

"YOUR ABUNDANCE DETERMINES YOUR POSSIBILITIES"

Matthew 6:19-24

Oh God—

The bumper sticker says smile if you love Jesus;

So I smiled all day long...

And the people thought I worked for Jimmy Carter.

The bumper sticker said honk if you love Jesus;

So I honked... and a policeman arrested me

For disturbing the peace in a hospital zone.

The bumper sticker said wave if you love Jesus;

So I waved with both hands... but lost control of the car

And crashed into the back of a Baptist bus.

Oh God—

If I cannot smile... or honk... or wave...

How will Jesus know I love Him?

If you love Jesus tithe... honking is too easy.

--Bruce Larson, *What God Wants to Know*

This morning we continue in our series *70 Days of Vision* as we are all

being challenged to evaluate our worldview and see if it is a Biblical

worldview or one that comes from a secular influence and mindset. Today

we focus on the topic: "Your Abundance Determines Your Possibilities."

Our passage today is one that teaches us how to approach and relate to money. But it goes much further than that- it also gives us insight into how to spend our money. And given these tough economic times people are reevaluating their spending and on what and whom.

I would suggest to you that there are three key principles we need to be cognizant of or have "right" if we want to please God as it relates to our money, according to this passage.

If you have your Bibles with you please open to Psalm 24:1 where we read these words which are the foundation to a Biblical window of financing. It says, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it." From this one verse who can we say without hesitation is the Maker or Creator? God, right! And if God is the Maker then who is the owner? Right again, it is God. So is it fair to say that God owns it and we do not? Right again. So what is our role? It is the role of a steward. We are God's stewards and therefore we have great authority and great responsibility. As a matter of fact we are the bearers of His image in this world, do you realize that?

Jesus told a parable in Luke 12:41-48 where He tells us that from everyone who has been given much will be required, and from the one who

has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. When you think about it, we have been given by God a sacred trust- the world we live in, the people and relationships that are near and dear to us, our time, our talents and our treasures are all a sacred trust given to us by God. And because we are the stewards of what God has entrusted us there is a strict accountability that exists between us and the Master, otherwise known as God. And to make matters even better there is a remarkable reward for faithfulness and an unbelievable blessing that is ours when we are faithful. But Jesus gives us a warning that Jesus puts forth at the end of Matthew 6:24 when Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and wealth" or "you cannot serve God and money." Folks, the bottom line is this: on this side of eternity God and money do not always get along with each other. Do they somehow co-exist? Yes, but if they are to be joined rightly together, there are some boundaries in the relationship that need to be observed. God, not you or me must be in the control seat, God must be at the center of our lives and money must, let

me repeat must be seen as a means to a greater end. If we are going to be faithful, godly stewards then there must be a balance between God and money. We need to be right on God AND right on money or we will not be productive and accomplish what God desires for us here on earth.

Three things I want to share today. First, **we must have the right warehouse**. If we are going to do it "Biblically right" then we have to have the right warehouse or storehouse. Is our warehouse going to be earth or Heaven? Our kingdom or His Kingdom?

Let me ask you this- is money evil? Does the Bible say "money is the root of all evil?" I Timothy 6:10 says, "For the LOVE of money is the root of all kinds of evil." It is the LOVE of money that is the issue. Does Jesus say it is wrong to store money? No. Does He say it is wrong to desire treasure? NO. It is not wrong to be concerned for your own personal financial situation or even desire treasure. The problem is not the money, the problem is the warehouse. Where does Jesus say to store it up?

In Heaven as opposed to earth. And don't store it up on earth AND in heaven, just heaven... period. And Jesus gives us three reasons why.

First, **security**. Jesus tells us that treasure on earth is prone to corruption, decay and theft. On the other hand that which is stored up in Heaven is secure, it is safe. Folks, listen to this- Kingdom investments beats Wall Street investments all the time. Are we investing in Kingdom investments? Three things that are eternal are God, God's Word and the eternal souls of people. Are these our priorities? Do we set aside a portion of our income for these priorities?

A second reason why we should store up in Heaven and not earth is **the issue of yield**. Treasure in Heaven is high yield folks, and right now that is heavenly. Today people everywhere are scrambling trying to find that place to invest where it is safe and yielding some sort of interest. But scripture talks about heavenly investment yielding 30, 50, or even 100 times

the return and that is 3,000, 6,000 or 10,000 percent. Not bad, would you say? Folks, heaven is a high yield and it is safe.

And a third reason why we should store up in Heaven and not earth is **the heart value.** Jesus said in verse 21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." There is this strange interaction between our hearts and our treasures and our treasurers seem to go where our heart goes.

Look, when we have our hearts set on that new HD Television or that new car, or, you fill in the blank, your money is going to follow your heart, I guarantee it. But guess what also happens? When our money goes in a specific direction guess what goes there even more? Our heart.

Friends, I know that times are difficult, economically. But when I drive by the restaurants out in Montrose they look pretty filled- my point is people are still spending, maybe more discriminatory and selective but people are still spending. But what if we began investing in Heavenly investments like the local church, missionaries, ministries to the poor and those suffering with

Aids, and, you get the point. I believe that if we bless God's work He will turn around and bless us for He will show forth His faithfulness.

A question for us to consider- if Jesus came back, Oh, let's say tomorrow, and we stood before Him, how would He evaluate our personal warehouse? Do we spend our money on what we believe about God? And folks, this is more than about how the church needs to allocate its funds, I am talking about personal investment practices. Hear this, **people who have great faith and believe in God's promises look through a window of divine abundance that impacts the way they give.** First, we must have the right warehouse.

Second, **we must have the right perspective.** If we are going to have the right warehouse and invest our money in the eternal things, we must have the right perspective- the right spiritual, mental and emotion perspective about money.

Verse 22 of our passage finds Jesus saying, "The eye is the lamp of the body." If my eyes are good then my whole body will be filled with light but if my eyes are bad and deteriorating then my whole body will be full of darkness. And that is why Jesus said what He did in I Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" because He knew that if our eyes are so glued to money and making money we might be tempted to walk away from the faith. That is what it says in I Timothy 6:10 when it is read in its entirety for it says, "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains."

How we approach God and money is dictated by our vision. If we have "good eyes" the object of our desire is Jesus Christ and His kingdom. If we have "bad eyes" then our eyes are going to be looking all over the map and we will find them looking away from God toward the things and possessions we have amassed or desire to amass.

I would like a penny for every time someone in a church has said, "We can't afford it." If I had a penny for every person who ever said this statement I would be a millionaire. And yet that very statement is like saying that God is poor or even limited when, in fact, God is the God of abundance. Sometimes we, in the church, look through an unbiblical window and let finances dictate ministry. Last Sunday I shared the statistic that only 1 out of 4 people in Christian churches give a biblical tithe or 10% or more. And folks, this blocks God from doing what He wants in the world and it therefore promotes a false assumption that God does not bless most churches. And besides that statistics say that almost half, 47% of Christians give less than 5% of their gross income to the work of the Lord through their church. Friends, God will fulfill His work, but we can block it when we do not give according to God's specifications. So we need to invest in Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

And third, **we must have the right master**. Jesus puts it right out there in verse 24 when He says, "No one can serve two masters.... You cannot serve God and wealth [or money]." It just will not work trying to serve both because both demand our all and both are very jealous and both require complete commitment. We cannot have two lords or masters if we are going to be Christ's disciple. So who is our master?

What Jesus has done in this story is to personalize the power of money, He makes it a person, a master. And this wealth or money or as it says in some translations, Mammon, is elevated into a person, a false god or even an idol which takes on a life of its own. And if this money gets its claws into us it can pull us in all kinds of directions and one direction is away from God. And it can become the center of our universe and we become enslaved to it. And so this money becomes a task master.

So what is the believer in Christ to do? We shouldn't build bigger barns in order to hoard it. We shouldn't do whatever it takes to stockpile it.

So we can send it on to God; we can invest in Kingdom ministry and if we do our hearts will move us closer to Kingdom work because our hearts will follow the money.

The Apostle Paul put it so well when he wrote to young Timothy in I Timothy 6:7-8, "for we brought nothing into this world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these." The Bible teaches simplicity and the basic things of life—food, clothing, shelter, a few pleasures and a few treasures.

Dr. Kent Hunter in his book, *Discover Your Windows, Lining Up With God's Vision*, writes about God being the key to the possibilities—not how much money is in the checking account. He feels that when we ask about the cost before determining whether or not God wants us to do something, we are looking through the wrong window. He writes, [quote]"Imagine, ... Jesus in heaven prior to his mission to earth. God the Father is explaining Jesus' mission. He's unfolding the way he chose for Jesus to redeem

humankind. He begins with the virgin birth in Bethlehem. He explains the fulfillment of many prophecies through Jesus' birth. Suddenly Jesus interrupts impatiently, turns to the Father and says, 'Before you go any further, how much is this gonna cost? How long will this take, and what will be the expense?' The cost issue wasn't foreign to Jesus' thinking.... But often, when the words, 'How much does it cost?' are interjected early in the directional process, they represent a diabolical smokescreen that derails the mission that God has given you. The first question shouldn't be, 'How much does it cost?' The first question should be, 'Is God in it?'" [end quote]

Friends we only go around once in this life so we should have our eyes on eternity. And while we are here may we be engaged in Kingdom building in the here-and-now as we look to spending our forever with God. The Biblical way to spending is having enough of the basics and a few pleasures and treasures, and always keeping a focus on the right warehouse, the right perspective, and making sure God is the right master. Our abundance will

then determine our possibilities. And that will put us right on the money.

Amen.

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Matthew 6:19-24

Introduction: The bumper sticker...

Psalm 24:1- "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it"—the foundation to a Biblical window of financing

Three things to share:

First, **we must have the right** _____
Is money evil? I Tim. 6:10

Three reasons to store up in heaven:

First, _____ vs. 19

Second, **the issue of** _____

Third, **the** _____ **value** vs. 21

How would Jesus evaluate us?

Second, **we must have the right** _____ vs. 22

How we approach God and money is dictated by our vision

Third, **we must have the right** _____ vs. 24

What is the believer to do? I Tim. 6:7-8

Jesus, in heaven, asks the Father before He comes to earth- "How much is this gonna cost?"

The first question should be, "Is God in it?"

Conclusion: Our abundance will determine our possibilities and that will put us right on the money