



Series: Rhythms

Message: Finding Financial Freedom

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September 25, 2020 – Church Online  
Smythe Street Church

## **Make a Difference this Christmas (video – 3 min 21 sec)**

Every year we are excited to look at how we can make a tangible difference in our world with our Make a Difference this Christmas efforts as a church. We try to find three priorities as a church so that we can concentrate our efforts.

This year with COVID-19 the needs are even greater in the world and in our city, and we want to meet those needs with even greater generosity. Visit our website: [ssc.church](http://ssc.church) and we've put a link on the front page so you can find out how to give online or get involved.

We kick off this morning with Operation Christmas Child. It is a simple premise, you fill a shoebox with gifts for a boy or a girl, and then a local church in another country gives it to the child as an expression of God's love and as a means of sharing the gospel to their community.

Gift boxes are available here at the church today, or if you are in Fredericton you can pick one up here. If you're not in our community there are ways you can connect in your community or online, just search Operation Christmas Child and you will find details.

## **Rhythms**

At the end of September, we kicked off a series we've been calling Rhythms. Looking at patterns that God has put in our world that when followed bring life. Pastor Verner talked about sabbath, and how we think of time, Pastor Wayne looked at gratitude as a way of life, and this week, well I'm going to look at what Jesus has to say about money.

## **Oh No, not Money!!**

Why is it that we are uncomfortable with talking about money? I had something funny happen as I was preparing for this message today. I work with Circles, our Small Groups ministry, and I took a peek through my shelf of studies, looking for research materials and studies. As I was looking through the shelf I found our only

study on finances and the Bible. Although I had ordered it over 4 years ago, it is still in the cellophane wrapping. It's funny, lots of other studies have come and gone, but no one picked the one on money.

It seems that our finances are an intensely personal affair, so we don't like talking about them with others, and then to talk about them in church. Honestly, it can feel awkward for me as a pastor, because all too often I hear perceptions that "the church just wants your money" and I look at my own financial choices and wonder if I'm an expert. Maybe we should just skip over this, we think.

But here's what I say to that, if Jesus really does show us what God cares about, why would we not at least want to look at what he says. If you're here, or with us online and not a follower of Jesus, I'd say this to you today, Jesus is known for saying some pretty wise things, why wouldn't you try to listen to someone wise about money.

I think we need to listen to Jesus because he offers us keys to experience freedom when it comes to our financial life. I don't know if you've felt this way before, but there are times that we can feel like we are in bondage to money. It is as if finances control our lives. One of the largest stressors and causes of marital conflict is financial pressures, we can feel inadequate to handle our money, and in COVID, the financial concerns we carry can be a lot. If you are anything like me, I'd like to hear Jesus' words that can help me to experience freedom.

## Two Warnings from Jesus

### **Luke 12:16–21 (NIV)**

And he told them this parable: "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. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

When it comes to money, Jesus warns us that we need to be careful that greed does not bind us. Greed in this story was about being concerned selfishly about ourselves. This isn't a matter of just being wise. The man in the story had enough grain to fill his barns, enough to meet his needs, but then rather than trying to find another use for what was left, he said, I'll tear down my barns and make bigger ones, so I won't need to work and I can just satisfy my every appetite. That night God calls him to account for his life.

If we are focused on satisfying our appetites alone, we are in bondage to greed. And that greed is destructive.

I find it interesting that right before this passage Jesus gives a man a warning. The man had come to him asking Jesus to compel his brother to split an inheritance, and Jesus refuses, saying to watch against greed. How often has greed split families when money and possessions get caught up in between them.

## Warning against bondage 2: Worry

If we are not in bondage to greed, we can be in bondage to the other money vice: worry. Many in Jesus' audience would not have been wealthy, but rather struggling to get by, and Jesus says to them.

### **Luke 12:22–23, 29-31 (NIV)**

Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ...

And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world [*nations, peoples, those who do not know God*] runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

I think for many this is the bondage that grips the heart. The constant worry and concern for how to make ends meet. How to pay for school (or send kids to school), how to deal with all the bills, how to pay the debts, the rising cost of groceries, clothes are wearing out, what if I lose my job, what if I lost my job, will my retirement provide me enough. These are all items that not only are questions to answer, sometimes they move into becoming the worries that consume our minds and rob our peace.

## So How Do We Break the Bondage of Greed & Worry

Here Jesus is incredibly specific

### **Luke 12:31–33 (NIV)**

But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

As a child I often read this passage, and it said, seek first the kingdom of God. And we would stop reading there, but then Jesus goes further to say what he says in verse 32.

### **TRUST IN OUR GENEROUS HEAVENLY FATHER MAKES US GENEROUS AND FREES US FROM GREED AND WORRY**

Paul says it similarly:

### **1 Timothy 6:17–19 (NIV)**

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

If we want to have freedom and life, as Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:19, ‘the life that is truly life’ then it will be reflected in our money as we are generous and ‘rich in doing good deeds, generous and willing to share.’

## So specifically, how do I know if I’m bound in worry or greed?

At the very end of Jesus’ teaching in this section, Jesus gives one small phrase that is exceptionally important to listen to.

**Luke 12:34 (NIV)**

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

If you catch anything from today, I want you to get the two truths these words from Jesus reveal.

## YOUR MONEY REVEALS YOUR VALUES

If you say you care about something, and how you use your resources does not reflect it, then I’m not sure you do. If you want to know what you really care about, look at your money.

*Exercise: Look at where your money goes, specifically.*

Many times in life if we are not attentive, our money just goes away. Anyone ever feel like that. We end up at the end of the week and our money feels like it just left us? If you were to guess where money disappeared, what would you suspect? If you’re online, where is one of the leaky spots in your bucket that you think money just disappears to (put it in the comments). Dining out, coffee, clothing, books?

Look at your bank statement for the past week and add it up. Where has your money gone. This is a spiritual exercise, because what you do with the things God gives you is very much what the Bible means by worship.

What would you find. What will you find (in the debit era you can look online to see what you’ve spent, or do it going forward this week).

## I Struggle Afford to Be Generous

Money makes an awful master.

### **Matthew 6:24 (NIV)**

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

There are only three things we can do with money: Save it, Spend it, Give it Away.

If we truly struggle to give away, we are in a bondage and when money is our master, it will be difficult to serve God.

Giving to what God cares about, the poor and his work, is an act of faith.

**JESUS OTHER PROMISE: WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO**

## **YOUR MONEY CREATES YOUR VALUES**

Where you put your money, your heart follows. If you want to care more for the poor, start investing your money in ways to help the poor. You suddenly will start to care about how they benefit. If you want to care for poverty abroad, start by sponsoring a child, and you will care about what happens in that child's life.

In the same way investors track their investments, our attention follows where our money goes, and if we begin to invest our money in the things that stir God's heart, our heart will bend towards those things too.

And as we become generous, we become less obsessed with ourselves and our needs and begin to experience the blessings of peace, and goodness that come from knowing God. As Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:19, 'that they make take hold of the life that is truly life.'

## 2 Months to Christmas

Growth in my kids is when they begin to want to give. The most exciting moment of Christmas is the first one, when my kids are ecstatic to give gifts to each other and to Heidi and I. When they take their money, their efforts, their energy and give to someone else. They tell the stories of what they find.

Thanksgiving gift exchange. Nate excited to help me find things for Zoë.

Life is in the giving.

Good for everyone, but as a believer, giving is reflecting the generous God we serve and giving is an act of faith that he will care for us as we 'seek first his kingdom.'

### What would happen if we intentionally pursued generosity?

It would cost us something. I look how many from our church gave time and resources to the Out of the Cold shelter last year. It cost money, some sleepless nights watching over the place. But if you talked to anyone who went, it brought them joy and life.

Those who delivered Christmas hampers last year. It cost them a day when they could have been at the mall, but they wouldn't swap it.

When Pastors Verner and Heidi and Bernie have been in Haiti and seen how healthy children who are drinking clean water and their siblings are healthy too. It cost something, but it brings life.

If we want the life that is truly life, it doesn't just come from thoughts, and wishes, it comes with a worship that comes from our wallets. As Jesus said, 'it is truly better to give than to receive.'