



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
12500 E. 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

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March 21, 2010

Theme: Worship and Managing my Money

Text: Matthew 6:18-24

Although Jesus gives his disciples God's wisdom concerning money, he does not tell them exactly how to spend it. What he does tell them is not to "treasure up treasure on earth." Money is related to worship because worship is a 24/7 activity. For many, money competes with God as a source of security and satisfaction. Jesus implies that material things should not have first place in our lives. This is because they cannot provide either security or satisfaction. There are two reasons for this: (1) Only God can provide true security and satisfaction. (2) Material things are all temporary. They simply wear out. Only what is eternal can provide us with true security. God must be our source.

Jesus also gives us a positive command as He gives God's wisdom about how His disciples should relate to their money. Instead of treasuring up treasure on earth we should treasure up treasure in heaven, where things don't pass away and where they last forever. How do we treasure up treasure in heaven? The most general way is by doing good for people who are inside and outside of the Church. Another way is to give of the wealth we have to the work of the Kingdom on the earth. The Apostle Peter writes that our eternal inheritance is stored up in heaven where it can never spoil nor perish nor fade away.

The reason Jesus commands his disciples to treasure up treasure in heaven rather than here on earth is because our heart will be focused in on what we value. If the goal of our lives is to acquire wealth and possessions, then our heart will be deeply involved in that activity rather than in our relationship with God and spending eternity with Him. Jesus of course is not talking about our physical hearts. He is talking about what we think and feel inside. He is talking about what we value as being important. He wants to be sure that our hearts are not distracted from loving God by a desire for wealth. Proverbs says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life."

Jesus then turns to another part of our spiritual bodies as an illustration for the place that money can have in our lives. He speaks about having good or bad eyes. In the ancient world it was thought that the eyes were like windows—they allowed light to enter the body. Modern science tells us that this is quite true. The word, "good," in this passage means three things. (1) It refers to spiritual and moral goodness in general. (2) It can also refer to a person who has undivided loyalty to God through Christ. (3) In a context that deals with wealth and possessions, it refers to the person who has the right attitude toward wealth and toward God. A person with good eyes in this sense would be generous and giving with their possessions. A person with bad eyes would be greedy and stingy.



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Jesus calls His disciples to be generous and giving—even to the point of giving their wealth away.

Then Jesus says something that sounds very strange: "For if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" This sounds like a self-contradiction. How can light be darkness? Jesus is using the word light in a philosophical way. Philosophically, light stands for the wisdom by which a person lives. For example, a person might have this as their philosophy of life: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... [and] You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This is Jesus summary of the Law. If this is a person's "light," their whole being will be full of light. On the other hand, if a person's philosophy of life is that the most important goal in life is acquiring as much wealth as possible. If this is true, then, that "light," the truth by which they live, is actually darkness because it will lead people away from God.

The last verse of this section is familiar to many. Jesus says: "No one can serve two masters: Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other—you cannot serve both God and money." In this verse, Jesus presents money as a master or lord which competes with God for our loyalty. Jesus puts and either/or choice before us. It is a choice between the many gods of our society, and the One, True God of the Bible. We do not carve images out of gold, silver, stone, or wood. But we have gods nevertheless—pleasure, power, sex, wealth, etc. It in this context that the god that Jesus has in view is money.

Jesus speaks as though money is a god who exercises control over people in competition with God and Christ. Money does indeed have a powerful hold over people. To a certain rich man Jesus had said, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come, follow me." An essential way to break the hold that money can have over us is to give it away—regularly and consistently. A good place to begin would be to live simply so that we can give a tithe to the Church. This is one way to, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."