

# Do Not Sell the Gospel

by John Piper

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*We must not peddle God's word, but rather be motivated by a desire to serve and glorify God, and prioritize a relationship with Jesus Christ above all else.*

**Duration:** 22:25

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Luke 17:7-10, Luke 17:32, Luke 18:9-14, Luke 18:18-27

**Topics:** "Prosperity Preaching"

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## Description

In this sermon, Pastor John Piper reflects on a message he heard 36 years ago about the story of the rich young ruler. The speaker emphasized the importance of letting go of worldly riches in order to follow Jesus. Piper expands on this idea by also referencing the stories of Lot's wife, the obedient servant, and the obedient Pharisee. He highlights the fact that no amount of money can replace Jesus as our ultimate treasure. The sermon encourages listeners to remember these biblical examples and prioritize their relationship with Christ above all else.

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## Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at [www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org) Thirty-six years ago, I was where you are sitting right now. I was at a church in Pasadena.

It was called the Baccalaureate. The message that was delivered there had one point, and I remember it crystal clear. There are a couple of reasons for that.

One is that the speaker gave a dollar bill to all the graduating seniors of Fuller Seminary, and we held it in our hand while he preached. And the other was that he preached from the story of the rich young ruler, and he had one point, remember the rich young ruler. I took that dollar bill, and I put it on a little board and lacquered over it, and it sits over the door in my study.

I walk under it every day. And all it says is, the dollar bill is there, and remember the rich young man. So I thought I would give you that message, but the longer I reflected on it, the bigger it became, and so mine is going to be, remember the rich young ruler, and remember Lot's wife, and remember the obedient servant, and remember the obedient Pharisee.

And I know you won't remember that in 37 years because I've just ruined it with all of that, but you might remember something. And I hope that--I mean, I won't be alive in 37 years, but the speaker there is still alive, and he has broken my heart. His name was Mel White.

He was one of the best teachers I had, and now he leads a gay church, left his wife, left his children, and is now one of those outspoken defenders of gay Christianity in the country. That was sad to me because he taught me a lot, and I loved him. I would like to see him return from that mistake.

I hope I will not let you down like that as you look back. For as long as I'm alive, I would like to finish well. So these are thoughts on how not to peddle God's Word, and they take their starting point from 2 Corinthians 2:15-17, and then they launch into the text that I was really meditating on, namely Luke 17-18.

Ever since last August when I preached that message from Luke 18, I have thought and thought and thought about the wider context of that story about the Pharisee and the tax collector, so you're going to hear some spillover from that. Here's the text from 2 Corinthians. We are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to the one a fragrance from death to death, and to the other a fragrance from life to life.

Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not like so many, peddlers of God's Word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God, we speak in Christ. So peddling God's Word is the opposite of being the aroma of Christ. When you peddle God's Word, people don't smell the aroma of Christ.

They smell the aroma of greed and fear. So there are two ways that the heart of a word peddler manifests itself, by greed for money and by the fear of persecution. The heart of the word peddler craves earthly pleasure and dreads earthly pain.

That's what marks a word peddler. So what does the word peddler preach? The word peddler preaches human prosperity as the gift of salvation, and he preaches human obedience as the price of justification. Preaching prosperity appeals to the desire for earthly pleasure, and preaching obedience appeals to the desire for earthly achievement.

The one replaces God's worth with money. The other replaces God's grace with morality. So Paul renounced the pursuit of money as the way to do ministry, and so he received fewer physical pleasures.

And Paul renounced the pursuit of morality as the way to be justified, and so he received more physical persecution. If I still preach circumcision, why am I persecuted? In short, Paul preached Christ and let the chips fall where they would. If people gave him money, he had the grace to receive it.

If people gave him beatings, he had the grace to endure it. He would not peddle the word of God. So brothers, don't peddle it.

Don't sell it. Don't be in it for the money, and don't be in it in a way that avoids trouble. Preach Jesus as the only satisfying treasure, and preach Jesus as the only sufficient obedience.

Now, that's the point. To encourage you to strengthen your hand again in it, I want to go to Luke and share some thoughts there from money and Jesus as the alternative, and obedience and Jesus as the alternative. It's remarkable how these two chapters work.

I'm just, I think, beginning to catch on to what Luke's doing in Luke 17 and 18. So the two points I'm going to draw out are, all the money in the world cannot replace Jesus as our treasure, and all the obedience in the world cannot replace Jesus as our righteousness. And that corresponds to Lot's wife and the rich young ruler on the one hand, and the obedient servant, chapter 17, and the obedient Pharisee, chapter 18.

So take those one at a time. First, remember Lot's wife and remember the rich young ruler. All the money in the world cannot replace Jesus as our treasure.

Here's the story of Lot's wife in Luke. Luke 17, 26 to 33. Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

They were eating, drinking, and marrying, and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot, they were eating, and drinking, and buying, and selling, and planting, and building. But on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all.

So it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Now get this. The Son of Man, the Lord of glory, the creator of the universe, the savior of the world is about to be revealed.

Where should you look when that happens? What direction should you look? Verse 31. On that day, let no one who is on the housetop with his goods in the house. I'm sorry, I read that wrong.

On that day, let the one who is on the housetop with his goods in the house not come down to take them away. The goods are in the house. The Son of Man is on the horizon.

Where are you going to look? To your goods, or to the Son of Man? Verse 32. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it.

And whoever loses his life will keep it. And their losing the life or seeking to preserve the life there must mean seeking to hold fast to things and thus preserving the soul in this life for those pleasures. Here comes the Son of Man standing forth.

Your things are in the house. The Son of Man is on the horizon. And you've got a choice.

And he says, remember Lot's wife. She made her choice. Don't make that one.

Let goods and kindred go. This mortal life also. The Son of Man is on the horizon.

Look that way. Not all the money in the world can replace Jesus as our treasure. The rich young ruler, chapter 18, verses 18 to 23.

A ruler asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not commit adultery.

Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness.

Honor your father and mother. And he said, All these I have kept from my youth. And when Jesus heard this, this obedience, there's an overlap here.

Let's make this so interesting. This story is the overlapping of the obedience piece and the money piece. But we're focusing on money here.

All these I have kept. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, One thing you lack. And then he tells him three things that he should do.

One thing you lack, three things. One, three. One thing you lack.

Sell all that you have. Distribute to the poor. You'll have treasure in heaven.

Come follow me. I spent hours and hours thinking about that last year at Tyndale House. Because I wrote a chapter on this.

This is a very determinative book, in fact. I think what Jesus means is, you've got your hand around this riches. And your hand needs one thing in it.

Me. But to get me in your hand, you have to let the riches go. They fall on the poor.

And you take me. One thing you lack. Me.

Follow me. Follow me. But, when he heard these things, he became very sad.

For he was extremely rich. He loved his money more than he loved Jesus. And not all the money in the world can replace Jesus as our treasure.

So, brothers, point one. There's only two. Remember Lot's wife.

And remember the rich young ruler. All the money on planet earth cannot replace Jesus as your treasure. What will you give in exchange for your soul? If you sell out to money.

Remember them. Don't peddle the word of God. And lastly, number two.

Remember the obedient servant, chapter 17. And remember the obedient Pharisee, chapter 18. All the obedience in the world cannot replace Jesus as our righteousness.

First, the obedient servant. Luke 17, 7-10. Will anyone of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he comes in from the field, Come at once and recline at table.

Will he not rather say to him, Prepare supper for me and dress properly and serve me while I eat and drink. And afterward you will eat and drink. Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So, now this is Jesus drawing the lesson from the parable.

Or from the illustration. So, you also, when you have done all you were commanded. Say, we are unworthy servants.

All the obedience in the universe cannot replace Jesus. We need one thing. One thing.

And this man, according to Jesus, drawing out the lesson. When you have done all that is commanded of you. Say, it won't suffice.

The obedient Pharisee, we remember from last August. You've thought about it a lot. Got your opinions about it.

I'm thinking a lot about it these days. As to how to use it in this book I'm working on. He told the parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.

And treated others with contempt. Two men went up to the temple to pray. One a Pharisee and one a tax collector.

The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus. Now, just pause here. Because I've been writing back and forth with Tom Schreiner about this.

One of the things that grips me about this story is that Jesus made it up. This is not an event that happened. From which we are trying to draw inferences from what they might have meant.

These are words carefully chosen by Jesus Christ. As he makes up this parable to make his point. And so I'm assuming the words are chosen carefully with point.

And he puts in the mouth of the Pharisee. God, I thank you that I thank you that I'm not like other men. Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

For I fast twice a week. I give thanks tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector standing far off would not even lift up his eyes to heaven.

But beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified. Rather than the other.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted. So the Pharisee adds to the obedience of the obedient servant.

A persuasion that God is to be thanked for his obedience. So all the obedience in the world, including the obedience that you believe is worked by God. Cannot replace Christ.

And the mercy we desperately need. In fact, if there were time and we all had our Bibles open in front of us. I would love to just walk step by step through all of 17 and all of 18.

To show how Luke weaves this together. Such that the cry for mercy is, in fact, the cry for Jesus. Illustrated by the leper story and other ways.

When will the kingdom come? The kingdom of God is in your midst. All the obedience in the world cannot replace. Jesus as our righteousness.

So conclusion. When it comes to satisfaction. We need Jesus above all.

When it comes to justification. We need Jesus. Above all.

Our own money. Even if it filled the earth would not suffice. Our own obedience.

Even if it were perfect. And God given would not suffice in this fallen world. Therefore.

You have every reason brothers. To say with the apostle Paul. We are not peddlers.

Of God's word. We will not sell it. For money and we won't try to avoid persecution.

By preaching what may not. Please. Do not be driven by greed.

For money. Do not be driven by fear. Of persecution.  
Preach Christ. As you're all satisfying. Treasure.  
And preach Christ. As your God satisfying. Obedience.  
Let's pray. Father in heaven. As these brothers.  
Move on. Some here for a while longer. Some.  
Quickly leaving. I pray earnestly that they would never ever. Peddle.  
The word of God. May they remember lots wife. And may they remember.  
The rich young. Ruler. And I pray that they would never.  
Retreat. From preaching what might bring them. Persecution.  
But that they would always preach. What humbles. Man.  
And exalts. Christ. I commend them to your grace.  
How precious. They are to you. And to us.  
I love them. I long for them. In the years to come.  
To be powerfully. Used. For your great name.  
I believe that's going to happen. In stunning ways. Out from this room.  
And I pray it. I ask for an exceeding blessing. Upon them.  
That there would be fruitfulness. Beyond their dreaming. From their lives.  
And from their faithful ministry. So we ask this. In Jesus name.  
Amen. Thank you for listening to this message. By John Piper.  
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