

# The Gospel, Possessions and Prosperity - Session 3

by David Platt

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*Jesus teaches that spiritual integrity is more important than material prosperity and that we should store up treasures in heaven, not on earth.*

**Duration:** 1:15:14

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 15:11, Matthew 6:11-12, Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 7:12

**Topics:** "Possessions"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of our use of money in demonstrating where our heart is. He encourages the congregation to examine their checkbooks and budgets to see where their priorities lie. The preacher asserts that our use of money determines where our heart goes, and that if we want a heart for missions or for the poor, we must invest our money in those areas. The sermon also discusses the parables of the rich man and Lazarus and the talents, highlighting the responsibility we have to use the time, talents, and treasures God entrusts to us for eternal purposes.

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## Transcript

We're going to try to cover Jesus and all of the New Testament before the next break. This is obviously where we are New Covenant people. And so, what we see Jesus saying, now Jesus is unique in the sense that He's speaking still in an Old Covenant context, He's not died on a cross, but He's ushering in a New Covenant.

So, it's a little tricky at times, but then in the New Testament we'll get to us under the New Covenant. So, the life of Jesus, He's from a poor family, we see that His family was kind of the exception, giving more inexpensive offerings there in Luke 2, surrounded by varied followers. Fishermen, like James and John, and actually probably a little more well-to-do than some other fishermen because they had people who worked with them, hired servants there in Mark chapter 1. Matthew, a tax collector, probably had a lot of money, and then the rest of them probably ordinary peasants.

So, varied followers, and well, it's interesting in the Gospels, we see Jesus attracting poor people and rich people, both end. From a poor family with varied followers, He led an itinerant ministry, an itinerant ministry. Now, this is important.

Jesus didn't stay in one place, He traveled, and the disciples who were with Him did the same thing. So, He would say things like Luke 9, foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. So, that's unique in that they didn't have a place where they were living all the time, like a house.

Now, we have evidence that Peter probably still had a house that they would go and stay in, but they had an itinerant ministry with an intentional mission. We talked about Luke 4 already. Jesus came, Jesus came, and this is how I want to describe His mission.

It was a spiritual mission. Primarily, He came to preach good news. He came to preach the gospel.

That's what Jesus came to do, but that was a spiritual mission with social ramifications to address deep needs. He did come to the poor, the captive, the blind, the oppressed there in Luke chapter 4, and we see Him. We see Him healing people of disease.

We see Him telling blind men they can see, raising dead people to life. So, there's social ramifications of the gospel. Spiritual mission, He's preaching good news, primarily with social ramifications.

See the universality of Jesus' mission here in Luke chapter 4. Jesus did not come only for local affection. He came for global adoration. This is something we looked at, Bart Box preached on Luke 4 here, and this was the picture.

Jesus came for the stranger, the outcast, not just for the people of Israel ultimately. Universality of Jesus' mission and the radicality of Jesus' mercy. Today is the day of salvation, He said.

Today, that which you've longed for in the Old Testament is here, is fulfilled in your hearing. So, that's the life of Jesus in a nutshell, the temptation of Jesus. Notice, you read through Matthew chapter 4, it's interesting.

What you'll find is, all of these temptations, at least indirectly, if not directly, dealt with possessions. All three temptations involve material possessions, and what we find in what Jesus does in resisting those temptations is that spiritual integrity is more important than material prosperity. Spiritual sustenance is more important than physical sustenance.

There's a warning here from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, the allure of the world is strong. But what does Jesus do every time He's tempted with the allure of the world? He quotes the Word, the power of God's Word is sufficient. That's why we're spending all of our time thinking about Scripture here tonight.

And it might seem even laborious at times, but the best way we can fight materialism in our hearts and in the culture around us is with the Word of God. That's the best way. Spiritual integrity more important than material prosperity.

Teachings of Jesus. Now what we're going to do is we're going to walk through His teachings in two kind of groups. Just His general teachings, His encounters with people, and then His parables we're going to do second.

So we'll start with His general teachings, the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are the poor in spirit. We're going to fly here.

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is saying, blessing is reserved for the utterly destitute. Now that doesn't necessarily mean physically poor, but the word poor in spirit there literally means utterly destitute.

Those who are destitute for God. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew chapter 6, verse 1 through 4, piety should not be paraded.

Don't give in order to be seen by others. That doesn't mean it's bad to talk about giving and that sort of thing, but this is the motive of our hearts. Must never be to give in order to earn the applause of men.

Then in Matthew 6, Jesus talks about prayer and tells us how to pray. Matthew 6, 11 through 12, the Father provides physical provision. We ask God to meet our needs, not our greeds.

Give us this day our daily bread. That's based on, remember we saw that in the manna from heaven, day by day provision of bread. God meets our needs, not our greeds.

We don't pray for God to meet our greeds, we pray for God to meet our needs. The Father provides physical provision and then provides spiritual redemption. Food for our stomach and forgiveness of our sins.

Back to back there in Matthew chapter 6, verse 11 through 12. Now starting in verse 19 of chapter 6 in the Sermon on the Mount, this is where we see a block from this point in chapter 6 to the end of chapter 6, a block of teaching about possessions that are extremely important. Two treasuries.

Look at Matthew 6, 19. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Notice here, Jesus is not against you storing up treasures. Jesus is not saying to us, don't store up treasures.

Instead He's saying to every single one of us in an American culture of wealth, store up real treasure. We can live for temporal treasures that we cannot keep, that moth and rust will destroy. Does that sound like a solid investment plan? Put your treasures where they'll be stolen.

No. Jesus is not saying here that just the materialism is wrong. He's saying it's ridiculous.

Jesus is not saying don't invest. He's saying stop making stupid investments. Invest in that which matters.

We can live for eternal treasures that we cannot lose. Treasures that will grow and can never be taken away. What's the better investment? When you think about it this way, think about it this way, realize what Jesus is saying.

Generosity is not a huge sacrifice. It's, I didn't know how to put this, it's humbly selfish. Like store up for yourselves.

Jesus is telling us to seek gain for ourselves. And the way we seek gain for ourselves is putting our hope and treasures in heaven. It's what Jim Elliott said.

This is so good. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. That's just smart.

To avoid materialism, Wesley said, I value all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity. This is the picture we're storing up. Randy Alcorn gives this example in the book he wrote.

I'm going to read it to you. Imagine you're alive at the end of the Civil War in the United States. You're living in the South, but you're a northerner.

You plan to move back north as soon as the war is over. While in the South, you've accumulated lots of southern Confederate currency. Now suppose you know for a fact the North is going to win the war and the end is imminent.

What are you going to do with your Confederate money? If you're smart, there's only one answer. You immediately cash in your Confederate currency for U.S. currency, the only money that's going to have value once the war is over. You only keep enough Confederate currency to meet your short-term needs.

He continues, as believers, we have inside knowledge of a coming change in the worldwide economic situation. The currency of this world will be worthless at our death or Christ's return, both of which are imminent. This knowledge should radically affect our investment strategy.

For us to accumulate vast earthly treasures in the face of the inevitable future is equivalent to stockpiling Confederate money. It's not just wrong. It is stupid.

Which treasury are we going to live for, Jesus asks. Two treasuries. And he commands us to command, live for treasures in heaven.

Two truths. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Here's the two truths.

Number one, our use of money demonstrates where our heart is. Do you know where, you want to know where your heart is, look at your checkbook and look at your budget. Our money does not lie.

This is humbling. Our money demonstrates where our heart is. And our use of money determines where our heart goes.

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Money leads, hearts follow. People say, I want more of a heart for missions.

Put your money in missions. You want a heart for the lost and the poor? Put your money toward the lost and the poor. You will not have a heart for the lost and poor if you keep buying more and greater gadgets and stuff.

It won't happen. Money leads, hearts follow. Right after this, Jesus talks about two perspectives.

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. If your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If in the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness. Two options here when it comes to perspective, how we see. Short-sighted, eyes focused on the things of earth, concerned with where you or others are going to be a few years from now.

That's how the world lives. You get the next gadget so you can get ahead of the next guy. Financial counselors say you need to plan ahead so you know where you're going to be 20, 30, 40, 50 years from

now.

And I want to propose to you tonight that that kind of counsel is short-sighted. It's absolutely short-sighted. It's short-sighted to live for the day when we will be 60 or 70 or 80 years old with our money.

There's a different perspective and it's far-sighted, eyes focused on treasure and eternity. And concern is not as where we or others are going to be a few years from now, but the concern is where we or others are going to be a few million years from now. We don't need to plan for what's going to happen 30 years from now.

We need to plan for what's going to happen 30 million years from now and spend our money accordingly. Choose investments carefully. Which one is the greater return 30 million years from now and spend on that.

You can get a nice car, a nicer car. So you got a simple car and you say, well for this much more I can get a nicer car here. And then you look at that money, maybe it's \$5,000 or \$10,000 extra and you think, or I could, I could invest in a church planter in India who will go into an unreached people group to share the gospel.

What's going to have an effect on 30 million years from now? This is a no-brainer all of a sudden. It is a no-brainer. This changes our perspective, what we do.

Right after talking about eyes and sight, Jesus says no one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Two masters. Notice, Jesus did not say you should not serve God and money. He said you cannot serve both God and money.

It's impossible. The choice is there. Money on the throne and a life wasted in the pursuit of wealth on earth.

Or God on the throne, a life invested in the pursuit of wealth in heaven. So from there, Jesus goes on and he talks about not worrying, don't be anxious about your life. And this is where we see sometimes our, our, our seeking after stuff is not just a greedy desire for more, it's a manifestation of insecurity in our hearts.

And Jesus says, seek the kingdom of Christ. Earthly treasures multiply anxiety. When you put your money in the stock market, your hope rises and falls on the stock market.

When you put your money in stuff, your security rises and falls on stuff. Don't do that. That is a miserable way to live.

Put your hope in God. Seek him, his kingdom. Earthly treasures multiply anxiety.

Eternal treasures guarantee security. This is where it's good. You get this expounded on over in Luke chapter 12 where Jesus is saying the same things.

And I want you to listen to what he says over there. Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the needy.

Now Jesus just said, sell your possessions, give to the needy. Bold command. But I want you to notice what he says right before that.

Fear not, little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. That verse right there, that's the key to this whole picture tonight, I think. It is the key to overcoming materialism, it is the key to letting go of our things, it's the key to obeying God, even when we have hard commands like sell your possessions and give them to the poor.

The key is, we don't need to be afraid because our father's good pleasure is to give us the kingdom. Now listen, follow with me here, trust the love of Christ. Jesus right before he gives us a command, he says, you have a shepherd who protects you.

You're a little flock, he cares for you, he shepherds you. You have a father who delights in you. Your father is pleased to give to you.

If we are children of a father, then what do we have as children? We have an inheritance that our father delights to give to us. You have a shepherd who protects you, a father who delights in you, you have a king who provides for you. The father's been pleased to give you the kingdom.

In light of the kingdom that he promises to give you, in light of the inheritance he delights in giving you, in light of the care he provides for you, sell your possessions and give to the poor. You have no reason to fear. That's good news, trust the love of Christ.

Okay, back here to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7, 12, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. Meet others' needs like you meet your own needs. That's a bold teaching.

Where do you begin to apply that? That's huge. Now we move on from the Sermon on the Mount, other teachings of Jesus, Luke 6, woes upon the rich. We're not going to read through all these passages, you'll be able to go back and hopefully look through some of these, but Jesus prophesied a great reversal here.

He was reminding them that the way things look on earth right now is going to look a lot different in eternity. In eternity, many will find themselves in an opposite condition from their situation on earth. That's humbling, isn't it? That should at least cause us pause, in 5% of the world's wealthy, that should cause us pause.

Prophesies a great reversal, he promises great reward. Followers of Christ are willing to endure present hardship in order to experience future glory. He's speaking, he's encouraging those who are going through hardship and he's saying, trust in me.

Trust in me. You get to Luke chapter 11, but give as alms those things that are within and behold, everything is clean for you. But woe to you Pharisees, for you tithe mint and rue and every herb and neglect justice and love of God.

These you ought to have done without neglecting the others. He's talking to people who are tithing, but they're missing the point. He says, we give a tithe as God's word commands.

So it's good, you should. He says, you ought to give a tithe. Now it's interesting, this is one of, really the only time, there's a parallel over in the book of Matthew where Jesus mentions the tithe and he doesn't command the tithe here.

Jesus never commands that we should tithe. He does say, you ought to have tithed. It's almost like implied, but he doesn't command it.

We give a tithe as God's word commands and then he says, we live with love that God's justice compels. The point is to give to those who are in need or the heart that desires to give. Now, we're going to come back to that when we talk about tithing, so just hold on to that.

Luke 14, 25 through 33, some of the most shocking verses, large crowds following Jesus. He turns around to them and says, if you're going to come after me, you need to hate your mom and dad, brother, sister, wife, and kids. He just lost most people at hello, like that's not a good opening line.

Imagine following an obscure religious teacher and turning around to you and saying, if you're going to follow me, you need to hate your mom and dad, wife, and kids. And the next statement, if you're going to follow after me, you need to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. Take up an instrument of torture and follow me.

Imagine following an obscure religious teacher in our day today and him turning around and saying, if you're going to follow me, you need to pick up your electric chair and follow me. That's weird. As if that's not enough, you get to the end of this passage, verse 33, any of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Give up everything you have, pick up an instrument of torture, hate your mom and dad, wife, and kids. Like that's a lot different than admit, believe, confess, and pray the prayer. Just saying.

It wasn't near as effective. They all turned away. What does that mean? And some people say, well, that's discipleship.

This is for mature, this was his intro. Jesus requires superior love. We are to love him in a way that makes our closest relationships in this world look like hate in comparison.

Superior love. In comparison to Christ, we hate the people we love. In comparison, relative there, it's not saying, it's not a command to hate mom and dad, wife and kids.

And that's huge. We have this idea. I need to move on, but we've got to stop here for a second.

We have this idea that obedience to Christ, it's like this begrudging thing. Well, I know I need to give, or I know I need to read my Bible, or I know I need to pray. That's not Christianity.

Like, I don't come home and give Heather a big hug and kiss, and she'd say, well, what was that for? Well, it says on page 45 of my marriage manual that I'm supposed to do that when I get here. It doesn't work. There's no affection in that.

You know, Christianity is not begrudging obedience. It is superior affection for Christ and a desire for Him. Superior love.

This changes our perspective, and this is the beauty. This is the beauty. Now, when we relate to wife and children, mom and dad, we relate to them properly because they are not superior in our affections.

Christ is superior in our affections, which frees us to love them the way they need to be loved, not to idolize them, but to love them properly, to love them as Christ loves them. Now we're looking at Ephesians

5. It's all coming together. It makes sense.

Jesus requires superior love. Jesus requires exclusive loyalty, exclusive loyalty. Take up a cross.

Through the cross of Christ, we die to the life we live. We die to the life. We are dead men and women.

This changes our priorities, and He uses two illustrations in that passage where a worker is constructing a building. He's warning against a hasty emotional decision to follow Him. He says, count the cost.

Count the cost like you would before you build a building, and we're warriors fighting a battle. That's big. Like in wartime, we ask the question, what can I do to help the cause? Everything is devoted to the cause.

In peacetime, we say, well, how can we be more comfortable? How can we have more fun? What kind of Christianity are we living in, wartime or peacetime? Jesus requires total loss. Renounce all that you have. Give up everything you have.

For the cause of Christ, we give up everything we have. This changes our possessions. Now here's the deal.

Not every single disciple of Jesus and not every single follower of Christ in the New Testament gave up all their property and all their possessions. Mary talked about Peter. He still had property.

They still had possessions. Some did give up everything, but the picture is, it is all renounced, it is all given over to Christ. Now, I want to be careful because I use language here like Jesus requires this, Jesus requires that.

I want to remind you. This is why that first part was so important. That's not saying that these are conditions we have to meet in order to be accepted by Jesus.

That's not what this is saying at all. Instead, what this is saying is, is that when we realize who Jesus is, then his authority over us, Jesus is Lord, and he does require. If Jesus requires or Jesus demands things from us, rubs us wrong, there's probably an issue with our understanding of Jesus' Lordship.

When we realize Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, then the fact that he requires things of us makes good sense and expects us to do it, but it's not conditions that we have to meet. It's Jesus' absolute authority over us, and don't forget, we talked about it earlier, God gives what he demands. He enables this.

It's grace. So, just keep that in mind. Mark 8, 34, 37, there's, you look at this, there is economic turns all over this passage.

If anyone would come after me and let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me, for whoever would, just circle him, save his life, will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it. What does it profit a man? To gain the whole world and forfeit his soul.

What can a man give in return for his soul? Like, what is Jesus saying? He's saying, we do not live for gratification in this world. We do not live for this world. We live for gain in the world to come.

If we save our physical lives here at the expense of our spiritual well-being, we will ultimately lose both. But if we lose our lives here following after Christ and proclaiming the gospel, we will preserve our lives for

all of eternity. Let's choose the latter.

Then you come to Mark chapter 10, verse 17-31, the story of the rich young ruler. Now, this one takes the cake. Like, rich, young, influential ruler coming up to Jesus.

If anybody needs to be in, this guy needs to be in. Think of all he can do for the kingdom. Like a simple, and he comes up and he asks, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He's an eager seeker.

I mean, bow your head and close your eyes and sign the card and this guy is on the circuit like that. Instead, he just doesn't have some of the methods that we have today and so he has the gall to look at him and say, sell everything you have and give it to the poor. The classic example of letting the big fish get away.

The guy turns around because he had great wealth, Mark 10 says. Now, when we come to this passage, we've got to be careful. There's two errors here.

Oftentimes we universalize this passage. We say, well, Jesus tells everyone to give away everything they have to the poor. That's not what this is saying.

We've talked about that. It's not what Jesus says to every follower of his. But at the same time, and that can kind of cause us to breathe a sigh of relief.

Okay, all right, good. But the second error is to minimize this because if this passage teaches us anything, it teaches us that Jesus does tell some people to sell everything they have and give it to the poor. I love what one writer said, that Jesus did not command all his followers to sell all their possessions, gives comfort only to the kind of people to whom he would issue that command.

Like, we laugh. And people say the point of this story is that Christ is supposed to be the center of our affections. And for this man, it was money.

For other people, it's other things. And so the only point, really, is that we're supposed to let go of the idols in our heart. And that interpretation is unquestionably true and utterly inadequate.

It's true. Yes, that's the point. But this speaks to possessions.

We've got to see ourselves here. We're rich. And this text is showing us the powerful relationship between one's spiritual condition and one's riches.

And so we're going to fly through this right here. What does this passage teach us? Jesus' call to salvation demands total surrender. That's what he's calling this man to.

Total surrender. Salvation, not a matter of external reformation. You look at this passage, Jesus says, obey the commandments.

Sell your possessions. What Jesus is doing and what he does, like in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, this guy thought, I can do this. I can make it into the kingdom by what I do.

And so what Jesus does is he takes the bar to an entirely new level. It's what he does all throughout to show that he can't do this on his own. Salvation not a matter of external reformation.

Salvation ultimately a matter of internal transformation. He's got to have a superior. He's got to be conquered by a superior affection for Christ and trust in Christ that would enable him to do that.

That's got to happen on the inside. And the whole passage hinted on how he viewed Christ. Comes up, he says, good teacher.

Jesus is not merely a respectable teacher. Jesus is the sovereign Lord. This is huge for us.

Jesus does not intend to be one voice among many in how we use our possessions. He intends to be Lord over how we use our possessions. Sovereign Lord demands total surrender.

Jesus calls us to give sacrificially because he loves us. I love Mark 10, 21. It says, Jesus looked at him and loved him.

Jesus loves rich people enough to tell them the truth. When Jesus tells us hard things, he doesn't tell us these things because he doesn't like us. He tells us these things because he loves us.

Jesus gives commands, not considerations. Five commands in that passage. Five commands.

As followers of Christ, we do not consider options. As followers of Christ, we obey. Some people look at this passage and say, well, what Jesus was saying was that this man needed to be willing to sell his possessions.

The only problem with that interpretation is it's not true. If that's what he meant, then he would have said, you need to be willing. He said, sell your possessions.

And by that, he meant, in the Greek, sell your possessions. We're in the New Testament language. It just comes in.

It's very helpful. Jesus does not want to strip us of our pleasure. He wants to satisfy us with his treasure.

I love this. Go, sell everything you have, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. He's not calling him away from treasure.

He's calling him to treasure. It's what we've already seen in Matthew chapter 6. He's not saying, don't care about treasure. He's saying, start caring about real treasure.

Do we want unpredictable investments or do we want inexhaustible savings? Love of possessions will inevitably and ultimately rob us of the joy for which we have been created. This man's face fell. He wasn't really sad because he had great wealth.

It's the only time in Mark when someone called by Jesus to himself refuses. Why did he walk away? Because his eyes were blind. He didn't see the depth of his need.

His face was sad. You see, he had such eagerness when he came up to Jesus. He walks away with joy.

Isn't it tragic? He's walking away from the only one who can bring him the joy he longs for. Clinging to his stuff because he thinks it will do it for him. His hands were full.

He went away sad because he had great wealth. Four more here. We desperately need to realize the deadly nature of our possessions.

Jesus turns around and says to his disciples, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. It's hard. And this was shocking to the disciples and it's shocking to us.

We are used to recognizing wealth as a blessing. The question is, are we willing to realize that wealth is often a barrier? It's hard for the rich. We are rich.

It is hard to enter the kingdom of God from this zip code in Birmingham, Alabama. It's hard. Salvation is utterly impossible for any and every person apart from the grace of God.

He goes on to elaborate on that it's impossible for the rich man to enter the kingdom of God. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Now that verse is often misinterpreted as well.

People say, well there's a gate leading into the city called the eye of the needle and in order for a camel to get through the gate, the camel had to get down and take a load off the camel, bring it to its knees and squeeze through. The only problem with that one is it's not true. So there's no record of that kind of gate, at least until like the 9th century, some say even the 19th century, and trying to do that misses the point.

The point is you can't do it. It's impossible. Not it's hard and you have to get down on your knees.

It's impossible. Salvation, utterly impossible for any and every person apart from the grace of God. God, you don't do anything to earn salvation.

God gives salvation to us. This is so important. God does not sell us salvation.

God does not trade us salvation. God is not looking for what you have to bring to the table. Because you have nothing to bring to the table.

He gives us salvation. God enables. He gives salvation to us.

Oh, this is good. God gives salvation to us and God enables sacrifice in us. Only God could so radically change a man's heart that he would sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow after Christ.

That's what he needed. He needed a change of his heart. Only God can do this.

Only God can do this in our lives. Only God can do this in our churches. We need God to do this.

We can't manufacture this. Two more from this passage. Jesus frees us from our bondage to ourselves and our stuff.

Peter turns and he says, We've left everything to follow you. There's a freedom there. We're free to go wherever he calls, to give whatever he asks.

That's where we want to be, isn't it? Free to go wherever God calls us. Free to give whatever God asks us to give. Finally, Jesus unites his people together to enjoy and encourage one another as they abandon themselves to him.

And he says, When you give yourself radically to Jesus, follow this, the church no longer seems like an abstract idea. Maybe you lose your family because you follow after Jesus, but you gain brothers and sisters and mothers. And you'll notice fathers is not mentioned because we have one father.

You gain a whole family. And church is that family. Sacrifice no longer seems like an appropriate term.

I love this. To those who give away everything, Jesus says, You get a hundred times as much. That's gain.

And this world no longer seems like an adequate home. Not just this age, but in the age to come, eternal life. In Luke, this story is followed by Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus was a wee little man. He climbed up in a sycamore tree. Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus. Go into your house today. Oh, yes.

That was beautiful. I don't know if that translates into China. I don't know if they know that song.

Anyway, yeah, okay. So, this wee little man. Isn't that unfortunate? Like that's the first thing we think of when we think of Zacchaeus.

The guy gave away like half of his stuff. And we think, what a wee little man. Man, it's unfortunate.

Jesus comes into his house. Zacchaeus stood and said, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.

And Jesus said to him, Jesus said to him, That's a good idea, Zacchaeus. That's a great example, Zacchaeus. Are you sure that's what you want to do, wee little man? No, Jesus said to him, This is startling.

Today salvation has come to this house. Wow. The basis of salvation, divine grace.

An encounter with the Son of Man who came to seek and save those who are lost. The fruit of salvation, just generosity. Justice and generosity.

Following up right on the heels of the rich young ruler intentionally in the book of Luke. Giving it away. Alright, next story, Mark chapter 14.

Oh, this one. This story. A woman comes with an alabaster flask, an ointment of pure nard, very costly.

Pours it over his head. Some who said, Why was the ointment wasted like this? For this ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor. They scolded her, but Jesus said, Leave her alone.

Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you will always have the poor with you. Whenever you want, you can do good for them.

But you will not always have me. She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial.

And truly I say to you, Wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, What she has done will be told in memory of her. Unfortunately, the classic proof text for indulging in possessions and ignoring the poor. I've had this quoted to me on so many different occasions.

When talking about giving to the poor. And they say, It's not that important. Jesus himself said, You will always have the poor among you.

As if, Oh, okay. They will always be starving. So let them starve.

Not only is that absurd logic, But it totally misses the point of this text. Jesus is not devaluing social justice. When he says, You can help the poor any time you want.

The implication is, You need to help the poor any time you want. You need to be doing that regularly. Jesus is doing that all throughout the gospels.

He's not devaluing social justice. He is condemning self-righteous judgmentalism. He rebukes this woman, Not because, He rebukes those who are accusing this woman, Not because they were concerned for the poor, But because they were showing self-righteousness and asserting themselves over her.

This is a unique occasion in redemptive history that warrants a lavish gift. It warrants a lavish gift. When Jesus is about to go to the cross, For someone to offer this expensive offering, That makes sense.

It doesn't become a standard for total extravagance in the western world now. This one fires me up. The normal practice of redemptive history includes consistent generosity.

The only thing this passage teaches, Or the things this passage teaches, Is that Jesus is pleased with an extravagant gift right before he goes to the cross, And he normally expects people to care for the poor. That's what this passage teaches. You've got Deuteronomy chapter 15, Where they say, Or Deuteronomy chapter 15 verse 11, There will never cease to be poor in the land, But don't forget, We saw this earlier, Right after that, It says, So open your hand wide to your brother, To the needy and the poor in your land.

Okay, next one. Mark chapter 11, Cleansing of the temple. People, well, The temple is designed to display God's purity.

That's clear. God desires for his purity and his holiness to be displayed in the temple. And so Jesus is turning the tables over, As they were making profit.

He's showing us that God does not intend worship for world to gain. He quotes from Jeremiah chapter 7, Talking about this is not a den of robbers. This is not worship for world to gain.

And not just that. The temple is designed, Not just to display God's purity, But to reflect God's purpose. God does intend worship for world wide glory.

Here's the deal, When he says, My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. We focus on the first part, We say, So we're supposed to, When we get together, We're supposed to pray. That's not the point.

Isaiah 56, And you've got it quoted there, Or got it listed there, Isaiah 56 verse 6 and 7, Is a prophecy about how the nations will come to the temple to worship. And the way the temple was set up, You had this outer court, The court of the Gentiles. You had an inner court where only Jewish people could go.

You had a sign that said, Gentiles don't come any further. Then you had in the center, The Holy of Holies. And as you progressed toward the center, Less and less people could come.

Right? Where did they set up all these tables? In the Holy of Holies? Certainly not in the inner court. Certainly not in the outer court, The court where the who were. The Gentiles, The place that was designated for the nations to come and encounter the glory of God, They had set up as a market.

They disregarded the purpose of God and said, Let the nations go to hell. That's what He was turning tables over for. Because they missed the point of worship.

And they abused it with their possessions. Next passage, Mark chapter 12. Asking about taxes.

And basically, They thought they were trapping Jesus when they asked Him these questions about taxes. Because to say, yes, you should pay taxes, Would be to show allegiance to Rome. To say no, would be cause for rebellion.

I mean, it would be rebellion and cause for punishment. So He affirms the paying of taxes. Says, give your taxes to your government.

Let me see the coin. Caesar's on it? Well, it's Caesar's. Give your taxes to your government.

But at the same time, your lives belong to God. Government's not sovereign. Caesar's not sovereign.

God is sovereign. So you may give your taxes to your government. But you give your trust to your God.

Give your taxes to your government. Give your trust to your God. Mark chapter 12.

This is the fascinating story. Put yourself in the role of this woman's financial counselor. She's got two coins left.

She says, I think I'm going to go give it all. Well, that's sweet. But let's think about this.

God wants you to eat. And God wants you to take care of yourself. And you've already, you've already suffered enough.

God understands. Hold on to your two coins. And Jesus looks at her.

This is intimidating enough to see Jesus watching what's going on here. Watching every detail as people put coins in here. Knowing every single detail of the money we spend.

And He sees her put these two, her last two coins in there. And commends her for it. What is that about? Jesus commends sacrificial giving.

Giving beyond our ability to give. This is not saying that every widow is supposed to give away everything they have. I don't need to universalize this.

Jesus is commending sacrificial giving. And He's showing us that sacrifice is measured more by relative risk than by actual amount. Well, you say, what do you mean? It's not that she put the most money in the offering, is it? It's monetarily two copper coins.

But her sacrifice was far, far greater. Genuineness is measured more by self-denying humility than by self-promoting piety. That's when you, when you look at the context.

The picture is, is contrasting what she had done with what the religious leaders did. Okay, now the parables of Jesus. Almost a third of Jesus' parables deal directly with money and possessions.

So, we've got to, and sometimes, I mean, oftentimes, Jesus uses money to illustrate a proper understanding of the kingdom. It's an illustration. But then shows us how a proper understanding of the

kingdom transforms our use of money.

So, you've got a parable of two debtors. We're going to fly through this. We've got to get to the rest of the New Testament.

Jesus celebrates with sinners, and Jesus cares for outcasts. So, He's attracting, again, the rich and the poor. Celebrates with sinners, cares for outcasts.

Parable of the seed among thorns. The seed rises up, and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for things enter in and choke out the word. Listen to this.

Possessions can keep people out of the kingdom of God. Parable of the hidden treasure in fine pearl. Love this.

Man walking in a field, stumbles upon a treasure. It's worth more than everything he has or will ever have put together. So, what does he do? He leaves it.

He goes and sells everything. People say, you're nuts. Why are you selling everything? He said, I'm going to buy that field over there.

They say, why are you going to buy that field? He says, I've got a hunch. And he smiles, and he walks away. They think he's crazy.

But inside he knows he's found something worth losing everything for. We have found someone worth losing everything for. That's the point.

They found someone, something worth losing everything for. We have found someone worth losing everything for. Christ is our treasure.

Abandoning possessions for Christ is not a sacrifice. Abandoning possessions for Christ is smart. Smart.

Parable of the Good Samaritan. Oh man, there's no way. Okay.

This is not just a story about helping other people. Point of the story. This is not just a story about helping other people.

This is a story about needing a new heart. Needing a new heart. The reality is, what Jesus does in telling this story, is exposing, and this teacher of the law is asking the question, there's a problem in his heart.

As he's trying to justify who he should give to. He needs a new heart. The heart of mercy.

See the love God requires. This is Matthew 22, 37-40. It's listed right before the parable of the Good Samaritan here.

See the love God requires. Love him with all your heart, soul, mind, and body. Undivided love for God.

Unselfish love for others. Love your neighbor as yourself. Think about that.

Have you ever done that for somebody? What this Samaritan did in caring for this needy man on the road. Have you ever cared for somebody like that? Have you ever worked to get everything they need without question? Providing for everything they need. I bet you have.

For yourself. And Jesus says, you're supposed to love others the same way. That's strong.

See the love God requires. Embrace the love God offers. Don't miss it.

The point in the story is we need to realize our own poverty. This guy thought he could justify himself. He needed to realize he needed.

If he had, at the very beginning, when Jesus said, the law says, love your neighbor as yourself, do this and you will live. If he had said, but I can't do that. I need help to do that.

Then that would have changed the whole conversation. We need to see our poverty and receive his mercy. Christ has loved us like this.

Before we can show the kind of mercy we see in Luke 10 to others, we need to receive that kind of mercy from God. Then we're free to give the love God desires. His love compels us.

His love compels us. Love for God results in love for others. We're not motivated to care for the poor by guilt.

If we know what we ought to do when we feel guilty, that's not enough. That's what the Levite and the priest as they were walking by, they knew what they ought to do. We're motivated to care for the poor by the gospel, by the fact that God has saved us.

When we were in need, when we realized that we were utterly destitute for him, and he drew us up out of the pit, it makes sense for us to now see someone in the pit and draw them up. His love is comprehensive. Mercy does not restrict who is loved.

Mercy does not restrict how much one is loved. It's comprehensive, and his love is costly. Mercy from God takes great risks.

Samaritan, as he cared for this man, and mercy from God involves great sacrifice. Mercy from God leads to great reward. Leads to great reward.

That totally did no justice to the parable of the good Samaritan. Moving on. Parable of the rich fool.

Land of a rich man produced plentifully. He thought to himself, what shall I do? I have nowhere to store my crops. He said, I'll do this.

I'll tear down my barns and build large ones. There I'll store up all my grains and my goods, and I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax.

Eat, drink, be merry. The American dream in action. God said to him, fool, this night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself is not rich toward God.

The man is covetous, desiring more and more and more and more. The man is consumed with acquiring more and more possessions. He's greedy.

The man is self-centered. Six times you see that first person pronoun, I. I. I'll do this. I'll do this.

I'll get this. I'll get this. He hoarded possessions for himself.

He hoarded possessions for himself, and he held possessions from God. Man-centered in his possessions, not God-centered. And his soul was required of him.

The man is self-condemning. Not because he's rich. He's not condemned by Christ because he's rich.

Because he is idolatrous. Because his life demonstrated a love for possessions. Covetousness is idolatry.

We're going to see that over and over again. Covetousness is idolatry, and it destroys and damns our souls. The parable of the great banquet.

Go out and invite people. People are too busy. So they turn away, and so he invites the least expected.

The kingdom belongs to the least expected. The kingdom belongs to the least attached. Those three men who were invited said, I've married a wife, therefore I can't come.

I have five yoke of oxen. I've got to go examine them. I've bought a field.

I must go out and see it. Those aren't bad things. A wife is not a bad thing.

Field, not a bad thing. Five yoke of oxen, not a bad thing. But good things that we can attach to ourselves.

It is possible to be so focused on earthly treasures, good earthly treasures, that you forsake eternal treasure. Good things can keep you from the kingdom of God. The parable of the dishonest manager.

This one is all over the board when you look at commentaries. And Luke 16, it's basically lauding shrewd management. But that's not the point.

One primary conclusion here. You read Luke 16. Use earthly possessions to accomplish eternal purposes.

Jesus is lauding the use of earthly possessions to accomplish eternal purposes. When it comes to our money, we can serve money and use God for our own means, or we can serve God and use money to accomplish His mission. Money makes a great servant, but a horrible master.

Three points to consider here. Because he goes on to then talk about one who is faithful in a very little will also be faithful in much. One who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest in much, and so on.

Our faithfulness with small tasks shows our fitfulness for large tasks. We're continually being tested on the small things, brothers and sisters. This debunks all our if onlys.

If only I had more money, I'd give more to the poor. If you don't give to the poor sacrificially with a little bit of money, then you're not going to give to the poor sacrificially with a lot of money. Our treatment of material resources demonstrates our trustworthiness with spiritual riches.

Our stewardship of another's treasure reflects our own responsibility with our own talents. The real trustworthiness, someone is what they do with someone else's resources. And that's the whole point.

We've been entrusted with resources from God. Parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Rich man, wealth, enjoying all that he has.

Poor man, sitting at his gates, getting the scraps from the rich man. They both die. The rich man goes to hell.

The poor man, Lazarus, goes to heaven. The rich man in hell is begging. Let me be just cooled off a little bit.

No, there's a bridge that divides you from hell and heaven. And you cannot ever cross that. He begs for them to go and then tell his brothers about this.

And Abraham says no. Even if they saw someone rise from the dead, they have rejected the word of God just like you have. So, the root cause here, unbelief.

The rich man lacked faith in God. That's key. He had rejected the word of God.

He had lacked faith in God. That's where the whole story ends up. There's a divine contrast in this story.

God responds to the needs of the poor with compassion. Lazarus' name literally means one whom God helps. It's the only time a name is given to somebody in one of these parables.

Now, this doesn't mean that just because somebody is poor means they go to heaven. Obviously, that is not true. But the picture is God responded to the needs of the poor with compassion.

And God responded to those who neglect the poor with condemnation. It's not saying the rich go to hell. But it is saying those who don't trust in God and as a result neglect the poor, they receive condemnation.

Remember, the core issue is lack of faith in God. An eternal consequence. If in our unbelief, if in our unbelief, that's the key.

That's where it flows from. Faith or lack of faith. Lack of faith.

If in our unbelief we indulge ourselves and neglect the poor, earth will be our heaven. This guy had a good life on earth. Earth will be our heaven and eternity will be our hell.

God help us to hear this warning. The beginning of this story, rich man enjoying all the treasures. Lazarus sitting with sores all over his body, scraping by.

The beginning of this story, who would you rather be? At the end of this story, who would you rather be? It's a humbling question. A clear choice. Are we going to continue in hollow religion that neglects the poor? He's saying this to religious leaders who are justifying their use of money and their indulgence in money.

This is big. Caring for the poor is not an optional extra in salvation. It's not an optional extra.

Caring for the poor is necessary evidence of salvation. Unbelief leads to neglect of the poor. Belief leads to care for the poor.

Caring for the poor, not what saves us. Remember that. Not what saves us, but the fruit of belief.

So what does this parable call us to do? Turn in honest repentance. Trust God and care for the poor. Hear the word humbly.

Hear it. Receive the word. And obey the word quickly.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The parable of the talents is next. The master entrusted his servants with talents.

And he goes away and he comes back. And some of the servants have invested them and received them. They've grown.

And then one guy has just sat on it and done nothing with it. It's been safe. But he gets back and he's proud to show the master.

And the master says, cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So not a good day for that servant.

Clearly, the message of the parable is that we will be responsible for the time, talents, and treasures God entrusts to us. We will be responsible for the time, talents, and treasures God entrusts to us. And we must be ready for the master's return.

Will we be found sitting on our treasure for our sake, brothers and sisters? Or will we be found spreading our treasure for his sake? Final one. It's really not a parable. The debate.

Sheep and the goats. Matthew 25. Remember the picture.

He says to the righteous. Those who are righteous. Those who have been made right with God.

This flows from them. It's not them earning salvation. When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat.

When I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was sick and in prison, you came and visited me. Therefore, you received inheritance from my father.

And he says to those who had not done those things in their unrighteousness. Because you did not feed the poor and bring drink to the thirsty and close and visit the needy. Then you are cast into darkness.

The righteous turn their attention to Christ by serving the material needs of his people. One of the startling things of this passage is that Christ identifies himself with his people. And says when you do something for the people of God who are in need.

You do something for Christ. The righteous turn their attention to Christ by serving the material needs of his people. They go to heaven.

I love this. Spurgeon said they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick. Why? For Christ's sake.

Because it was the sweetest thing in the world to do anything for Jesus. They did it because they delighted to do it. Because they could not help doing it.

Because their new nature impelled them to do it. It's good. On the other hand, the unrighteous turn away from Christ by ignoring the material needs of his people.

They go to hell. Not even because they didn't do anything deliberately wrong to the poor. They ignored the poor.

Possession of the New Testament people of God. Starting in Acts and moving through the letters. When we look in Acts, is the church setting precedent? In other words, we are supposed to do everything exactly like the early church did? Or is the church showing principles? Are there truths that underlie these stories that we are supposed to believe and follow? Consider a both-and approach.

Maybe everything in the book of Acts is not intended to be normative. Like it must happen this way. There are some unique things that are happening in the book of Acts.

At the same time, we are seeing the purity of New Testament community in a way that we want some of the things that we see here. And we are definitely seeing truths underneath it. Acts 2, 42-47, in the middle it says, All who believed were together and had all things in common.

They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. That is not a communist economy. This is not communism.

Not a communist economy. This is a faith community. Marked by visible unity and voluntary generosity.

That's the thing. This was not forced. This was not everybody put in the common pot and we are going to regulate how this is happening.

Force it upon you. Coerce it upon you. This is visible unity with voluntary generosity.

It's a great picture. And then right after that, Acts chapter 3, is they care for this man who is lame from birth outside the temple. A spiritual mission.

They are doing exactly what Jesus did. A spiritual mission. They proclaim the gospel with social ramifications.

The man is healed. Spiritual and physical both present there. Then you get to Acts 4. Listen to this.

Acts chapter 4, verse 32. Now a full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul. No one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own.

But they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were given their testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

Listen to this statement. There was no needy person among them. For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet.

And it was distributed to each one as he had need. And Joseph is an example of that. I love this.

They selflessly shared their possessions while they boldly proclaimed the gospel. Both ends. This was not social justice without the gospel.

This was deep care with gospel. Driven by the gospel. And they sacrificially cared for one another.

No one was needy. Yes. What Deuteronomy 15, verse 4 it said, There will be no poor among you.

At least for a small glimpse in the early church was a reality. No needy among them. Encouragement was evident in Barnabas.

Now we see a totally different picture at the beginning of Acts chapter 5. Ananias and Sapphira who basically embezzle, swindle money. They valued spiritual appearance more than spiritual authenticity. They tried to put pretense, what it looked like they were giving when that was not true.

Ananias and Sapphira contrasted with Barnabas. Simulated holiness for sacrificial kindness. Oh God give us a church culture.

That is not simulating holiness. But is marked by sacrificial kindness. And they lacked genuine fear before God.

They lied to the Holy Spirit. To God. Fear deception.

Tremble at the prospect of trying to deceive God. Fear distrust. Tremble at the prospect of distrusting God.

Fear disobedience. Tremble at the prospect of disobeying God. Ananias and Sapphira are struck down dead.

That will hurt your church attendance the next week. Acts chapter 6. Widows are in need. They need deacons to rise up to help the widows.

The community of faith cares for members. There is a responsibility the community of faith has to care for one another. No follower of Christ should be in need or want.

That's what elicited the need for this. Community of faith cares for members and then appoints leaders. These deacons who do this.

That's Acts chapter 6. Then you get to Acts chapter 8. Simon the magician. Some have called Simon the father of Christian materialism. When he saw the Holy Spirit, this dude saw dollar signs.

Look, if I had this power, look at all the money I could make. And the point of Acts 8, 18-23 and surrounding with Simon, God is not a means of financial gain. God is not a means of financial gain.

Beware. Beware the danger of misdirected motives. Simon was doing this for himself.

Whose name are we living for? Beware the danger of misunderstood power. Spiritual power is not about money and miracles. It's about prayer and proclamation.

Beware the danger of misplaced faith. Basically, Peter confronts Simon and says your heart is in the wrong place completely. Where is your heart? Additional observation in Acts.

An increasing number of Christians possess wealth as you move throughout Acts. You see people who have successful trades. You see people who are hosting churches in their homes.

There are some people who have wealth. They were recognized, church in Acts, recognized for their generosity. You see them giving, full of good works, acts of charity, giving generously.

Recognized for generosity. They were known for their hospitality. You see them sharing homes with one another.

You also see, as you keep moving on, an increasing tension between the church and the materialistic culture around the church. Increasing tension. Paul delivers a Philippian slave girl from demon possession.

And they're thrown in jail because they're disturbing the city. Then in Acts 19, Ephesian Christians start burning their magical scrolls. Some scholars estimate this about six million dollars in today's economy just

sold there.

Wouldn't it be awesome if the gospel had that kind of effect on the pornographic industry in our day? That people would be saved and their hearts being changed. Billions of dollars spent on that. It was all burned instead of being, instead of being indulged in by people in the church.

God do that. It's huge. But it was causing problems.

The gospel will create problems in a materialistic culture. For the advancement of materialism. Increasing poverty in Jerusalem, this is another trend we see.

Necessitated a sacrificial offering from churches in other areas. There was a major need in Jerusalem that we're going to see reflected in these letters that we're about to go through. Alright, James.

Oh, James. In a nutshell. Probably the first Christian letter or sermon that gives extensive treatment to poverty and possessions.

We see wealth and poverty mentioned. James 1, 9-11 talks about how earthly riches are temporary. Grass withers, flowers fall.

The rich man fades away in the midst of his pursuits. James 1, 27. Doesn't look like the world.

Which leads right into James chapter 2 where he confronts favoritism. And the fact they were showing favoritism of the wealth. And he says, no.

No. And this is basically an outline of that whole passage. We're captivated by the glory of Christ.

We see, knowing who Christ is, we see his supremacy over the wealthy. We don't need to honor the wealthy because they're rich in money. We honor Christ.

He's rich in glory. We see his supremacy over the wealthy and we remember his sacrifice for the needy. Christ became poor so we might become rich.

So why are we exalting the wealthy in our meetings together, church? This is what James is saying. Captivated by the glory of Christ. Grippled by the grace of Christ.

So we remember Christ reverses our status in this world. Those who are poor in spirit and neglected in this world will one day be rich in spirit and glorified in the world to come. And Christ transforms our standards in this world.

We live differently. We don't look at other people by the same standards we did before. We've been brought up by Christ.

Devoted to the law of Christ. And he just attacks favoritism. Favoritism disrespects man.

Disrespects man and dishonors God. Favoritism disrespects man and dishonors God. And he talks about how mercy triumphs over judgment.

We are cognizant of the judgment of Christ. Our words will be judged and our deeds will be judged. That's the end of that passage right there.

Our words will be judged. Our deeds will be judged. And we're a reflection of the mercy of Christ.

As we have received mercy, so we extend mercy. Am I leaving you behind here? Sorry. Oh well.

We extend mercy. If we do not extend mercy, we demonstrate that we have not received mercy. We've got to move it.

As we have received mercy, so we extend that which we've received. If we're not extending mercy, then we show that we've not received mercy. I'm sorry, that was rude.

I apologize. I apologize. I feel bad.

We extend mercy. If we do not extend mercy, we demonstrate that we have not received mercy. James 2, 14-19.

We've talked about this some already when we were talking about the gospel. Faith in our hearts is evident in the fruit of our lives. You can't say, go I wish you well, keep warm and well fed to those who are in need.

And say you have faith. That kind of faith is dead. People who claim to be Christians but fail to help poverty stricken fellow believers are in fact not saved.

Now again, it's not saying you need to help poverty stricken fellow believers in order to be saved. It's saying your faith is dead if you look at poverty stricken fellow believers and you do nothing. It's not New Testament faith.

Acts of mercy are not means to salvation. We're not saved by what we do. James makes that clear.

Acts of mercy are necessary evidence of salvation. The natural overflow, evidence of our salvation just like we've talked about. Tim Keller said, Mercy to the full range of human needs is such an essential mark of a Christian that it can be used as a test of true faith.

Mercy is not optional or an addition to being a Christian. Rather, a life poured out in deeds of mercy is the sign of genuine faith. Ultimately, deedless faith is useless faith.

Deedless faith is useless faith. Faith that does not act is not faith at all. Faith is not mere intellectual ascent.

The demons believe God, James says. It's not mere intellectual ascent. Faith is not simply an emotional response.

Faith involves willful obedience. Faith acts. Faith acts.

That leads to James 4. I'll tell you what, James 4 really doesn't address as much when it comes to possessions. Move past that to the first part of James 4. James 4, 1-4. Go to James 4, 13-17.

James 4, 13-17. We can become so consumed with the material realm that we become blind to spiritual realities. What we need to see, what James is talking about, he says, Today or tomorrow we'll go into such and such town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit.

But you don't know what tomorrow will bring. You don't know that. God is sovereign over our life and death.

And God is sovereign over our activities and our accomplishments. Do not think next year the market will be better. You don't know that.

You don't even know if you'll be here next year. God is sovereign over these things. Then you get to James 5, 1-6.

And it is a scathing confrontation of, and it's unbelieving rich here in James 5. Unbelievers who are rich. God is coming to judge the sinful. He's coming to judge the sinful.

Weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. That is not seeker sensitive. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth eaten.

Judge the sinful for hoarding wealth. For hoarding wealth. The treasures on earth were going to bring about their torment in eternity.

Their possessions were accumulating while people were dying. Hoarding wealth for living in self indulgence. Says you're gorging on food.

You're like a cow about to go to the slaughter. They were overfed and unconcerned. God may that not be so.

In us, your people. They would be judged for condemning men. The oppression of others would lead to their own damnation.

God was coming to judge the sinful. And then he says to the believers there in James 5. But be patient believers. God is coming to deliver the faithful.

Particularly those who are poor and struggling. God is coming to deliver the faithful. So that's James.

Then we get to Paul. Think about Paul for a minute. Paul before Christ.

Prosperity. Most likely had means. Highest of education.

Great family. Paul after Christ. Suffering.

Everything changed. Stoned. Beaten with rods.

Forty lashes minus one. Danger at sea. Danger from false brothers.

Danger in the wilderness. Danger from his own people. Danger from Gentiles.

Danger. Danger. Before Christ.

Prosperity. After Christ. Suffering.

So look at his letters. Galatians. Galatians 2.10. Remember the poor.

We're just going to look at all the times where Paul mentions the possessions. Amidst theological controversy which is what Paul is addressing in Galatians. There was no debate concerning the need to

help the poor.

Then you get to Galatians chapter 6 verse 1 through 10. Some people believe this whole passage is a reference to possessions. And I don't know if the whole thing is.

I'm not sure if I've bought into that completely. But there are implications here. Four enemies of spiritual community.

Self-centeredness. Pride basically. Self-righteousness.

This is what was underlying the issues in Galatians. Self-righteousness. Self-sufficiency.

And then self-esteem. Always concerned about asserting themselves. And what Paul does is he gives them five essentials to combat that.

Confront one another in your sin. Confront one another in your struggles. Don't really do as much as possessions.

But then share your resources generously. He says share. Uses the word koinonia that's used for fellowship in the New Testament.

Talks about sharing with one another. Sow your resources eternally. Sow.

You'll reap what you sow. You'll reap what you sow. So sow wisely.

And then spend your resources selflessly. Galatians 6 says especially for the household of faith. Especially for the sake of the church.

So that's the picture we see in Galatians. First and second Thessalonians. There are a lot of people in Thessalonica who were not working.

They were talking all the time about the second coming of Christ. And so some of them had quit their jobs. And so Paul writes a letter to them and says get a job.

That's second Thessalonians. And what Paul is saying to them is avoid idle people. Avoid people who aren't working.

You're just sitting around doing nothing. Avoid idle people. Work for your possessions.

Get a job. There's a lot of other things there as well. First Corinthians.

This was a trouble filled church. And likely only had a small number of people who had means, who had wealth. But the implication is that those people who did have a lot were causing a lot of the conflict in the picture here.

In First Corinthians. First Corinthians 4, 8-13. Paul contrasts their leader's prosperity with his poverty.

And Paul says you're living in ease while the rest of us are fighting a battle out here. And in this disparity Paul asserts his credibility. Some of the leaders there were trying to undermine his credibility.

And so he is in part asserting his credibility here. You get to First Corinthians chapter 5. That's the passage where you've got a sexually immoral man that's in need of church discipline. Most likely a wealthy

man.

Most commentators think. But what's interesting, listen to this. Listen to this.

Right in this passage, First Corinthians 5. I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed. The church must discipline in situations of sexual immorality. And the church must discipline in situations of material greed.

That's profound. What does that look like? The Christian must repent or be cast out of the church. Repent or miss out on the kingdom.

Serious stuff. You get to First Corinthians 9. This is where Paul talks about whether or not leaders should be paid for what they do in the church. Particularly teachers of the word.

Paul asserts that leaders who sow spiritual blessings in the church should reap material blessings from the church. It's kind of tough to talk about this without sounding a little self-serving here at Brook Hills. But the interesting thing was Paul yielded this privilege in Corinth because he believed that was better for the gospel.

Paul wanted to be unattached. He wanted to make sure it was clear that he was not attached to anyone. They were paying him to say this or that.

Paul wanted to be above reproach. And so in Corinth, he didn't do this everywhere, but in Corinth he said, I'm not going to take these material resources. Then you get to First Corinthians 11.

You've got to go back and look at this passage in light of the ramifications it has for possessions. Because what was happening is rich people were coming in to the gathering in the church and they were getting drunk. And isolating poor people over here.

And then they were celebrating with all their stuff, poor people over here, and then they would celebrate the Lord's Supper. Taking the Lord's Supper, Paul says, necessitates concern for the Lord's body, the church. You've got gluttons and drunkards, hungry and impoverished.

To partake of the Lord's Supper while ignoring the poor misses the point. Paul says, you drink your judgment and you risk your life. That's huge.

That we should consider how we are showing concern for the needy before we take the Lord's Supper. And if we are ignoring or neglecting the poor, then we are missing the point of the Lord's Supper. First Corinthians 13, if I give away all I have and deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing apart from Christ's love.

Giving away everything you have is meaningless. That doesn't mean don't give away everything. It means love.

First Corinthians 16, 1-4 talks about a weekly offering that was taken for the impoverished church in Jerusalem.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-platt/the-gospel-possession-and-prosperity-session-3/>

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