

What's In Your Wallet: Unlimited Treasure
First in a Stewardship Series
For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matt. 6:21
September 19, 2021
Pastor Jenothy Irvine

Intro "Testimony" Video - Joe Trueblood

Prayer Dear God, all we have is yours. Help us to trust you with the treasure we have been given. May we have ears to hear, eyes to see, and a heart open to your word. Amen

Message

It's funny the things we remember about money growing up. I remember my mom and dad had a huge glass jar in their room that they would put their change in at the end of the day or end of the week. I remember my dad had a small jar for special coins he kept in his top dresser drawer - where all important things go! I remember selling lemonade to make money to go to the carnival. I remember when I was older asking my dad for some money and he would always take out his wallet, open it slowly, and then watch it closely as if money were flying out of it. He would turn it upside down sometimes and shake it saying, "nope nothing in there today." However, he often had a five-dollar bill I could have at least to go get a pop or go to the movie with a friend. My mom on the other hand, when asked if I could have some money would either say, "dig to the bottom of my purse and see what you find," or she would take her wallet, open it and say something like, "that one is mine, that one is God's, that one is for the cable bill, that one, ok you can have that one."

You can tell a lot about a person by their wallet. Or more specifically what's in their wallet. You undoubtedly have seen the Capital One ad campaign featuring celebrities asking the now-famous question, "what's in your wallet?" It is hard to believe that slogan has been around since the year 2000. The company wanted to use the quote because it's an interesting question; it grabs our attention. It tells us the stuff in our wallet represents financial security, purchase power, and prosperity. But what else does it represent? It is a clever tagline indeed, but what is it really asking?

It is a question that causes the consumer to ask, do I have the right stuff to get all the satisfaction I am looking for in life. It prompts us to wonder if we are getting all that we think we deserve. Is there more out there? Are we missing something? How am investing, spending, and making the money I need to be successful? Of course all this with the goal of getting you to sign up for a capital one card or to use their banking services so that you will have the right stuff in your wallet.

What about you? What's in your wallet?

You might very well be thinking, none of your business Pastor Jenothy, and you are right. However, we simply want to use this question to help us reflect on this year's giving campaign. Every year about this time, the church takes a few weeks to talk about giving financially to the church, how that money is used / invested into the life of the church and community and how it is used to cover expenses of operating a large facility and staff. At the root of our asking such a question is the invitation for all of us to think about how money and faith are related and ask what your money has to do with your relationship with God.

I don't want to get in your business and meddle with your money. I don't want to know what you make or don't make or how you spend it. I simply want all of us to think about what is in our wallets and what that says about our faith and relationship with God because giving financially to the church is not a money issue, it is a relationship issue between you and God. It is about understanding the giving nature of God and the impact that has on every part of our life.

Throughout the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) Jesus used parables to illustrate a certain point or teaching. It is a method that uses common objects of his day; things that the people would relate to and understand. From the beginning, money has always been something humanity is interested in and can relate to. After all, we like it, we use it, we want more of it, and it "makes the world go round." It makes sense then that Jesus would use money to explain or as an example of our relationship with God and our understanding of the Kingdom of God. If you think about it, our bank statement tells the truth about what's really important to

us - what our most valued treasure really is. Jesus highlights this in what is called the sermon on the mount.

In Matthew 6:19-21 we read these words:

This illustration is part of a collection of instructions, all with the same point. All with the same purpose and that is that our priorities drive our life. What we come to value, hold most dear; what we treasure drives our life and relationships. Jesus is addressing the crowds because the religious leaders of the day and those who were listening to them were more interested in *looking* the part of follower than *being* the part of follower. They were caught up showing off their wealth, looking good in front of others, sounding like they had it all together and were good people because they followed the law. They were trusting themselves and not God to prove to others they were good, righteous people.

This passage is about priorities, and the central priority is God. No question about the importance of putting God first. The thing is, God is relational and loving and wants us to choose to love and serve God freely rather than to be forced into it. Because of that we lose sight of what matters most and allow our lives to be taken over by all the other objects, causes, relations, items, activities, and people around us.

It is always easier to see and judge the mistakes of those early followers and religious leaders because we stand on this side of the cross. Yet, I wonder if we are doing the same thing even today. I wonder if we have our priorities in line with God? Do we prioritize our lives with God leading the way and with God at the center? Or, are we being consumed by the very things, events, desires, and products that we consume. Do we put our money and what it can do for us ahead of God and our relationship with God?

This passage is all about learning to love and serve God for no other reason than God first loved us. Not for fame, or to flaunt what you have, or to make a name for yourself; not to look good or check another box off the “things to do to prove I am a good Christian” list. It is about putting God first in all things - every part of your life.

It doesn't mean you can't have anything or strive to own nice things, go out to eat now and again, or travel and invest in the future. What it means is you do those things with God leading the way, not self, not ego, not greed, not power, not others expectations, not rivalry, not fear; God. It doesn't mean your kids and family can't have stuff and be involved in activities, it means you choose and prioritize those things and activities with God in the center, not fear of missing out, or for personal gain, status, position, or popularity; God.

This text is Jesus' challenge to recognize that earthly - worldly treasure is limited, but what we have with God is unlimited treasure and that is where our energy, passion, and priority needs to be. What you treasure will drive your life, whether you realize it or not.

Over the next several weeks we challenge and invite you to explore the relationship between faith and giving; to reflect on how you prioritize what you have, how you get it, and what you treasure. This is where some folks get nervous, some defensive, and some uncomfortable thinking "here we go, the church wants my money." On the one hand, you are right, the church needs money to operate and continue doing what it does. On the other hand, it has nothing to do with your money and everything to do with trusting God with what you have and understanding what it means to give to God.

"Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or - worse - stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. 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