

Fake Wealth

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking true wealth, which comes from a relationship with God, and avoiding fake wealth, which is material possessions that do not bring joy or peace to our souls.

Duration: 31:07

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:11-14, Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:36, Luke 9:23, John 3:16, Romans 10:9-10

Topics: "Wealth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the issue of greed and the false perception of wealth. He emphasizes that life does not consist of material possessions and warns against the dangers of greed in all its forms. The preacher shares a parable about a rich man who plans to build bigger barns to store his surplus grain, thinking he has secured his future. However, God intervenes and calls him a fool, as his life will be demanded from him that very night. The preacher also cautions against false ministers who manipulate people for their own financial gain, promising blessings in exchange for money.

Transcript

Did you know that on Palm Sunday, we're celebrating the last week of the Lord's life, he entered into Jerusalem, and those last days leading to Good Friday, his crucifixion, he was going down that road, fake trials, fake accusations, lies, condemning him, Herod, all of that, Pontius Pilate, he was going through all of that, beatings via the dolorosa, the way of suffering, punched out, back opened up by whips with little pieces of lead in them. He did all of that so that you and I could be with him in heaven forever. Is that correct? Yes.

He sacrificed himself, he gave himself away so our sins could be forgiven. Every wrong, filthy, dark, terrible thing that we've done, been forced to cover up in many cases, all of that was provided for when he shed his blood and he died on the cross so that those who put their faith in him and make him the center of their lives would enjoy eternity with him forever. And what's odd is that while he was going that way, he would have people with no thought of understanding what he was about.

He was giving and he lived among a society like we do of takers. And one day, not in the last week of his life, but before that, a guy yelled out in the crowd and said this to him. Someone in the crowd said to him, teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

Jesus replied, man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you? Then he said to them, watch out, that's to all of us. Watch out to the crowd, to his disciples. Watch out, be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

Notice, not greed, all kinds of greed. In other words, there's varieties of them, their nature, different kinds and colors of them. Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.

In other words, you are not what you own and what you own is not who you really are. And he told them this parable, a story to illustrate a truth. The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.

He thought to himself, what shall I do? I have no place to store my crops. Then he said, this is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones.

And there I will store my surplus grain. In other words, I got it made, I'm gonna chill now. And I'll say to myself, literally, and I'll say to my soul, in the Greek, you have plenty of grain laid up for many years.

Take life easy, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, you know, we talk to ourself, but in this case, God spoke to him to contradict what he had told himself. You fool, this very night, your life will be demanded from you.

Literally, in the Greek, this is the NIV translation, they're asking for your soul tonight without defining who they are. They're asking for your soul tonight. It's the last day you're ever gonna live.

Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? Then Jesus saying to the crowd, this is how it will be with whoever stores up things. This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God. We have a new phrase now in our contemporary language, don't we, in our vocabulary, fake news.

Fake news is something being reported that's not real. But since we don't know it's real and the media kind of controls what we take in, it could be fake news. I wanna speak to you today about fake wealth.

Fake wealth. This is a problem that has plagued mankind from the beginning of the Bible to the end. All kinds of greed.

And Jesus is saying, your possessions don't satisfy you, they're not who you are, and you're gonna live beyond your possessions. Then what are you gonna do? If all your hope and direction of your life is toward what you have and what you can accumulate, what are you gonna do when you die and it's all taken from you? Because naked we came into this world and naked we're gonna leave. So greed is something in the Old Testament, New Testament, it's warned against.

In fact, the Apostle Paul in one of his letters makes a comparison of greed to idolatry. In fact, he says, greed, which is idolatry. Now when we think of idolatry, we go back to the land of Canaan, let's say, or Egypt when they were slaves.

They had physical objects of worship, the Egyptians did. Then when the Israelites got to Canaan, the promised land, Israel, we then find that there were Baal worshipers. Those were physical objects.

They knelt down before them. There was Asherah, the horrible god. There was Chemosh and others.

Those were physical objects. They bowed down to them. Not only that, some of them sacrificed their children to those gods in the fire because supposedly the gods demanded that sacrifice.

Well today, we don't bow down in most places. Certainly in America, we don't bow down and worship an object. Gotten past that, but Paul says, and the New Testament says, no, idolatry is still a problem because covetousness or greed is like idolatry.

You're worshiping something other than God. In this case, you're worshiping money. Your life is about money.

You do other things, you go on vacation, you eat food, all of that, you have children, but really, at the heart of the matter, materialism, money, accumulating things, the newest gadget, that's what it's about. That's what people's lives are about. I would venture to say that one of the gods, small g, of America is definitely money.

People will do anything. Cheat, cut corners, get over on someone else, steal, rob, take advantage of their own parents and grandparents, what? I want money, money, which gets me pleasure or satisfies my desire for material things. And what's odd about greed is that most of us identify it with rich people, but that's not true at all.

There are a lot of rich people who are greedy. That's how they're rich. But there are a lot of middle class and poor people.

Trust me, I've traveled around the world. Some of the greediest, tightest people in the world don't have two nickels to rub together, hardly, but they are greedy for money. They worry about money.

They think about money. They dream about money. Money is everything to them.

They might even go to church on Sunday, but when push comes to shove, it's about money. This is why now less than five, 6%, I think it's way below that, of professing Christians who come to church, tithe their income, give 10% to the work of the Lord. Why? The spirit of greed is there.

I'm not giving up money to somebody, something. I'm not giving that up. That's my money.

I work for it. That's my money. Don't touch my money.

And this is a problem throughout the Bible. In fact, greed has gotten some of the best people in the Bible. A prophet named Balaam went off the tracks because of greed.

The servant of Elisha went off the tracks because of greed. Judas betrayed our Lord, and Jesus on Good Friday will be thinking of his death on the cross, which we should think of every day. But how'd he get there? Because he was betrayed.

By whom? Judas. For what? Money. Money.

And he had been stealing money out of the bag that they got donations, and he had been doing that for a whole long time. And we know of other people in the New Testament who were judged severely, like Ananias and Sapphira, because they couldn't get loose from their money. They made it like they were generous, but they were lying.

They were holding onto the money, which they said they were giving to God. So this is a problem, and what makes it such a, it's a warning. Jesus said, as he's walking down the road, and a man yells out, hey, come and help divide with my brother and I. We're having a skirmish and a fight over the inheritance that was left to us.

And Jesus said, what do you think I came here to divide money? I'm not here to divide money. I came here for your soul. I came here for your eternity.

I came here to wash away your sins. And he spotted in that man what plagues a lot of people. He spotted that greedy spirit.

All kinds of greed. I've watched people in my life find the Lord, become Christians. Christians, as young adults, they didn't have two nickels to rub together.

And then God blessed them. And it actually, I look now, it became a curse. They got blessed materially, became a curse.

It was what happened, remember what God said to the Israelites when they were on the edge of the land of Canaan, about to go in. Moses told them, now listen, watch God, here's what God says. Watch when you go on that land, because I'm gonna bless you.

And you're gonna prosper. And you're gonna now have your own olive trees, and you'll sit under them, and all of that. And it's no more in the desert, just trusting me day by day.

You're gonna have your own. Now you be careful that those material blessings don't make you forget me. So God must know a lot about all of us.

Sometimes the blessing becomes a curse because we forget God, who gave us the blessing. I've seen that happen. People start out, find Christ, they're in the prayer meeting, they're involved, they wanna work, they wanna do, they don't have much of this world's goods.

And the next thing you know, they're blessed. They get married, they get an apartment, they get a sofa, they get a car, things that they didn't have together. The next thing you know, that's become their God.

They're more worried about their car, which is gonna disappear in an instant, than they do about the things of God. Don't tell me that's not a reality, because the God of this world, one of the gods of this society we live in, invades the church. And don't you think ministers pick up on that? Some of these characters on television, they know it's all about money for the people, so they promise them blessings of money if they'll give them more money.

There's double greed. They want your money, and to get your money, they promise you'll get more money. Send me 100 and I just know from God you're gonna get 1,000 within a week.

My foot. Listen, I wanna remind you all, the minute you, and the TV is littered not only with sincere people, but false con artists like that. The minute you hear that any blessing has to come when you pay that guy some money, know that you're being conned.

That is a con. Wait, you're being played. Nowhere in the Bible does it say any blessing comes when I have to give some minister some money.

In fact, the Lord told us as ministers, freely you have received, freely give. How many are happy all God's blessings are free? Come on, wave your hand at me. They're free.

We can believe and receive them. And if the money was so important, why don't some of these guys say, now listen, if you want that blessing, you gotta give to God a seed gift and all of that verbiage they use. So why don't they ever say, give to the missionary in Bangladesh.

Give to your church so they can feed more poor people. No, they never say that. You gotta give it to them.

But they're appealing to what they know you wanna hear and what is so natural to us. Greed. Greed.

Why are you driving that old Ford? You should be in a Mercedes. Greed. Instead of thanking God for what we have, more.

Mas y mas. Cada dia, mas y mas. I gotta get more.

And this has invaded the church so that giving is down and volunteerism is down for missions. It used to be people would pray and that couple I introduced to you, they heard from God, trust me. From where they were living and the house they just sold to come here.

They didn't come here to make a million. They came here because God told them, come. In fact, ministers have called me and said, I don't believe.

Are you telling the truth, Bradley Knight and his wife are leaving North Dallas to come to downtown Brooklyn and the church and work under Carol. This is so funny. My wife can't read or write music and he's working for her.

That is so funny. Isn't that amazing? You can't even make that up. But because a call of God, not thinking about bottom line income, thinking about what pleases God.

What's the parable? I want you to notice, Jesus said, listen, everybody in the church, all ministers, Jim Cimbala, everybody. The ground of a certain rich man was blessed by God and the crops multiplied so much, he didn't even have barn now space to put the grain in. Notice this.

He was a fool, we learn later, don't we? God called him a fool. But his land was blessed. Never think that because someone has a lot of money, that's the sign of God's blessing on them.

Because this man's a fool and he's in fat city at the same time. He got all kinds of money. Because materialism so invaded the Christian church and Christian theology and preachers that people think, oh, you got a lot of money, you're close to God.

You're poor, oh, you lost out with God. Listen, God has chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith. Some of the best Christians who are rich in God's sight don't have hardly any money to speak of.

But they're rich in God. They have Jesus. They're serving the Lord.

They're influencing people. And some of the richest people are doing zero for God and don't have any wealth. They have fake wealth.

Their wealth's gonna disappear like the foolish man here in a second, in a millisecond. I don't want you to be that way. I don't wanna be that way myself.

So Jesus says, this rich man had so much blessing, which had nothing. Notice, God is a God who rains and the sun shines and he rains on the good and the evil. You ever notice that? The sun doesn't shine on just the Christian farmer's land, on the atheist's land.

And the people who have the most money in this world aren't Christians, they're non-Christians. They curse God a lot of them. And God still lets them have the money, like this foolish man.

All wealth, any blessing we got, we should thank God for. But notice, this man never thought, what could I do with my money to give it away? No, no, it was just keep getting it, keep getting it. But you know what Ecclesiastes says? Ecclesiastes 11, I think, verse five says this.

Whoever loves money never has enough. Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.

You get a raise, you rejoice for about 30 minutes. Then you hear about someone who works in the same company who makes more than you. And around and around it goes.

Whoever loves money never has enough, never has enough. It doesn't satisfy your soul. So this man who's empty and a fool, he's got his plans.

Oh yeah, let me get on my drawing board here. And what I'm gonna do is put up some new barns. I got bigger ones now I'm gonna put up.

Put all the grain in that. Because wow, I'm blessed. Never thought of giving away anything.

You know, I spoke years ago in Colorado Springs to a ministry called Joyful Giving. But it's people who have a lot of money who meet in conferences and talk and pray about what's the best way to give away their money for Christ. Imagine that.

They meet to figure out how can we, oh, they need clean water in Tanzania. Let's give some money to dig some wells and get some water over there. Now that's doing a good thing with your money.

This guy, and those are wealthy people, this guy, no, he's got it all mapped out. I got my IRA. I don't need an IRA.

I got my own retirement plan. Mama didn't raise a fool when she raised me. I got the biggest barns now.

And you know what? When I've just filled those barns with all this grain, I not only have enough for today, guess what? I got enough for tomorrow. Not just tomorrow, next month, next year. I'm cool.

I got it all figured out. Until God says to him, man, you fool. You only live for today.

You never thought about eternity. Tonight, your soul's required of you. You know, 21 Christians were killed yesterday in Egypt.

Christians, some Islamic radicals bombed the church on Palm Sunday and they died. But they might be richer than all of us put together because there's fake wealth and then there's true wealth. This man had the fake wealth.

You know when you have fake wealth? When it can be torn from you in a second. That's fake wealth. How much could that mean? If you don't even know who's gonna spend it after you go.

I've watched and counseled and seen children and grandchildren who curse their own parents and grandparents inherit the money that they strove for and work for and all of that. And it was spent in the worst possible ways. On drugs and just riotous living.

Because whatever we have, it can be taken from us in a second. Tomorrow is not guaranteed. Do I get an amen on that? Tomorrow's not guaranteed.

Especially with every time we pick up the paper, turn on the news. Something here, something there. Something in London, something in Egypt.

Something, who knows? And Jesus said, you're so foolish because you had fake wealth. And he said, that's the way it's gonna be for all of us, including the speaker, about people who have money here but have no wealth with God. They're not rich toward God.

And that's why Jesus suffered all that he suffered so you and I could be rich and have him in our lives and live, listen, live in a nice place in heaven where we're going. How many are planning to go to heaven and say a loud amen? You think gold and silver is a big thing here? The streets are gold up there. Only Jesus can satisfy your soul.

Money along with material things, vacations, the newest phone and all this stuff, that's the God of this world. I'm telling you, that's the God of even the people go to church. They care more about their phone than they do about the things of God.

And then it's all gone in a second. And then you have nothing. For naked we came into the world, naked we're gonna leave.

This is something that Jesus wants to help us with. Because you might have been brought up in a house and influenced strongly by covetous philosophy, greedy parents, grandparents, money. I had one grandmother who I lived with when I got out of college for a while.

And she didn't have much at all. And she would be giving her offerings to the Billy Graham Association and just sending \$10, whatever she had. My other grandmother, my father's mother, she couldn't even write her name.

All she could do was X. She was from the Ukraine. My other one was from Poland. And she had this gift, my mother says, in her hands.

She cooked for the wealthiest people. They would take her in limousines. She would go to these mansions and she would cook for them.

Not just Eastern European food, American food. She just learned how to cook. She just, and she never spent a dime.

Never spent a dime. Same black dress, just money was everything. She didn't trust banks after a while.

She heard that someone robbed a bank. She didn't understand how it worked. She said, I'm not using a bank anymore.

She lived on Hawthorne Street in an apartment between Bedford and Flatbush. She lived in that apartment. Someone broke in with her there to rob her.

Pushed her down, ransacked the apartment looking for money. And she panicked and the guy said to her, where's your money, I can't find it, where's your money? She pointed to the mattress. He went in and got \$15,000 out of the mattress.

It can all disappear in a second. Just get sick. Just get a bad doctor's report.

Just die. Just whatever. It's gone in a second.

And I love you all. I don't want you to be poor toward God. I don't want to be poor with God.

I want to be rich toward God. I want to have Jesus in my life. I want to be serving him.

I don't want to be distracted by this junk thing called money, it's fake. It's real, you need it, praise God, we use it, we thank God for it and all that. But it doesn't bring any joy to your soul.

If you have no peace and joy, I've met some of the wealthiest people that you could imagine and I had a very wealthy, wealthy, wealthy, big power broker in New York finance. I met him recently at dinner and he told me, Pastor Cymbal, you are onto that when you described how empty people can be. I'm telling you, they have so much money they could never spend it, but I'm with them all the time.

He says, no one home in their soul. No peace, no joy, nothing, just dog eat dog, cat eat cat, just how do I get ahead? How do I get more? Jesus warned about this because it can get us. Look at last verse, 1 Timothy six, verse 10.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money, these are Christians, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. You know what comes to my mind as I close? Horrible thought, horrible thought.

Didn't think of it this morning, horrible thought. I'm gonna say it though, it's true. Remember I told you in Canaan, some of the gods demanded the lives of the babies.

You had to sacrifice them in the fire. That was Kemosh, C-H-E-M-O-S-H. I wonder how many children have been sacrificed in another way because of their parents' greed.

No time to take them to church, no time to talk to them about the Lord. Just instruct them about money, money, money, money, money, money, money, money, money. What does it give? The kids end up lost.

So we gotta make a choice. We gotta decide to follow Jesus. Hey listen, he will supply all of our needs.

Come on, how many believe that he will supply all of our needs? You don't have to worry about that. And some of us, hey, truth be told, some of us he might bless with a lot of money. Pray, use it carefully.

And don't forget God and give. And some of us, others, we might just get our needs met and run through life that way. That doesn't matter.

The real riches of Christianity are not for today. That's what's, listen, the man in the parable lived only for today. He had no thought of eternity.

He thought only of his body, never of his soul. He thought of how he looked. He probably was taking selfies every 30 seconds.

But he had no idea about his future, about God and his relationship with God. He lived for today instead of eternity. He lived for himself.

He never thought of giving money away. There's no mention. In fact, it was pointed out by some commentator that I read that there's more I and me in this parable than in any other parable Jesus gave.

This guy is just full of himself because that's what money, greed does to you. Just me, me, me. Not for us today.

We're gonna serve Jesus. Let's all of us bow our heads, close our eyes. I have good news.

He died on the cross. He went through everything that I told you about so that you and I could be in heaven. But you gotta know that he's numero uno, the center of your life, that you put your faith in him.

And maybe somebody here has been distracted, turned away from the faith. You got caught up with just the pace of life. We become pennywise dollar foolish.

We forget what really matters. And this is why we're sitting depressed, no joy, no peace. And others who have half what we have are just celebrating Jesus all day long.

It's a message, it's a sermon from God. Come to me, I'll give you the true riches. I'll give you peace and joy.

I'll give you everything you need. A million years from now, as I started, everyone's gonna be somewhere. Church won't buy it.

Trying to live a good life won't buy it. Coming to church on Palm Sunday and Easter won't do it. You have to have a relationship with Jesus, put your trust in him.

And if some of you need an adjustment or to accept him for the first time, or just, pastor, that message was for me. I could tell while you were preaching it, I got little grabs in my heart, little tugs. That was God.

Wasn't you, it was God. I wanna start over with Jesus today and keep him at the center of everything. If you'd like me to just pray for you before I close, would you just stand? Say, pastor, pray for me.

That message in certain way was for me. Just stand and I'll pray for you. Thank you, thank you, thank you up in the balcony, thank you downstairs, just stand.

All you're saying is I need the Lord. I don't wanna get tricked into thinking that what I'm striving for here on earth has any eternal value. No, I wanna live for Jesus in a way I've never lived before.

That's it. Wanna live for Jesus like you've never lived for him before. Just stand, please, where you are.

I wanna say a prayer as I dismiss. Just stand up, that's it. Last thing you need to do is look around or feel self-conscious.

Jesus went to a cross and died in front of a public gathering of people mocking him and yelling, and now you and I would be nervous that we stand in a church and say I need the Lord. No, do it. He loves you.

If you're standing because I wanna give you something for free, come up quickly to the front. Everybody from the balcony, no one else move. I'll dismiss when they get here, but please, everyone get here.

I'm gonna just share what was whispered in my ear just now. They needed my approval. Come down from the balcony because my 102-year-old mother who was in church this Sunday, she'll be 103 in November, her blood pressure is really, really low, and they have to make a decision whether they're gonna take her to the hospital.

I don't know what's gonna happen today with my mom, but guess what? If God brings her home today, she's gonna be one of the richest people in heaven. She doesn't have much of this world's goods. She at one time did, but she gave away everything.

They were always giving. Even when my dad was drinking and beating her, and I was growing up in that hellish atmosphere, my mom was always, Jim, Jimmy, Jimmy, put Jesus first. Jesus, always Jesus first, Jesus.

Isn't that good to know? If she lives, I have her. If she goes, Jesus has her. But she's gonna be wealthy.

She's gonna be wealthy. Lord, touch my mom today. Help her this very moment, Lord.

Lord, let your will be done. But if she could speak to the people here in the front, I know what she would say. She would say, live for Jesus, trust in Jesus.

Work for Jesus, live for Jesus. Everybody in the building, repeat after me real loud to help my friends in the front. Repeat after me, dear God.

Thank you for loving me. I want the true riches that are eternal. Forgive me of my sin, every sin.

I turn from them, and I put my faith in you. I believe you died on the cross and resurrected from the dead. And I'm gonna spend eternity with you in heaven.

Save me, change me, make me new. Only you can do it. I'm tired of my life now.

I want your peace and joy. So I humble myself and ask you to come in. In Jesus' name.

You know, some of you are crying tears, you. Those are the best tears that you'll ever shed in your whole life. Because you know what happens? When you turn away from the way you were living, and when you turn to Jesus and you see his love, many times it breaks you inside and you cry.

I've cried a thousand tears. Never be embarrassed of those tears. It's a sign he's working in your life.

Now look, I want your name so I can give you a free New Testament and we can follow up with you on this Palm Sunday. So every one of you, we're gonna have people in the front on these steps. I have to have workers, not just in the back.

I need some right here in the front, or we'll never get folks here in the front. Wait, the Lord is here. Lord, touch my sister here.

And give her the peace and the joy that only you can give her. She's confessed her need of you. She's put her faith in you.

Now give her, Lord, the assurance that you've received her today. That she doesn't have to keep coming and knocking on the door because your arms are wide open for her, Lord. I thank you for her and the others that are here.

Help us to help them. And we just thank you for your sweet presence. Your love.

Thank you for your love, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray this, Lord. And everyone said.

Amen. Everybody stand in the auditorium, please. Greet each other, you may go.

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