

Luke 16: Money Master

Money is a silly thing when you think about it isn't it? It's paper. It's plastic. It's just numbers on a screen or page. And yet, it makes the world go round, doesn't it? You have to have it. But it, in itself, is worthless. You could be a billionaire, and you could think, "Aha! I am untouchable, I have so much money I can do whatever I want!" And then I could drop you in the middle of the Sahara desert with your pockets full of credit cards, and green pieces of paper. And well, suddenly your money isn't that helpful is it? It's just paper and plastic. And you, billionaire, will die just as fast as the poor person.

And in life, with money and means, we can get out of things, we can enjoy nice things, we can get better healthcare, but that's just a stall. With money and means, you will die, almost as fast as the poor person. And yet the world chases after paper.

Jesus challenges our affinity for money today. He doesn't say you can't have it. No. But he does challenge us to reflect on the question: do you have some money, or does some money have you?

So what is our Master? A Master owns you, tells you what to do and you do it, even if you don't want to. And so in High School I had to drive 45 minutes to work at a concession stand selling burgers and fries. And put up with grouchy customers,

and my boss would make me do the dishes when I really didn't want to. But I did want gas in my truck for the weekends and enough for some games and movies. So, I did it. I did what the boss told me, because I could have quit but then... no money. It, the money, forced my hand.

But we say our Master is the King of kings, the Savior Jesus. And so I would like to think if it came down to my concessions boss, or something Jesus would have me do, I'd listen to Jesus right? He's my ultimate master. Yet, how often for us, when we know the voice of our Master which says to not hold grudges, to not click that link, to not cut that corner, to not treat that person like that, and for our purposes today, to maybe sacrifice a bit of the income. Which voice do we listen to? And if not the voice of Jesus, well, then, who is our master in that scenario?

Now I am not condemning you to hell, for a sin that you know you shouldn't do that you do anyway. Paul in Romans 7 is struggling with that. We fight these fights, and sometimes we lose, those old masters get the better of us. This is why we are so thankful that the true Master, Jesus, is merciful and loving, this is why we are here: for grace that we really do need. But that should be more reason to ponder the question: are we immune to what Jesus challenges us with today? Or can we just skip this lesson for us today because, "No, not me, I don't love or listen to money or the ways of the world." Come on, now. Let's be honest.

We like our money, do we love it? How do you know? Well, when you listen to it's voice over any other – that needy family, the loved one who wants to spend some time with you but that overtime money is so nice, and “you’ll make it up to them with a new ipad later...” More, more, more, more, more. We are consumers in a consuming society. And we have different socioeconomic and tax brackets here, sure, but compared to the world? And the history of the world? Running water, heat, garbage and sewer. We are rich. And we want more, more, more. Yet Jesus calls us to be sacrificial. Giving of the self. That’s the opposite of consumerism.

And so he challenges us today. Let’s meditate on who the real master is. And, as we do, let’s not forget that if the litmus test for your master is: will you do what you don’t want to for them - well, does Jesus ever tell us to do something we don’t want to? And, as un-fun as it is, the answer is yes! He does all the time. “I don’t want to forgive that person, Jesus.” “I don’t want to give the 10%, Jesus.” “I don’t want to give up that thing or that time or that sin.” “Jesus, I don’t want to get cancer or the heart attack, why are you letting it come to me?” “Jesus, I don’t want the world to think I’m hateful because of your teaching that sounds so out of touch.”

Why should we follow a Master like that?

I find it interesting how little our Lord thinks of all our chasing after paper. He says, “If you are faithful in very little, then maybe you will get the true riches.” Very little? Salaries, bills, interest, loans, mortgages! These aren’t very little?! Jesus says, “Oh yes they are.” Now he knows we need food on the table and roofs over our head, but folks, come on, do you realize how much we have? And we still aren’t happy. So maybe Jesus is onto something when he says he offers something greater. How about a little courage, peace, and forgiveness. How about his kingdom of life to the fullest forever? That’s true riches.

We think, “Oh we don’t have time for that. We have real problems.” And when we do that we are just like the pharisees. Notice how the pharisees react to Jesus’ teaching. They don’t get angry, they don’t get violent, they ridicule him. They make fun of him. “Oh this crazy preacher, he’s so silly. Because everyone knows money is where it’s at, and your stupid if you don’t think the same.”

Jesus says, “God know your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” And we think Jesus, “that’s all nice but I got bills to pay and chronic pain!”

But again don’t you see how “very little” that is? Jesus offers us a hope beyond all of that. So follow after him, lift your eyes from the ads, the distractions, the

everyday cares and worries. (And, by the way, if you think this all doesn't apply, if you are doing just fine. If you don't believe money is, in some way, your master, then you are better than me, so go ahead and prove it - sell all you have and give to the poor. And if you don't want to do that, like I don't. Then perhaps we can be more thankful for what the Lord has given us, and perhaps we can admit that we do kind of love our money.)

And take that truth, along with our fears, and pains. And take it to the King, the true Master, and say "Lord forgive me, strengthen me, and help me to be faithful with what you've given me. And help me to hold onto and never lose sight of the promises and riches of eternal life you offer."

We have been caught up by God's work, not ours, into a story, a reality, a present, and a future, that is so much bigger than we can imagine. We are ants on a rock flying through space. And yet we are each loved, valued, so much that a price would be paid. Not in money, or gold, please, what is that to God? Rocks. Paper. A price was paid in blood. In the life of someone for you. That matters. What's money for a life? How much is a life worth? Ask the insurance panels, I guess. But we know its more. Far more.

Even moreso, how much for the life of the sinless Son of God? What's that worth.

I'll tell you. God looked at that worth and at you, a sinner, and he said - "it's worth

that much. I'll pay that much!" And we think God is not merciful!? We think his gifts are boring!? Come to this rock. The Crucified and Risen Lord. Come to him and let him remind us, as he does today, that there is more going on. And the plan is being worked, the blood shed, for you. That you might be washed clean, and be with Him forever. That is priceless, that is lasting, that is why we follow after Jesus, the Master, the King. For he has promised that there is a Kingdom, and it is all yours.

God be praised. In the name of Jesus. Amen.