Put Money First You Lose, Put God First You Win

by Timothy Tow

The sermon emphasizes the importance of putting God first and not prioritizing material wealth, highlighting the consequences of putting money first and the benefits of investing in the heavenlies.

Scripture: Proverbs 19:17, Malachi 3:10, Matthew 6:19, Matthew 6:33, Romans 14:7, 1 Timothy 6:6, James 4:8
Topics: "Materialism", "Stewardship"

Description

Timothy Tow preaches on the contrast between prioritizing money over God, warning against the pitfalls of materialism and the pursuit of wealth through risky investments and high-interest borrowing. He emphasizes the inability to serve both money and God, urging listeners to invest in heavenly treasures through acts of charity, tithing, and seeking God's kingdom first. Tow stresses the importance of contentment, godliness, and stewardship, highlighting the dangers of the love of money and the need to flee from such temptations.

Transcript

Text: Matt 6:19 -34

Today is the last day of the first year of the Third Millennium. What New Year resolutions will you make? Young people especially. Becoming more and more a materialistic society, our Singapore philosophy is, "Get Rich Quick." Are you drawn to this rat race?

In our serial study of the Gospel of Matthew, we have arrived most timely at Matthew 6:19-34, Jesus' sermon on Mammon and God. What title should I give to this long passage? "Put Money First You Lose, Put God First You Win." May these two guidelines restrain you from the pitfall of financial ruin and keep you in the prosperity of our God.

First, "Put Money First and You Lose." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (v.19). In olden times people would bury their treasure in the ground for security. But thieves could discover the hiding place and steal it. Worms might penetrate to eat it and rust might corrode it. During the days of Japanese occupation in WWII we heard stories of such losses.

Today, we keep our money in the bank. Those who want to get rich quick take it out for more profitable investment. This leads them to buying shares, into speculative business. This is highly profitable but also highly unprofitable. For the stories I've heard of those who play shares are mostly tearful and sorrowful.

A friend of my sister sold her house for $400,000. She entered the share market. She lost it all in a few months. She had to go back and work, and is now living in a cubicle. The thief of speculation stole all her money.

Moreoever, there are those who borrow at high interest. Here is where the moth and rust of corroding high interest comes in. Should not they who are cheated by speculation turn back? Like gamblers (and speculation is gambling) they persist to gamble. They are then like the blind groping, but never finding the way out. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (vv. 22-23).

A Christian cannot serve both money and God. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (v. 24). Therefore leave off your plausible philosophy, "Let me make the money and I will give even half of it to the Lord." It is as foolish as what an old Lifer newly converted but little instructed in the Word told the Pastor, "Pray that I will "touch" the lottery, and I will give 50% of it to the Church." The Lord has placed a curse on gambling by the VIII Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." The element of stealing is in gambling. Do you know that? If you win, it is Satan's bait to greater destruction. But there is a difference in wild speculation and steady investment in Blue Chips.

Now, the second point. Rather, "Put God First You Win." "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (vv. 20-21). When you bank your money with God, you not only have 100% security, the centre of your attention is also God. You are led to increase in devotion and service to Him. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (Jas 4:8a). What is one way of putting your money in the Bank of Heaven? "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again" (Prov 19:17). The Bible is full of instruction on works of charity and kindness to our neighbours, the sick and the poor, even foreigners who live amongst us. Be mindful also of the Levites in the O.T. and God's servants in the N.T.. Lifers have learnt this lesson well as reflected in the designated offerings on the Weekly's back page.

Paying our tithes is another way of investing in the Heavenlies, and the return of dividends is far better than from earthly investments. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal 3:10). Jesus sums it all, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God , and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt 6:33).

What does a man need after all? Food and clothes for the body are most basic. Not luxuries and any wasteful expenditure. The Chinese, for this modern age, adds two more basic needs, viz. housing and travelling ( ). In Singapore , housing is easily solved by getting an HDB flat with your CPF, and travelling by bus or MRT. A simple life style for the ordinary guy.

If you must have a car because your job requires it, God will surely provide if you put Him first. You can start off with a second-hand car. And that was how I was provided. At first I was riding a bicycle. After two years my father bequeathed to me his old 8 h.p. Ford Anglia. After three years I bought a new Volkswagen Beetle (for $5,000 in 1955). It is good to live according to our graduated provisions. As your pastor I learned patience first before He blessed me with prosperity. We must all be tested.

St Paul sums it up most succinctly, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (I Tim 6:6-12).

We are not towkays who own big possessions. Every Christian is a steward and is accountable to God how he lives and spends his money. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom 14:7-8).

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