we treasure God as our King, he can give us the kingdom because he is the King. That adds such power to the one who provides for us.

Shepherd suggests protection and provision, Father suggests love and tenderness and authority and provision, King suggests power and sovereignty and wealth. And so if we trust God as Shepherd and Father and King and we are not worried about money and things, then we can truly worship a real and precious God.

These verses speak quite strongly about simplifying our lives, minimizing is the "in" word. The minimalist home. But often we have a tendency towards accumulation. Some of us have a tendency to be hoarders. When a hoarder lives with a minimalist, there can be some tension! I know! And I'm not saying who is who!

Most people would confess to a shopping weakness, acquiring rather too many things. How many pairs of shoes can one person wear? How many shirts and ties does one man need? Did you need that new jacket? Or that new scarf to add to the fifty that you already own?

Money and possessions do not bring happiness. Recent research into the attitudes of people who have won thousands and millions in lotteries showed that no matter how much a person had won, they usually wished it was just a little more.

We tend to live at the extreme end of our resources, sometimes being over-stretched. We manage to secure that mortgage that is three, four, five times our salary and then worry for 30 years about interest rates going up. Jobs are no longer for life and we worry about redundancy and how to get another job.

Yet many of us who are older can look back on times in our lives when things were very hard and yet God did provide. Hardship caused by unemployment, a failed business, marital separation, living as a single parent, debt, bankruptcy, repossession. Lots of anxiety and stress at the time but God got us through it. We're still here. If you are experiencing any of these things right now, you will get through it, do not despair.

However much we have or do not have, Jesus still wants us to trust in him, to worship God and to give something away. Just like the widow with the pennies.

Jesus said "Sell your possessions and give to the poor." Now we know Jesus was talking to his disciples at this point. They were not wealthy, they didn't have a lot of money to give, so they might need to sell something to be able to give money to the poor. They probably didn't have a lot of possessions either but Jesus still said, sell your possessions.

He doesn't say how many possessions to sell. To the rich ruler in Luke 18:22 he says "Sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Sell everything.

When Jesus met Zaccheus the dishonest tax collector, Zaccheus repented of his sin and promised to give half of his possessions to the poor. Zaccheus gave fifty percent.

In Acts 4, Barnabas sold a field and brought the money to the disciples for the work of the church, presumably he kept other fields and possessions.

The bible doesn't tell us how many possessions to sell. But Jesus does tell us that it is vitally important that we show love towards people who do not have the necessities of life and who do not have the gospel, the necessity for eternal life. Jesus wants us to lighten our hold on our money and possessions, to simplify our lives, not to accumulate.

Jesus wants us to be heavenly minded and not focused on the things of this world. A person who is heavenly-minded will make a hugely loving difference in the world. The people who are most powerfully persuaded that what matters most is treasure in heaven, not big accumulations of money here, are the people who will be constantly dreaming of new ways to simplify and serve, simplify and serve. And they will give and give and give.

Jesus commands us to accumulate treasure in heaven and so maximize our joy in God and that is worship.

Perhaps it might add another dimension to consider the words of our reading in The Message -

**29-32** "What I'm trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with *getting* so you can respond to God's *giving*. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don't be afraid of missing out. You're my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself. **33-34** "Be generous. Give to the poor. Get yourselves a bank that can't go bankrupt, a bank in heaven far from bank robbers, safe from embezzlers, a bank you can bank on. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

Amen and let us continue to worship God with our offering!