

Jesus Christ Is Lord - Lord of Our Money (2)

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and he requires us to be humble and willing to serve God and others, even in the face of wealth and materialism.

Duration: 44:15

Scripture: Luke 16:19

Topics: "Money"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being a responsible steward of God's blessings. He highlights the need to carefully manage and plan our resources, ensuring that we do not exhaust them all at once but rather distribute them wisely. The speaker also warns against the dangers of becoming too focused on accumulating wealth and emphasizes that our purpose in life goes beyond material possessions. Ultimately, the sermon encourages believers to prioritize their eternal goals and to use their resources in a way that honors God and serves others.

Transcript

Jesus Christ is Lord, and he is Lord of all, as Peter told Cornelius. Jesus Christ is Lord of all. We have been seeing how he requires to be Lord of every facet, every area of our lives, and we've come now to concentrate upon this.

Now last time we thought of one aspect of this only. We saw that Jesus Christ lays certain limitations upon us. In the matter of accumulating wealth for ourselves, he sets limits.

We were looking particularly on that occasion at the words of our Lord in Matthew chapter 6 verses 19 to 21. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust doth destroy, and where thieves break through and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. The passage is very well known.

There, whatever the full, the total significance of those words, one thing is clear. Our Lord sets certain limits and he says to us, don't spend your time, primarily at least, in gathering riches for yourselves here upon earth. That's not what you're given life for.

That's not what you believers have been redeemed for. The purpose of your life, the goal of your redemption, goes beyond that. And unless we have seen that, we've never really come to terms with

biblical Christianity on its ethical and practical side.

We are not here primarily to make money for ourselves. We are responsible for our families. We are responsible to be able to bear the burdens of others.

And we as congregations are privileged to stand behind those whom we send forth in the name of the Lord and in our name to serve him. But our business, our main business, is not fundraising. It is not the gathering in of Mammon.

The purpose of our life goes well beyond that. Now today, the Lordship of Christ and our actual possession of wealth. When we have gathered together such wealth, be it great, be it small, however, never mind how large it may be, that's not the important thing.

Whatever wealth we have, Jesus Christ says, I want to be your Lord in possessing it. And I want to tell you how to possess it, how to react to it, how to use it properly. And I want to tell you of certain dangers.

And I tell you as your Lord. Now that's the thesis that I want to be expounding this morning. In order to allay any misconception, let it be said again, of course, that scripture nowhere states that riches are wrong in themselves.

Now Jesus did say, of course, that they're deceitful. Matthew chapter 13 verse 22, Mark 4 19, etc. And that as such, they may well be a factor in choking the influence of the Word of God in our hearts.

He says that. The deceitfulness of riches and the care for the things of this world can choke the Word of God in our hearts. So that you can be a biblical scholar, you can be reading the scriptures regularly every day, and you can sit under the most spiritual and edifying ministry every Lord's Day.

But the Word of God may be choked in your soul. And riches, whether the riches you hope to have tomorrow or the riches you already have today, whether they're in your mind or in your bank, riches, the care and attitude of your soul toward material things can so strangle the Word of God, and it does very little for you. A real problem, of course, resides not in riches in themselves but in us.

Riches in themselves are not inherently wrong, but the point is I'm wrong. My nature is a fallen nature, and your nature is a fallen nature, and even when we are redeemed of the Lord, there is so much of the old Adamic nature that remains in us. And somehow or other, the thought of riches and the desire for riches can so carry us away that we do the most strange things and we displease our Lord.

Now it may come as a surprise for us to hear it put in blunt terms. Jesus insisted that whatever justification there may be for our having more wealth than we actually need to meet our obligations, it is a very dangerous commodity to hold on to. Now I don't know whether you've ever heard a sermon in which it was put as bluntly as that.

I want to say to you, and I can make no apology for it because Jesus says it, one of the most dangerous commodities in your possession and mine will be our wealth. I've referred to the fact that Jesus said that we shouldn't lay up treasure on earth for ourselves. I've referred to the fact that he speaks of its deceitfulness, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things.

Choke the word. May I remind you of his other statement, no servant can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money.

Indeed I remind you of Paul's words translated in the NIV a little different from the King James, but it's strong enough. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Not of all evil, but of all kinds of evil.

Beyond such general references to a few relevant passages however, let me quote one in particular which expounds the same alarming truth. That is, which warns us of the dangers of possessing undue riches, riches beyond the purpose of God. I quote to, I quote and call your attention to Mark 10 verses 21 to 25, a very familiar passage.

It centers in Jesus' interview with a rich young man who inquired of him as to the terms of possessing eternal life. Now remember that, the terms of possessing eternal life. Having assured our Lord that he had kept all the commandments from his early youth, Jesus looked at him with affection and discerning his real problem, Jesus said to him one thing you lack.

He said go sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven then come follow me. At this the young man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth.

Now notice, Jesus looked around and said to his disciples how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. Now ladies and gentlemen that's not Glenn Owen speaking there. This is the Son of God and he said riches are a positive danger.

The disciples were amazed at his words but Jesus said it again. Notice he said it again in different, in different words. Children he says how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God and then it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Now he says later on it is not impossible because what is impossible with men is possible with God. Of course we know it is possible and we rejoice to know so many rich brothers and sisters who have entered into the kingdom and live under the lordship of Jesus Christ. But nevertheless says Jesus they constitute a real peril.

Those words of verse 25 it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. These words ought to haunt us when we begin to feel the power and the pull of riches drawing us out into each new day and we know no horizons beyond the material things of this day and age. They're dangerous to handle very, very dangerous.

Though we thank God for men from Abram. We've been referring to Abram this morning and Isaac and Jacob and David and Solomon and Job and other very rich men in the Old Testament right on to Joseph of Arimathea and probably Lazarus Martha and Mary and some others in the New Testament who had been able to handle such riches as they had by the grace of God and to the pleasure of the speaker of these words, the Son of God. But how can they be dangerous? Now this is the question.

How can I stand here this morning and say that Jesus says that it's a dangerous thing to have too much wealth? Well let me try and answer it in his own words using largely his own statements. First of all there is the danger of our riches affecting our sight, affecting our vision. Did you ever hear that before? Now Jesus refers to this in Matthew 6 in a passage to which we've already referred in part.

Having forbidden the laying up of treasure on earth for ourselves, Jesus then proceeded to say this. The eye he said is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good your whole body will be full of light, but if your eyes are bad your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness? Matthew 6 22 and 23. Now taken out of context those words could mean anything of course, but they're in a given context here and they're sandwiched between two references to money, to mammon. The first reference lay not up for yourselves treasures in heaven and then immediately afterwards Jesus says you cannot serve God and mammon.

And then in between you have these words. So he's evidently referring to the same subject. What's he saying? The eye is the lamp of the body.

Whatever you want to do, it is the eye that enables you. Now I know there are exceptions to this and we'll come to that in a moment, but if I want to put a switch on my eye shows me the switch and I can do it with my hand. I know where to put my hand.

If I'm walking down the street and I find the street I want to I want to enter, well I see it with my eye. I see the name of the street. I turn the car that way or I walk up that way, whichever the case may be.

The eye is the lamp of the body. Or if there are some steps to negotiate my eye tells me there's the step and so I lift my foot. I negotiate accordingly.

The eye is the light for everything I want to do in the body. Now the exception of course is this. There are so many blind people who are able to negotiate wonderfully, wonderfully without the sight of the eye.

And they have some extra sense that others of us who are blessed with sight do not have. Now that's an exception to the rule. But generally the principle that Jesus mentions is of course true.

You need your eye to see what you're going to do and if you can't see what you want to do your physical body can't be involved. You can't touch the thing. You can't find it.

You can't do what you want to do. Now says Jesus, if your eye is sound your whole body will be full of light. You can do what you want with your hand.

You can do what you want with your eyes. You can do what you want with your ears. You can listen from the right direction.

You can do what you want with your feet. You can walk where you want. Your whole body is full of light.

If your eye is single and your eyes in good in good order. In total blindness the darkness is complete. Now John Stott after giving I believe an explanation something along those lines indicates what I believe is true.

That very often in scripture the eye and the heart are synonymous. Now let me put that in a nutshell like this. Sometimes scripture says that to set one's heart on something is exactly the same as fixing one's eye on something.

And of course we use this in common parlance. You set your heart on something you've got your eye fixed on it. This is the thing you're out for.

And John Stott says that we have the same kind of transition here in Matthew 6. From the reference to heart in verse 21 where your treasure is there will your heart be also. To the reference to the eye in verse 22. The eye is the lamp of the body.

Then Stott proceeds and I want to read a few lines from him. The argument seems to go like this. Just as our eye affects the whole body so our ambition.

What we fix our eyes on what we center our hearts upon. So our ambition affects our whole life. Just as a seeing eye gives light to the body so a noble and a single-minded ambition to serve God and man adds meaning to life and throws light on everything we do.

Again just as blindness leads to darkness so an ignoble and selfish ambition namely to lay up treasures for ourselves on earth plunges us into moral darkness. It makes us intolerant. It makes us inhuman.

It can make us ruthless and can deprive life of all ultimate significance. If this becomes our prime aim. It is also Stott the question of vision.

If we have physical vision we can see what we are doing and where we are going. So too if we have spiritual vision. If our spiritual perspective is correctly adjusted then our life is filled with purpose and drive.

But if our vision becomes clouded by the false gods of materialism and we lose our sense of values then our whole life is in darkness and we cannot see where we're going. You see the danger? Now Jesus further illuminates this principle elsewhere in the New Testament. He does so particularly by means of a parable.

A parable he uttered during the days of his flesh and a letter he wrote after his ascension or cause to be written. First of all let me refer to a parable of Jesus which further illumines the danger of wealth. I refer of course to the parable of the rich fool as he is called in Luke chapter 12 verses 13 following.

The way in which money or wealth affects our vision is demonstrated by Jesus in that parable. The rich fool as Jesus would speak of him goaded by his success as a farmer found that he had so much goods he just couldn't cope with it all. And so he decided to build bigger barns and to say to his soul, soul you've got much goods, plenty of goods laid up for many years.

Take your fill, eat, drink and be merry. Just enjoy yourself. Live for today.

Now you see something had happened to that man's vision. He thought of life purely in terms of the here and now. Gathering up wealth for myself now, now, now.

There are many points here. Gathering up wealth for himself, gathering up wealth for himself now, gathering up wealth for himself now and then totally oblivious to the passage of life, the transitory nature of life and that one moment his God would say to him, man I want your soul. He was blind you see.

He never thought of death, he never thought of judgment, he never thought of God, he never thought of the end of the journey, he just thought of adding, adding now, now, adding more, more today, more today, more today. Are you blinded like that? Well you don't need to be a big businessman to be in that category. You may only have very little in the bank but this is the motive, this is the spirit.

It's not a matter of rich or poor in the sense of having a lot and only the people who have much fall into this category. Not at all. You may only have very little in your bank account and perhaps nothing at all but your attitude is this, I must have more today, I must live for more today.

And the purpose of life is materialistic. Riches have this uncanny capacity apparently to blind men to the passage of time, to the approach of death, to the imminence of judgment, and to the need as Jesus

proceeds to say of laying up riches toward God. Jesus said exactly the same thing in his letter to the Laodicean Church in the book of Revelation chapter 3 verses 15 to 18.

Now let me just quote these words. The church is bragging and says oh everything's going well with us. You say, says Jesus, I'm rich.

This is the church now, not the individual. I'm rich. I've acquired wealth and do not need a thing.

But, says the Lord of the church, you do not realize that you are actually wretched and pitiful and poor and blind and naked. The church at Laodicea thought of its material prosperity as evident indication of its success, whereas it was in fact a sheer diversion from the pursuit of true riches. That is, of such spiritual riches as God requires in the first place of every soul of man.

Churches nor less than individuals therefore can be blinded by gold dust and thereafter can be left to fumble around with greater or lesser success in the pursuit of things that God is not concerned about. It's a terrible thing to be spending our strength for things that God is not really interested in, at least primarily. That's the first danger.

The danger of having gold dust in your eyes and you can't get rid of it. You don't see the purpose of God for living. Is there someone here in that category? Beware.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ asks you, take note. I warned you. I've the right to the whole of your life and I warn you of the danger of wealth.

A second danger of riches is that of its strangling our compassion. Time does not permit me to show how the Old Testament places the highest conceivable value upon compassion for the poor and the deprived. Now I'm not rushing through this because it is unimportant.

Brothers and sisters it is. It was important then, it is important now. So much so that when Jesus he was he was he was out in a party on one occasion.

He was invited by a special, a Pharisee, a high-ranking Pharisee and even in the party he said something which which was a little bit a little bit hard-hitting. He said when you gather a party you, he says, go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame and the people who can't ask you to come back to a party. In the New Testament as in the Old Testament religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless has this element to it.

To look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. Our God is a God of compassion. Now it was in order to relieve the necessities of the poor, you remember, the poor saints in Jerusalem that Paul organized the first relief fund in the mentioned in the in the scriptures.

It's no wonder therefore that our Lord whose compassion knew no bounds required his followers to express the same kind of compassion as himself. You remember that little note, I must mention it. It seems so insignificant.

On the night in which Jesus was betrayed at one point in the upper room he told you just go and do what you're about to do, go and do it quickly. Do you remember what we read? The disciples didn't know what Jesus was referring to. Since Judas had charge of the money some thought Jesus was telling him to buy

what was needed for the feast or to give something to the poor.

Now why did they come to that conclusion? It might be that Jesus is sending a Judas out on this festal occasion to give something to the poor. Well evidently because they were in the habit of doing that. Now they had no great income, they had no source of income, they were not rich, but they must have been in the habits of the disciples thought well perhaps that's what he's saying.

It's a mystery to us, we don't understand. We are not surprised therefore when the tax collector, collector Zacchaeus had spent only a short time in the presence of Jesus and had come to an experience of salvation, he emerges saying these words. Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, look Lord here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor and if I have cheated anybody out of anything I will pay back four times the amount.

Marvelous miracle that. You have the same kind of attitude in the in the church at Pentecost. They had all things common.

Now I'm not a communist, never will be. And I think that we evangelicals are sometimes glossed over that passage rather too glibly and too freely and saying oh that's communism, incipient communism. That's Christianity.

They cared that there were some in need and because they cared for the need of others they felt constrained by the mighty spirit of God within them to bring what they had to share with others. You have it not only in Acts 2 verses 42 to 45, you have it in Acts 4 verses 32 to 37. Not only that but when Paul is writing to the Corinthians in chapter 2nd Corinthians chapter 8, he bids the Corinthians do the same thing and then he explains why.

Our desire, he says, is not that others might be relieved while you are being pressed. When I'm asking you, he says, to make a contribution toward the needy saints in Jerusalem. It's not in order that they should have an easy time and you should be put to greater difficulties.

Not at all, he says. But that there might be equality. Now this is Paul speaking.

That there might be equality. In what sense? Paul explains. At the present time, he says, your plenty will supply what they need so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need.

Then there will be equality as it is written and he quotes the scriptures of the Old Testament to show that he's in the prophetic line, he that gathered much did not have too much and he that gathered little did not have too little. Brothers and sisters, this is an important aspect of Christian truth. Now, over against that kind of compassionate concern for others that the New Testament requires of Christians, somehow or other Jesus envisaged in the possession of riches this uncanny influence upon us that our heart of compassion freezes up and we either do not see the need of others or we do not hear the cry of the needy or we become careless and strangle the voice of the Spirit in our souls.

I'll give you just one illustration now, but the time is going, from Jesus' teaching. Think of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus in Luke chapter 16 verses 19 to 31. Gorgeously dressed and living in limitless luxury, that rich man seems to have been totally oblivious to the desperately needy Lazarus who was regularly laid at the rich man's gate in the hope that he might have were it but a few crumbs from his table.

What did he get? Oh brothers and sisters, our Lord could bring words together and he could say them in such a way that if unless we are like stones we cannot miss the thrust. What did he get? What did he get? He was laid there daily and the rich man went in and out. He didn't see him, so it would seem.

Or if he did see him, he shut his bowels of compassion against him, to quote the King James Version rendering in Philippians 2. He shut off his heart of feeling and compassion. If he saw him, he was either too busy to look at him or if he saw him and his need, he did nothing about it. His compassion, if he had any, was strangled at birth.

And the most pungent part of it all, it seems to me, is this. That the poor man in his rags and in his misery got more from the dogs of the rich man than he did from the rich man himself. His dogs licked the poor man's sores.

And that was the only alleviation he had. What is it that had strangled a man to such an extent that he had no compassion? Well, he'd become so absorbed with riches for himself and his dogs. Oh, I love dogs.

I don't want anyone to charge the preacher this morning with not loving dogs, but for himself and his dogs. He didn't see this picture of a tragedy that sat daily at his gate and so he didn't do anything to help. Can I close with this? There is one other thing I must add in this context.

There is yet a most more subtle, perhaps, danger in the possession of undue riches. And that is this, the danger that rather than that we possess riches, they soon take over and they possess us. Now this is clearly what had happened, of course, with a young man who questioned Jesus about how shall I inherit eternal life? His riches had possessed him.

He couldn't think of life. He couldn't think of eternal life without them. He was possessed by them.

He was mastered by them. He was under the heel, under the dominion of Mammon, and he couldn't get out of his prison to save his soul. One can probably say the same thing about the rich farmer of Luke 12, 13 to 21.

Wealth seems to have had an insidious influence over him and to take right over so that he thought of nothing else. Now this being so, it is necessary to take very seriously at least two further guidelines laid down in the Scriptures concerning our material possessions, whatever they are, however, whatever their extent. One, we need to remember that God alone is the possessor of all things.

There is nothing, my friend, that you really have that you can say in the absolute sense, it is mine. Did you know that? This hits hard, you know. It hits the preacher as it hits the listener, before it hits the listener.

It's been jabbing at my conscience and my heart this week. We shall see the counter side in a moment, but look at this. The silver is mine, says the Lord, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty, Haggai 2.8. David, you remember, after bringing so much wealth for the building of the temple, David says to the Lord later on, he says, wealth and honor come from you.

And then he goes on, but who am I, he says, and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you and we have given you only what comes from your own hand. The sentiments of our hymn, we bring thee but thine own, whatever the gift may be. You see, we possess nothing.

You don't possess anything in the absolute sense. Everything belongs to God. You know, when the Israelites of the Old Testament, when the Jews of the Old Testament had tithed and brought their offerings and the special festal gifts and whatnot, and it cost them at least one-third of their annual income, as I indicated the last time we were on this subject.

When they've done all that, the Lord insisted that He was the Lord of what remained in their possession. You don't give your tithe to the Lord or you don't give your offerings to the Lord and then say, well now I can use what I've got left just as I please. No, no, no.

The tithe is but a symbol, an indication that He's Lord of all. Trouble begins the moment we tend to think of ourselves as owners in the strict sense. The New Testament doesn't use that word of us.

The term that the New Testament generally uses, though I can't enlarge greatly upon it this morning, is that of stewards. We are stewards of the grace of God, stewards of even material things. We brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of the world, but God put certain things in our hands and He says, now exercise charge over these things for me whilst you have life until my son returns.

We are stewards. What we have within our power and authority to use, we simply hold as stewards, or as our reading this morning from Luke 17 translates it, managers, and it's a good word, managers of God's, of God's possessions. Now this word for steward means, and I summarize it in this way, a steward is one who was entrusted with his master's goods.

That's the first element. Second element is this, he was to use his master's goods for the benefit of the household. He was generally a manager of a household and he was to use what the master put into his charge for the well-being and the welfare of the whole house.

Included in the house was himself and he was to use it for them to meet the needs of the whole household including his own, but he mustn't overdo it as far as he himself is concerned. He must have his share. He's given a certain portion, but he must be very careful that he thinks of the household.

And last, not quite lastly, he had to be prudent and plan his outlay, not using up today what he should keep for tomorrow. Perhaps he had been given so much to take care of over a month, shall we say, or over a week. It varied in practice, but the point was he wasn't going to use up on the first day what was meant to last a week or meant to last a month.

He was to be the manager and he was to give out enough for today and that in the light of the fact that there is a tomorrow. And then the Lord will come and put more in his hands again in due course. He had at last to give account of what he had done with his master's goods.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I don't find this a very easy subject to speak on. Can I say to you, you and I are but stewards of the Lord's bounty. Our lines are fallen to us in very, very pleasant places.

I know there are among us those who are finding it difficult just now. And believe me, there are those in this congregation that bleed for you, who are unemployed, who are having to contemplate getting rid of your homes and things of that order. But whatever we have in our possessions, listen my friends, we are but stewards of them.

We've been entrusted with them by our master and we are to use them for the household as well as for ourselves. And we are not to hoard what is meant to be spent today. Neither are we to spend today what

is meant to be kept for a week or for a month or to cover a longer period until the stock is replenished.

We've got to follow the will of the Lord. He is to be Lord. He determines the whole issue and he sets the terms.

Those who rightly assume the stewardship of money are not mastered by the wealth in their possession, but they use it. And I must close with this. You may wonder why our Lord was so strong in the passage in Romans in Matthew 6 24.

No man can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and Maimon. Now the truth of that only comes out when you realize that Jesus is using a word which means not just serve in the sense of our 20th century word servant.

Of course you can serve two masters in our 20th century sense. I know people that have got two jobs and so do you. And they render reasonable service to both masters.

And they keep down two jobs rather well. What Jesus said was something quite different from that. You cannot render slave service to God and Maimon or money.

What God requires of you is not just occasional service, but he requires you to be his own possession, his slave. To hand over your right to life and your right to live and your right to spend and your right to do this and that and the other, to hand over yourself. Jesus Christ requires to be Lord.

Now you cannot have two Lords like that. You can only have one. And the moment you begin to come to terms with Maimon and say, I... yes, I'll render the same quality of service and time and effort for the ingathering of Maimon as I do to the service of my God.

That moment you have chosen Maimon rather than God. Oh, this is a very sobering subject. Peter's words to Cornelius, to which I've referred, rightly sums up the teaching of the New Testament as far as I can gather in Acts 10 36.

He is Lord of all. Do you acknowledge him as such? And we got some things to put right. Are there some priorities in our lives that have not been rightly located? How do we need to reorder things? Do we need to put some of the things that are now on the top of the list right at the bottom? What do we need to do? God only knows and your conscience by the Spirit.

May the Lord enable us in all things to honor him who died our salvation to procure and lives that we may be saved. Let us pray. Oh Lord our God, we cry unto you to forgive us for anything in this area of our lives that may have been unworthy of you.

We thank you for those known to us and many unknown to us who have been entrusted with much and have so lavishly cared for others, relieved burdens, comforted folk in their distresses, given them a new start in life, and when they were at the end of their tether they came alongside of them as a Barnabas and shared with them. But our Father we are aware of these dangers described in our Lord's teaching and as we are becoming increasingly aware of them we pray that we may make provision in our thought life, in our spiritual experience, in our day-to-day communion with yourself that we may honor you in this area too. This we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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