

Money

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 0 0] Now I'm going to look back at Sam, well, briefly at Sam 15, but the subject this evening is money. And that's what we're hoping to look at for a little while this evening.

Now I think everyone will recognise here that money is kind of important. At least if money is not important, what money can give us is important, or it's important because of what it can give us.

So I think we all recognise that to a greater or lesser degree in our lives. Money is really quite important. It's an important theme. And like all important themes in our lives, the Bible has a lot to say about that as well in our thinking and in our living.

We like money. There's no doubt about that. And the danger for us in liking money at one level is that we place too much emphasis on the material things that it can give us to make us happy.

We look for our happiness in the material possessions that money can provide for us. Or we can go a step further and we can recognise that we love money, not just that we like it, but we absolutely love it.

[1 : 3 1] And we're obsessed by it. And we're living our lives in the pursuit of money so that it becomes for us more important than people and more important than relationships.

And there's many people who live their lives with that philosophy that money is more important than anything, including relationships, including people, and obviously I guess at that level, including God.

And that's a very dangerous place to be. We do like money. We do love money to a greater or lesser degree. But also we need to recognise just by way of introduction that we need money.

I'm not going to be pious about this and pretend that we don't like or need or enjoy money. It's not evil. Money isn't evil.

The Bible doesn't say anywhere that money's evil. The Bible does say that the love of money, and I'll look at that a little bit later on, is the root of all kinds of evil.

[2 : 3 4] And that's significant. Now money, like all of God's gifts, is from Him and it's good. And He wants money to be a blessing to us.

He wants it to be a good thing for us in our lives. He wants us to pray about the money that we have or even the money we don't have. But when we do have money, He wants money to be a servant for us, not a master over us.

And that's very significant, that's very important, that we want to see money in its biblical perspective at that level. Something that God gifts us, something that is good, something that is a great servant, but a poor master.

A little bit like fire. Fire's a great servant. It's a terrible master. A fireplace with a lovely hot fire like we had this afternoon in the manse. They were in front of it, asleep in front of it, that's great.

It's a beautiful thing. But your house being on fire, it's not such a good thing. And the same is true with lots of different things, including money.

[3 : 42] Money's a great servant, but a very poor master. So we do need to have in our lives a biblical attitude to money. I know it's not very exciting on a cold March Sunday evening to potentially be speaking about a theme like this, but I hope it will be significant and important because it's an important part of our lives and we do need to think about it.

We need a biblical attitude to it. Because we've seen it's important to have a biblical attitude in lots of different areas of our lives. And the danger for us, isn't it, sometimes is that when we walk out the door here, we close our Christianity as well.

We don't take our Christianity with us, but we can leave it here in church. And we don't apply the principles of belonging to Jesus Christ into our everyday living.

And into the mundane, boring, back pocket wallets that we have. But yet he requires us and asks us to do that. And if we come to this Sam, Sam 15, it's a Sam of David and it's a Sam where David is really speaking about the qualities of a righteous person.

I'll say a little bit more about that in a minute. But this righteous person, sometimes referred to in the Psalms as the perfect person, he is quite often the theme of the Psalms.

[5 : 15] This righteous, this perfect person. And really what the Sam is doing, what David is doing is expressing, is emphasizing the kind of lives that a believer should live.

The moral responsibilities, the characteristics that should mark a person who is righteous.

He's not saying the Sam is saying when he speaks about this perfect man and this righteous man, he's not saying, sometimes referred to the faultless man as well. He's not saying that any of us can be perfectly righteous, faultless or perfect.

But he is saying, a couple of things, he's saying that when we put our trust in God, we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we have moral responsibilities to live like Jesus, to live in a certain way.

In other words, there's a weight of responsibility to live morally out of gratitude for what Jesus has done for us. But he's also pointing to this kind of the model person, the ideal person, the ideal believer as it were, the perfect believer.

[6 : 27] And that in itself, all of these Psalms that speak about the righteous, the perfect or the just person is pointing forward to the only righteous, just and true person, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

So in many of these Psalms, what it highlights, the righteous living, the righteous person, the perfect person, the ideal person as it were.

The attributes that are given are pointing forward to the person of Jesus who lived that perfect life.

So all the attributes you see in the Psalms, which you look at, sometimes when you read the Psalms, you think, ah, the perfect man does this and that and the perfect person does that. You think, well, I can never attain to that.

Good, brilliant, that's great, because none of us can. But it points us to Jesus who lived this righteous and perfect life in our place and yet died for our sins.

[7 : 30] Then when we trust in Him, He wants us by His grace and by His strength to attain to, to move towards, to live this kind of ethical and moral life out of gratitude and love for Him.

And that's very important. We see Christ in it and also we see what Christ can do for us in His strength if we trust in Him.

So if you could look at the Psalm, you could see a man, a person who, the question of the Psalmist is who can be in God's presence, who can live in God's sanctuary, who can live in His holy hill, who can walk and dwell with God.

And he's pointing out it's only a perfect person that can do that. And that of course pointing to Jesus saying that someone who's walk is blameless, who always does what's righteous, who speaks truth from his heart, who has no slander in his tongue.

And as he goes through that, we could look at that and say, this is Jesus. This is, this is how Jesus lived. He walked righteously. He was blameless. We were looking at, well, kind of very casually looking at some of this this morning.

[8 : 40] He didn't ever slander with his tongue. He didn't cast any slur on his fellow man that was wrong. He despised sin when he saw it in others and yet retained judgment on that.

He was honouring to those who feared the Lord. He kept his word even when it was hurtful to the point of the cross. And if he had money, he presumed Jesus had money or was Jesus too holy and spiritual to have money?

Don't think so. He was a carpenter. He was a blue collar worker. Made money to keep his family, didn't he? His father died at an early age.

And so he dealt with his money in a good and responsible and in an honest way. And so we see in a sense a picture of Jesus.

And therefore, as believers in Jesus who have come to him recognizing our need of Jesus, then we see by his strength we can live this way also.

[9 : 46] So we are people today, if we are Christians, we are people who ourselves have received his righteousness, his perfect life and all that he gives us.

We are covered legally. You know that term that we are legally covered in his righteousness? We are made right. We are clean.

But it also means that we can live for the first time the way he wants us to live in our lives. And that, can you believe it? That even extends to what we think about money.

Isn't that? Jesus even has a right to lordship over the way we think about our money. That is outrageously good because he is Lord and God.

So as this Sam unfolds, we see the kind of people that we, God wants us to be, the kind of people that he wants us to think about.

[10 : 48] He says it matters how we speak. It matters that truth matters to us, that we don't lie easily. In fact, we don't lie at all. He says it matters that we don't slander people with our tongue.

It matters the way we treat our colleagues at work, our neighbours, our fellow students, our friends in school. It matters how we speak and how we think about them.

That we don't do wrong to our neighbours, that we have a right attitude to people who might lead as a stray, and that we have a right respect and a love for those who are going to be good for us in our lives.

That we try and keep close to people who are going to be a good influence, and we try and avoid in terms of influence people that are going to be a negative influence to us in our lives.

And it means that we have a Christ-like attitude to money. There's a couple of things here, and there's only a couple of things here that the psalmist says about money and about our attitude, a Christ-like attitude to money.

[11 : 51] The first is that we're to be generous with our money, who lends his money without usury or without interest. And that's really speaking about a situation where someone with money was aware in the community of believers or around them of those who didn't have and who needed money, and who didn't extort to them by charging them unjust and unfair interest if they had lent them money.

And it just is quite a specific situation, but it speaks more broadly, and the Bible goes on to speak in different places more broadly about generosity, especially to those who are less fortunate than we are.

It's speaking of an attitude of open-heartedness with respect to our money. And it's an attitude where we see money not just as ours to keep and to grab and to make the most of and to seize every opportunity to make more.

Here's someone who's really struggling, I'll lend them money, but I'll lend them a great amount of interest, so I'll get more out of it. So it's really not an act of grace or love or concern for others, it's really a greedy attitude where we're wanting to take more back.

A generosity of spirit with regard to our money, and that's important for us if you broaden that. It's important because as we stand here, as I stand, you all sit there, we're the richest of the rich in world terms.

[13 : 28] So it means that we're, even as believers, we're looking beyond not just our immediate community, I'll come back to speak about our immediate community, we're looking to the world community and we're recognising there's huge inequality, wealth and poverty.

There's huge need. And there's millions of people this evening who will not know where their next meal will come from and we're aware of that, at a level of being able to share what we have in a responsible way with them.

Generosity of spirit comes from understanding grace. When we understand what Jesus has done for us and the generosity of what we're looking at this morning, and despite being rejected at every level, continuing to go to the cross, because of the generosity of his spirit towards us and his love towards us and his grace towards us, then that generosity of spirit is to be reflected in our lives.

And the way we think about people, not just with regard to money but generally, generosity of spirit, but also with regard not just to our lives and our homes and our hearts, but also our wallets.

So there's a generosity of spirit that even reaches to let the moths go, let them go, in the wallet, so that we have generous hearts, generous lives, generous attitudes and a generous wallet, where that is possible and feasible for us.

[15 : 08] So generosity is one important principle here. The other important principle is scrupulous honesty. It does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

There's this whole idea of an honest character, someone who's not willing to sell his soul for money. We know about that, don't we, from this morning with Judas, who regarded people as more important than making money and making a quick buck and who wouldn't lie or cheat or accept a bribe particularly against the innocent.

Isn't that interesting? How amazingly that parallels with Judas that we looked at this morning. He does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Here, Judas, give us Jesus, we'll give you 30 pieces of silver.

By the way, I need to make an apology for this morning. I got my chronology wrong. Do people notice that? Yeah, sorry. I don't know what I was...

Sorry. I got it wrong. I said Friday night and Saturday morning. Of course, what I meant was Thursday night and Friday morning, because Jesus died on Good Friday, not Saturday.

[16 : 19] I think it was something to do with the clocks. I got mixed up with the clocks and it got my timing all wrong. Poor show. Sorry. Anyway.

And the person who pointed out isn't here tonight. So I don't know what that says. Probably going to go to another church. I've been a decent preacher.

Truculus honesty is hugely important because we believe in truth, don't we? And we believe in the truth of Jesus and we believe in the truth of the word and we believe that honesty then matters because if we come to faith, we've had to be very honest about our own need, our own hearts and our own lostness.

And we know that God knows our hearts. We've made that important decision, haven't we? That God knows our hearts tonight as Christians. Therefore we have to have a scrupulous honesty with regard to money, don't we?

Because God knows our hearts. And He knows if we're trying to make a quick buck at the expense of someone else or if we're trying to cheat someone or if we're trying to even cheat the tax man or anybody else, whether people see it or not is utterly irrelevant.

[17 : 40] We are to be scrupulously honest with our money because God sees and because it reflects the character that we believe that we want to become as followers of Jesus.

So there are a couple of important principles from this, the Sam generosity and scrupulous honesty. There's also some general biblical teaching that I'll mention briefly before we finish tonight.

And the first is with regard to money, what the Bible says, I haven't got a text for this because there's so many, particularly from Proverbs. If you have time, Luke, and I've asked the young people to do this at identity, is go on to Bible Gateway, which is an online concordance, and type in money.

And you'll find a whole list of texts straight through the Bible that will teach you a lot more and I'll be able to teach you in this short time about what God thinks about our attitude and our behaviour with regard to money.

But one of the things that's really important, particularly in Proverbs, is prudence. That we are careful, that we, the Proverbs is really God's book of common sense.

[18 : 58] And so in Proverbs, there's lots of advice about being wise and prudent with our use of money. And that's a very important biblical principle that were to be prudent, that we would be considerate with our use of money.

We're not a flash it around. We're not to spend it like it's irresponsibly, like it doesn't matter, hey, I'm a Christian, I'm going to heaven anyway.

It doesn't matter if I get into debt. We're to live, I think a fair biblical principle is, as much as we can, as much as it within our means to live within our means, to don't spend more than we earn as a general principle as a non-go and principle life, that we recognise the difference between what we need and what we want.

Lots of the time, I really want that. But we also have to ask, well actually do I need that? Is it something that I think is a wise thing to have?

Or is it something that will just be an indulgence for me in life? So that we have a sense of prudence with our money. Some people and old people, all of us together have to do that in our lives to be thinking Christians.

[20 : 14] God's given us, you know, there's the parables in the New Testament that use the illustrations of money, how we use our money. How are we to use our money? Well God says we're to be prudent.

And in being prudent, it means, and I'm going to come back to this again at the end, we need to be aware of the people around us. I mean prudent with our money, we need to be aware of the needs of people around us.

We need to be aware of the people we love who are struggling. We need to be aware of those who are poor. We need to be aware of those who have lost, who are in dire situations.

We need to be aware of the community of those whom we love and we need to be able to support them when we can. So it's being aware of others around us.

And the second thing is we need to be aware in terms of general Bible teaching. And we read this in Matthew and it's also variously in different places in the Bible, it's also in 1 Timothy chapter 6.

[21 : 20] Be aware of the love affair with money. Be aware of that. The Bible's quite a lot to say about loving money more than loving God. Loving money more than loving your wife or your husband or your friend or your neighbour.

Loving money first, putting it right there. Wow, this is what I really love in my heart. I love of money. And that's hugely important.

Godliness with contentment in 1 Timothy 6 is a great gain for we've got nothing into the world, we can take nothing out of it. Isn't that amazing? We can't take anything.

Much though the Pharaohs tried and died with much of their wealth, they didn't take it with them. They still lay there for us to plunder thousands of years there.

But if we have food and clothing, we would content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation, into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires. That plunge many people into ruin and destruction.

[22 : 20] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. So there's this real spiritual link between the love of money and spiritually wandering from Jesus.

Why? Because we're dethroning Jesus and we're putting money right there on the throne and all that it can do for us. And we love it. And we love what it gives us. We love the power.

We love the authority it can give us. We love the pleasure it can give us. We love the independence it can give us. We love the fact that we don't need to worry about God because we've got money.

And the pursuit of money is this great spiritual aspect to it so that Jesus himself says, it's easier for a rich man, rich person, to go through the eye of a needle to enter the kingdom of God.

It's very interesting. The way of the love affair with money, it can become a snare and it can become a trap.

[23 : 23] It doesn't bring the heart happiness that you're looking for. If you're looking for it in wealth and in possessions, it simply doesn't do that. It hasn't got that ability.

It can't provide the satisfaction and the peace and the forgiveness and the belonging and the wholeness that Jesus Christ alone can bring.

Our identity is to be in Jesus Christ. He says, you know, he's not saying it doesn't matter. He's not saying to be spiritual. And if he's saying, seek first my kingdom, seek first a relationship with me, a heart walk with me and these things that you need will be added to you.

He says, I know, have you seen the lily of the field? Have you considered them? The beauty of these things. And I love you much more than these you're made in my image.

Beware of the love affair. Keep our hearts for Jesus Christ. And that goes for not just money, doesn't it? It goes for ambition and it goes for power and it goes for position in life and it goes for all kinds of things.

[24 : 32] So be aware of that love affair and also recognize it and see it then as a gift. It's a gift from God and a blessing from God as much as we can to be recognized as that and to be in some degrees given back to God.

We have a great responsibility to support the work of the kingdom here on earth with our money. That's an important biblical teaching for us.

The Old Testament, the people gave a tenth of what they earned that went back to maintain the work of the kingdom of God. In the New Testament, no such fixed figure is given, but it does tell us to give sacrificially, does tell us to give gratitude, does tell us to give in proportion with what we earn.

So we've got to think about it and do a bit of maths. It does tell us to be, in other words, proactive about that. It tells us to give the first fruits. In other words, it doesn't tell us to spend everything we've got and then if we've got 25 pence at the end of the month, we'll see what we can give to the church of Christ.

The first fruits. It says regularly on the first day of the week. It says generously, cheerfully. It says lots of things about how we can give to the cause of Christ.

[26 : 01] It's a mark of our commitment. It's a mark of our service. It's a mark of our understanding of money and of the gift of money and of giving back to the cause because God says he is no person's debtor and he recognizes that.

We need it here. St. Columbus and we look for those who are committed to the work and to the community here to be giving proportionally according to their income or if they haven't, then they don't, obviously.

But we see it as a response of grace to our mission, to outreach, to ministry, to the building, to the Bibles, to resources, to all that we're doing.

We need and are committed to and we're very grateful for all being able to support the work in that way. But it's a gift that acknowledges God receives it back.

It's also a gift that we recognize is not just for ourselves. So the money that we earn, the income that we receive, if we do receive income, it's not just for ourselves.

[27 : 07] We are to remember those in greater need than we are. And we are to remember ourselves as a community. There will be in any community of believers in any city group or in any church, there will be people who are really poor, really struggling and a few are a bit enmarassed about the whole thing.

And there will be people who will be really rich and there will be most people in between somewhere. We need to be aware of that and know one another and love one another.

It might be that we just open our homes. It might be that we share our possessions. It doesn't have. Well, I've got that. I can give you that.

To borrow. Don't wreck it. Bring it back. In other words, don't abuse it if someone gives you something. Respect it. Give it back. But you know, the early church, it was one of the things they did.

They had everything in common. Now, that's not a command for us, but it's a reflection of the love they had for one another. You know, we're not to be possessive about everything. It's mine. You know, the first thing, the first thing, you know, the first thing, I think I've said this before here.

[28 : 13] The thing I always do with a book is I put my name in it. It's mine. I've bought it. And if I give it away, I'll never get it back. It's mine. I think that's a good thing to do.

Because there's lots of Bibles get left here and people don't put their names in Bibles and we never get them back to people. But if it's done in a possessive spirit, I'm, this is mine and I don't want anyone else to have it, then that's crazy, isn't it?

Because we love one another and there's lots of people here and we're lots of different stages and ages and needs. And some people are really struggling, so we help them. Some people don't have things, so we share them.

Some people are lonely, so we invite them into our home and we share what we have. Because what we have is not simply for our own enjoyment.

And the great thing is that the more we do that, the more we will enjoy it. The more we will enjoy what God has given us when we share it with others. There's nothing really great, is there, about just doing things on our own.

[29 : 15] It's great to share a good time with someone else, share a good experience. And that is true with the use of our money. So very briefly, very briefly in conclusion, what are we to do if, and I take two extremes here, what are we to do if we're really poor?

If you're sitting here tonight and you think, well, it's all very well talking about money and income and disposable income and what you can give out here. I've got nothing. In fact, I've got worse than nothing. I'm in unimaginable debt.

What do we do about that if we're really poor? Because it's easy to be pious, isn't it? For us, it's easy to be pious and talk about these things and not realize how much we can be struggling.

Philippians 4 verse 12 says something very interesting about Paul, as he expresses biblical truth. I know he says what it is to have need. I know what it is to have plenty.

I've learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in need, I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

[30 : 26] So if you're in that position where really money is a big issue because you don't have any, there's a learning process that we're going through there in that position where we it's hard, really hard, really difficult, but we learn a sense of contentment that God will provide for us, particularly if we're living in a Christian community, at least ought to be the case.

But we trust in God and as Paul learned, we can do what we need to do through the strength he gives us. He reminds us there's better things.

Why did the church flourish among the poverty stricken and the New Testament, the poor classes and the revelation speaking to these churches that were struggling and oppressed and persecuted and poverty stricken and ostracised and had nothing?

Why? Why was it so important? Because they had a hope and a future. They had inheritance in heaven. They had something to look forward to. Church don't need that. They've got everything they think that they need in this life.

Those who are poverty stricken know a little bit about hell on earth. They know a little bit about loss and they understand how much the beauty of Jesus means for them in the future and his love and provision for them in the present.

[31 : 51] And when you're really poor also as a Christian, when you're really struggling, don't be proud and not accept help. Because we've got that, we hate being in debt to anyone and we hate receiving help.

It's a sign of weakness for us so of. Don't be afraid because that's what the Christian community ought to be like and we ought to support each other in that way. So if you're really rich, that's an issue, a battle and a struggle.

Sorry if you're really poor. What if you're really rich, I'm going to go to the same verse. Same verse, you're rich or poor. I'm not saying this because I need to have learned to be content whatever circumstances to be need or to have plenty.

I've learned the secret of being content in every situation whether well fed or hungry, living in plenty or want, I can do everything through him who gives me strength. So it's the same verse for the riches for the poor.

Those who are struggling at one end or those who have plenty, because there's a lot of temptations at the other end of the scale as well. Temptations to be arrogant, to be independent, to be selfish, to be careless of others, to be the self-made man or woman and to think of all the people you've stood on to get to that place if that's what's been the case.

[33 : 12] And it's easy for rich people, really rich people particularly to withdraw from the Christian community and not become involved, to become independent, to live in their castles.

But really rich need to have the same dependency on Jesus Christ, the same humility need to sit beside everyone else in the church because our identity is not in our wealth or our possessions or our bank book or our account, it's in Jesus Christ.

Nobody's any better than anyone else here because of how much they earn. Nobody receives any favour or I've never ought to receive any favour because of their position financially in this world, your brothers and sisters in Christ.

And that is what matters and sometimes rich people need the strength of Jesus Christ to recognise that just as much as people need to recognise the need for the strength of Jesus Christ to take them through that.

Proverbs is very wise, it might be in Ecclesiastes, I meant to write it down, I forgot, which is really annoying.

[34 : 25] But he says, give me neither poverty nor riches but give me what I need on a daily basis and I'll be content with that. And that's a, I'll look that up and you can look up tonight in identity through Bible Gateway, give me neither poverty nor riches and there's a great wisdom in that biblically, that we don't want either extremes.

And part of what we are, I think, as a community is to be avoiding these extremes in our extreme wealth, to give it for the cause of Christ and extreme poverty to receive help and strength through the gospel.

So these are one or two thoughts on what the Bible has to say about money and I hope that the young people will be able to continue that their study by looking at some of the questions and also for all of us to be thinking Christians and to remember that God is Lord of our wallets, of our bank accounts, of our attitudes to one another and of our honesty and of all of these things.

So let's be thinking Christians. Network, when we close the Bible in our daily lives, may we not be closing our relationship with Jesus also. Let's bear our heads briefly and pray.

Lord God, teach us to have a biblical attitude to money, not because it will make us right with God, not because it will make us righteous as people, but out of gratitude because Jesus lived with that honesty and that generosity and gave us great advice in the battles that we face because there's huge temptations, Lord.

[36 : 11] We know that and we confess that this evening. There's huge temptations when we are poverty stricken to be jealous or bitter or envious or broken or frustrated and there's huge temptations when we have plenty to be independent, to be arrogant, to be self-made, to be careless in our attitude to others.

So give us that balance, Lord. Give us that recognition of what you have given to us as a gift. Give us a loose hold on it, reminding ourselves that naked we came into this world and naked we will return and we can't take anything with us.

So give us a prudence that is caring of others, but give us an extravagance, Lord God, that is recognition that you are the giver of every good gift.

Help us, Lord, and be with everyone here with the different needs, pressures, burdens, fears and worries they have financially. And may they not be ignored or swept under the carpet or may they not bear them on their own, but may we together be a help and encouragement and strength to one another.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.