

Our World and Our Wealth

by John D. Martin

We are all kings for a little while on this earth, and our responsibility is to decide what we're going to do with the things God has given us.

Duration: 53:27

Scripture: Luke 16:1

Topics: "Wealth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the reality of the world we live in, highlighting the staggering number of people living in poverty and struggling to find basic necessities like food and water. The speaker emphasizes the preventable deaths of 29,000 children every day due to starvation and preventable diseases. The sermon also includes a story about Wesley, who realizes the importance of using his money to help those in need rather than indulging in unnecessary luxuries. The speaker calls on the audience to take action and overcome evil with good, reminding them of the golden rule and the responsibility to help those in need.

Transcript

The story is told of a shipwrecked sailor who landed on a South Sea island, one of many stories of that sort. And he was seized by the natives and they hoisted this man to their shoulders and carried him to the village and put him on a rude throne and said he was going to be king for a year. And then he discovered that they did that every year.

That they chose a man, put him on a throne, and he was king for a year. But after he had been king for a little while, he began to wonder what happened to the other kings after the year was up. Because there didn't seem to be any of them left on the island.

And then he discovered that after the year was up, they took the king and they put him on a desert island and there he was left to starve to death. So this man was wise and he said, well, I'm going to be king for a year. So he hired people to go out to that desert and fertilize it and build irrigation systems and build buildings and put trees there and for the whole year they went there and they refurbished that or they furnished that island with every imaginable thing that a person could need.

And so at the end of the year, when he was banished to the island, he didn't starve to death like the others did. Now, we are all kings for a little while on this earth. And our responsibility is to decide what we're

going to do with the things God has given us.

We can keep them here and have nothing on the other side. Or we can send them on ahead, as we said this morning, and we will enjoy them through all eternity. I'm not sure what all that means, but that's what the scripture has clearly said to us.

Jesus said, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. And then he told us how to do it. He said, sell that you have and give alms.

Provide for yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heaven that faileth not. Now, we live in a world where we have tremendous opportunity to do this with extravagance. Because we live in a very, very needy world.

There's no end to the needs to which we can give, literally. And we're going to talk about that tonight. I have four points to my message tonight.

The reality of the world we live in, the requirement, the resources, and the response. So first of all, let's talk about the reality. Seven billion people live in this world.

Are you aware that one billion of the seven lives on a dollar a day? Another two billion of the seven live on less than two dollars a day. In other words, nearly half of the world that we live in struggles to find enough food and water just to survive another day. Almost half of the population of the world.

That's an incredible fact. Some more facts. 29,000 children die every day from starvation and preventable disease.

That's brought on by contaminated water, infections, malaria, etc. 29,000 children. In fact, to help you think a little bit about that reality, while I'm giving this message tonight, 1,000 children in the world will die.

And it's perfectly preventable. All they needed was food. All they needed was clean water.

All they needed was proper medical attention for the curable diseases they had. But while I'm speaking tonight, 1,000 children in the world will die of causes that could have been prevented. To give you a little bit of an idea how many people 29,000 people are, the city of Chambersburg is near us.

It's 20,000 people. So what we're saying is that all the people in Chambersburg, in fact, even in this larger area of Chambersburg, 29,000 people would be dead by this time tomorrow. That's how many people we're talking about.

Every year there's a young people's ministry called Teen Mania that puts on an event to challenge young people. And one year they decided to do a little demonstration to make the reality of the world we live in just a little more real to people. So what they did in every session that they had, they had this in various parts of the country, is they brought a goldfish bowl up.

And the person took the goldfish out of the bowl and laid him on the podium and then stepped back and let the audience watch that goldfish flop and flounder and die. And in every case before that happened, somebody couldn't stand it, ran up from the audience, grabbed the goldfish and put it back into the bowl. The problem is you're not there when those 29,000 children die.

They die in obscurity. They're often in places that the news media doesn't even reach, and nobody sees them die. Somebody has said a single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic.

But tonight I want you to leave this place with a sense of responsibility for those many, many people that have just become a statistic. The golden rule. Suppose you were starving and you knew that some rich teenager could have saved your life if she hadn't needed that sixth pair of shoes.

What would you think if you heard that she was a Christian and you knew what Christianity taught and you died and you knew that this person had the means to save your life and was not caring? What would you think? 850,000 children go to bed hungry every night. How much would it take to prevent this mind-boggling tragedy in our world? Well, there are some statistics that people have figured. You can go on the internet and get these for yourself.

\$13 billion a year would provide the basic nutrition for every starving person in the world. \$13 billion a year. You say that's a lot of money.

Are you aware that American Christians spend \$21 billion a year on soft drinks? If every Christian gave the money they spent on soft drinks, it would feed every starving person in our world. You want to know how much they spend on Christmas gifts? \$100 billion. \$100 billion would literally feed, educate, cure almost every problem in our needy world.

That's what we spend on Christmas gifts. \$3 billion a year would save 1.5 million people from blindness that occurs simply because of a lack of vitamin A. American Christians spend \$5 billion on bottled water. But the most heart-wrenching part of what's going on in our world is the injustice that happens to people that have no choice.

\$246 billion children in our world are in the bonds of child labor. And let me read you an actual account. My sister is 10 years old.

Every morning at 7 o'clock, she goes to the bonded labor man. And every night at 9, that's 14 hours later, she comes home. He treats her badly.

He hits her if he thinks she's working slowly or if she's talking to the other children. He yells at her. He comes looking for her if she's sick and cannot go to work.

This is a terrible thing for her. I don't care about school or playing. I don't care about any of that.

All I want is to bring my sister home from the bonded labor man. For 600 rubies, I can bring her home. That is our only chance to get her back, but we do not have 600 rubies, and we will never have 600 rubies.

And 600 rubies is \$14. All over the third country world, people get into trouble. There's a funeral they cannot pay for, or there's an illness they cannot pay for, or they just simply don't have the money to put food on the table.

And so these children are sold to these bonded labor men. And they may earn 10 cents a day, and the interest gets way ahead of the amount they owe, and they will work for years to pay off \$10, \$15, \$20 that was borrowed. To me, that is heart-wrenching.

In fact, so heart-wrenching, I must do something about this. I've been talking about this with my family. I can't handle the fact that they're children.

What were you doing when you were 7 years old? What were you doing when you were 10 years old? Here are our children. I just can't imagine. And I want you to think about this.

What I want to do tonight is lay a burden on your heart. We live in a country that is totally unrealistic. It's the richest country that the world ever had.

And I see teenagers in my own community buying designer clothes, buying \$160 sneakers, buying soft drinks, buying fancy cars, buying fancy clothes, buying 20 shoes, buying... Well, you know what goes on in our plain communities. What is the requirement? What does God think about all of this? God has repeatedly admonished us and warned us about our responsibility. It's a little bit like the whole subject of economics, and this one is related.

There are dozens of scriptures. In fact, I want to turn you to a bunch of them tonight. I want you to see them for yourself.

Turn to Proverbs 24, verses 11 and 12. I would like tonight to put such a burden on your heart that it would forever cure you of your selfish materialism if you're involved in it. I hope there are people here tonight that have already dealt with it.

But if you haven't, my purpose tonight is to make you aware of the fact that your indulgence is somebody else's suffering. It's not something you can do with impunity. It costs something for somebody else for you to be selfish with the resources you have that they don't.

Proverbs 24, verses 11 and 12 reads this way. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and I just read you some accounts, and those that are ready to be slain, if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not. Now that may have been true years ago without all the electronic media we have today.

But there is nobody today that can say, We don't know this is happening. It's on your cell phone. It's on your computer.

I mean, it's just there. If you want to know it, you can know it. And it says, Don't you say to the Lord, We didn't know it.

Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? And shall he not render to every man according to his works? So don't say, I didn't know it. They were statistics. I didn't actually see it happening.

Don't say that. There's not a single person sitting here tonight, especially after this message, that can leave this place and say, I don't know it. I'm going to buy my 20th pair of shoes.

Or I'm going to buy my dream car. Or I'm going to build my dream house. Or I'm going to continue some other indulgence.

When you leave this place tonight, you will not be able to say, I did not know it. Would you turn to Proverbs 28, verse 27. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack.

Now God said that I didn't. That's a promise. He that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Now I don't know what that means, but I don't want to find it out. He that gives shall have no lack. He that hideth his eyes shall be cursed.

Would you turn to Proverbs 21, verse 13. And these are Old Testament scriptures. This one says, whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Jeremiah 22, Jeremiah 22, verses 16 and 17. He that judgeth the cause of the poor and the needy, then it was well with him. Was not this to know me, saith the Lord.

You see what he's saying there. To judge the cause of the poor and needy is what it means to know God. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness and for to shed innocent blood and for oppression and for violence to do it.

All right, let's turn to Ezekiel 16. These are strong scriptures. And I was very convicted.

My life needs some changes in this area as well. And I intend to make them. Ezekiel 16, 49.

Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom. Now, if you were to ask most people what was the iniquity of Sodom, they would say homosexuality, and it was. But that's not even mentioned here.

Here was the iniquity of Sodom. Pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters. Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Now, apparently God puts sexual immorality sort of in the same category that he puts this problem. That makes it pretty serious to me. All right, apparently ignoring the poor is somewhere in the same category as sexual sin in God's eyes.

God takes our attitude toward the poor, as you can see from these scriptures, very seriously. He has a special eye on the poor, not only for their need, but for your response to their need. He's watching.

You see, God could deal with all these inequities. He could save the whole world without the missionaries. God could do all of that.

But he leaves these situations for his children to accept responsibility and do what needs to be done. And he takes it very seriously, and he's watching. He's watching my attitude toward the poor, just as he's watching my attitude toward the lost.

And he takes it very seriously. I want you to turn to Matthew 25, the classic scripture now in the New Testament, and we'll just simply read it. It doesn't really need a lot of comment.

I'm just going to read the entire passage, verses 31 through 46. When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was in hunger, and you gave me meat.

I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in. Naked, and you clothed me.

I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we in hunger, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we

thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was in hunger, and you gave me no meat. I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink.

I was a stranger, and you took me not in. Naked, and you clothed me not. Sick, and in prison, and you visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him saying, Lord, when saw thee we in hunger, or thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Well, most people are gonna say, Well, I thought the judgment in the end was gonna be whether a person surrendered in faith and obedience to Christ.

That is true. But it's interesting that when the soldiers came to John the Baptist, or the people came to John the Baptist, and he preached that scorching sermon to them, and then they said, Well, what shall we do? He said, If you have two coats, give one away. If you have more food than what you need, give the extra away.

What strange advice. You would have thought he'd have said, Well, you need to repent. He was saying you need to repent, but he said that's fruit for repentance.

If you were asked most people, What is fruit for repentance? They'd give you an altogether different picture. John says, Fruit of repentance is what you do with your stuff. Zacchaeus came to Christ, and he said, Behold, my goods I give to the poor, and I'm going to give back double, or however much to the people that I wronged.

And he said all of that. And you know what Jesus said to him? Today is salvation. Come to this house.

Now, if salvation, if genuine repentance is giving away your extra stuff, and if salvation is proved by what you do with your extra stuff, I ask myself, How much salvation are we experiencing? And Jesus makes it very clear here that that's what the judgment is going to be based on. The evidence that you have surrendered your life in faith and obedience to Christ will manifest itself specifically in this manner. Or according to John the Baptist, according to the example of Zacchaeus, and according to what Jesus says here, there has not been a genuine repentance, there has not been genuine faith in Christ, there has not been a surrender to His Lordship, there has not been an obedience to His commands, because He makes it very clear what we're supposed to do.

And the thing that troubles me is the church for years has failed to really emphasize this fact of the gospel. There's a great blind spot in American Christianity. And it's amazing sometimes what kind of blind spots Christians can have.

Are you aware in this country, 150 years ago, Christians defended slavery. And we look now and we say, how in the world could they possibly have defended slavery? But they did. You can be that blind.

And tonight I hope, including myself, we can get rid of the blinders. There are 143 million orphans in the world. Because of all the wars and all the horrible things that happen in the world, there are 143 orphans.

There's an anti-Christian website that plays the song, Jesus loves me, this I know. And while they're playing, this is an anti-Christian website, while they're playing, Jesus loves me, this I know, they pass pictures of the emaciated, starving children in front of you while you're watching that website. And the whole time it's playing, Jesus loves me, this I know.

And then at the end they have a cross with the circle with the line through it that means no. And then they say this, He is your God. These are His rules.

And you all go to hell. Now granted, that's a pretty awful message. And they don't intend for it to do any good.

But I'm afraid they understand the gospel better sometimes than we do. The widow gave all that she had. She gave her living.

That literally means she had nothing for the next day. And Jesus said, she gave more than all the rest put together. That's Jesus' standard.

Not how much you gave, but how much you have left. You know, I hear people say, well, this man's really rich, but he really gives. Well, according to that parable, I don't think God measures how much you give.

He measures what it costs you to give. So that's the requirement. It's very clear from the scriptures that God expects us to know what's going on in our world and to respond to those needs to the extent of our ability.

And he will hold us accountable. Let's talk about the resources for a few moments. The United States is the richest nation in the world.

It has one half of the world's wealth and 5% of the world's population. Did you hear me? It has one half of the world's wealth and 5% of the world's population. There are 160 million adults in the United States who claim to be Christians.

Now listen to this. If each person who claims to be a Christian would give \$15 a month, it would literally wipe out starvation in the world. Now, I understand that a lot of those situations where people are starving are political situations.

You can't even get the stuff to them. I understand that. We're only talking in hypothetical figures here.

\$15 a month from every professing Christian in the United States would basically solve the problem of world hunger. That's all it would take. It wouldn't take a lot.

Just that much. Not only would it do that, it would also provide safe drinking water for all children and it would educate every child who's not in school. Let's turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. 2 Corinthians chapter 8. There's only one reason why God has given us more than what we need.

Did you know that? There's only one reason why God has given anybody more than they need. And it tells it here in this passage. 2 Corinthians chapter 8. It says, verse 13, For I mean not that other men be eased and ye burdened, but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want,

and their abundance may be a supply for your want, that there may be equality.

If you have more than enough to meet your needs, there's only one reason why you've been given more than enough. So you can help those who do not have more than enough. That's the only reason.

It's not yours to do with what you want to. It's not the purpose at all. In fact, are you aware of the fact that the great practical theme, I said practical theme, of the scriptures is equity.

The prophets scored Israel time after time for inequity, which is what the word iniquity means. The word iniquity is the word inequity. It means for you to respond with your resources in a way that is not equitable.

You lavish them on yourselves, and there are other people in the world who are dying to support that extravagance. That's inequity, iniquity. And God hates it.

And he says here that the reason some people have more than enough is so they can give to those who don't have enough, so things can be equaled out. That's the only purpose, that you have more than what you need. I was telling a friend of mine about a brother in our community who farms organically.

He feeds his cattle very little grain. He says it's too expensive. He grazes his cattle.

He has his whole farm basically in alfalfa. He grows no corn. And he makes a decent living.

And he said my cows don't get sick. I don't have any mastitis. I don't have any twisted stomachs.

My cows stay in the herd for 12 years instead of two or three like the people who push them with energy. And he was telling me what for a wonderful experience he has farming. He has healthy cows.

He makes a living. Everything's fine. I was telling a friend of mine about that, and he said, now this was a good plain Mennonite.

He said, yeah, he said, you can make a living doing that, but you can't get ahead. I said, what do you mean by getting ahead? Well, he said, you'll never come up with the money to buy the next farm. See, that's our mentality, to get ahead.

And my question is to get ahead of whom? God? He said, if you have extra money, it's not yours to do with as you please. It's here because there are many people in the world who need that excess, and God, for some reason, has given it to American people and American Christians. And what he's expecting to happen is for this to flow from America to other parts of the world so there can at least be some semblance of equality worldwide.

This is an unbelievable opportunity. An unbelievable opportunity. Let's look at the response.

Let's turn to 2 Corinthians. We're right here in Corinthians. Let's look at chapter 9. I like this verse.

Verse 6 of chapter 9. But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly. And he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Now, this is in the context of giving.

Read 8 and 9. That's the context. The person who gives sparingly will reap sparingly, and the person who gives bountifully will reap bountifully. Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Do you know what the Greek word for cheerful there is? Hilaros. The word from which we get hilarious. God loves a hilarious giver.

I mean, when he gives, he's in hilarity. It is the most uplifting thing he can think of to do. That's the kind of giver God loves.

Let's continue. And God is able to make all grace. This verse is often quoted out of context.

This is in the context. If you're not living as I was describing, this verse does not apply to you. God is able to make all grace abound toward you that ye always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.

That's to the hilarious giver. I think if I asked for a raise of hand, every person here would say they want that kind of blessing. I do.

God has clearly told us how you can have it. And if you turn to Philippians, it says... Let's turn to it. Philippians chapter 4. I should be able to quote it right off.

I'm getting older and absent-minded, and I can't always quote. Oh, yes. Verse 19.

My God shall supply all your needs. And again, this is in the context of giving. Paul's commending the people in Asia.

I'm sorry, in northern Greece. Thessalonica, I think. Philippi, I'm sorry.

He's commending the people in Philippi for sending an offering to him. And I want to read what he says here. Verse 17, before we get to verse 19.

Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. Paul says, the gift you sent to me, I'm happy you sent it. Not because you sent it to me, but I am so happy with what's going to happen to you as a result.

You have set to your account a bounding gift and reward. And then he goes down in verse 19, and he says, But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches, in glory by Christ Jesus, because of their response. Now, if God gives us according to his riches, that's a little bit different from him giving out of his riches.

Let me explain the difference. If I were a millionaire, and you had a \$50,000 hospital bill, and I paid \$40,000 of it, you would say that was a pretty good gift. But that would give you no clue how wealthy I really am.

But if I paid you a whole \$50,000 bill and gave you \$25,000 on top of it just as a gift, that would give you some clue how wealthy I am. And God gives us, to the cheerful giver, to the hilarious giver, God gives according to his riches, not out of his riches, commensurate with his wealth. That's how he gives.

This is a tremendous principle. I want all of you to leave tonight to be hilarious givers. That's what I want to have happen.

All right? Let's turn to Matthew chapter 6. I mean, the gospel is just full of this. And I don't understand. I don't understand why these themes are not preached.

They are practical themes. Everybody wrings their hands in plain circles and says we're drowning in our materialism. Listen, we're in a war against the world, and the world is basically a materialistic world.

It values only the things you can see and feel and touch and experiment with. And we're in a war against that. And the best way to win this war is extravagant giving, to deal with this whole problem in our lives.

Matthew chapter 6, verses 1 to 4. Take heed that you do not your alms before men to be seen of them. Now, alms is giving. I think the word alms here to the Jewish mind meant any kind of righteous deeds, but we think of it specifically in terms of giving.

Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret, and this is the part that excites me, that the Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Now, in reaction to the Roman Catholics that had their means of grace, and I mentioned those, I think, in my other message, we have gone to the other extreme and have said there are no means of grace. There are means of grace. Here he gives one of them.

When we give alms, God rewards us openly. Not necessarily with alms. Let me give you an example of a man who God rewarded openly in a tremendous way.

And you probably did not know what was behind the scenes. Let me tell you what was behind the scenes. His name was John Wesley.

Now listen to this. John Wesley chose to live on what today would be a salary of \$20,000 a year, and he never changed that through his entire life. That's what John Wesley lived on, \$20,000 a year.

Now, John Wesley wrote many books and was involved in many enterprises, and he earned approximately \$160,000 a year. He never took out of that more than \$20,000. He gave \$140,000 of that.

And if you visit the Wesley Museum in London, and you go down to the basement of that church where he preached, and there's a museum of John Wesley's life. And I stood there convicted. Here was a man who was known widely.

He was famous. He could have had whatever he wanted. There would have been Christian people who would have been glad to give him pretty much whatever honor, whatever position he wanted.

But here was a man who cared about the poor in London. And there was exhibit after exhibit of the lengths that he would go to to just help one prisoner who was in trouble or one poor person who was in trouble. John Wesley was an extravagant giver.

In fact, at one point in his life, tea became expensive, and he quit drinking tea so he would have that much more to give to the Lord. Those are the kinds of decisions he made. And like I said, if you go down there and look at his museum, he was involved with jails and prisoners.

He was involved with the poorhouses. He was involved with getting people to think about freeing the slaves in England. Everybody who was in need captured this man's heart.

And here's an actual account. Wesley had just finished buying some pictures for his room when one of the chambermaids came to his door. It was a winter day, and he noticed that she had only a thin linen gown to wear for protection against the cold.

He reached into his pocket to give her some money for a coat and found that he had little left. It struck him that the Lord was not pleased with how he had spent his money. He asked himself, Will thy master say well done, thou good and faithful servant? Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money that might have screened this poor creature from the cold.

Oh, justice! Oh, mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor woman? Then, there's a reason why at his death somebody made this comment about Wesley. When Wesley left this world, he left a battered hat, a worn coat, a tattered Bible, and the Methodist church. And that was not just a happenstance.

That whole statement is one statement. That's why God blessed him. I want you to turn to a very interesting Scripture that's very often misunderstood.

Luke chapter 16. And I'm going to take the time to exposit this a little bit. Chapter 16.

Jesus says to his disciples, beginning in verse 1, There was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee, given account of thy stewardship? For thou mayest no longer be steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? My Lord's taken from me the stewardship.

I'm too lazy to dig. I'm paraphrasing a little bit here. And to beg I am ashamed.

I'm resolved what to do, that when I'm put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called unto every one of his Lord's debtors, he called them unto him, and said unto the first, How much dost thou owe my Lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said, Take your bill quickly, and write fifty.

He was still giving away his Lord's money unjustly. Then he said to another, How much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take that bill and write four score.

So you owe a hundred measures, just write eighty. We'll just give you twenty. He had no authorization to do this, but he was getting prepared for getting fired.

And the Lord, not Jesus, but his Lord, who he had ripped off, commended him, because he had done wisely. For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. This man knew that it was to his advantage to make friends with his money, with his Lord's money.

And we don't understand that. Our Lord says, Do it! And we don't do it. Verse nine, And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation.

I'm not sure what all that means, but that's what it says. You're to do what this guy did. That's what you're to do with your money.

Now here's the part I wanted to look at. Verse ten, He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in least is unjust also in much. And then he tells you what he's talking about.

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the kind of riches that John Wesley experienced spiritually. That's what he's saying. God says this is a test.

I give you money. That's least. That's least on my scale of importance.

And I'm going to watch to see what you do with it. And then when I see what you've done with your money, I will decide whether to give you the true riches, which is the kind of riches that John Wesley enjoyed in his ministry. Does that explain to you some things that you may be often wondered about? As to why there is so little power, so little gifting, so little effect of our witness and testimony.

It could just be that the Lord is looking to this materialism that we all know exists and the waste of our resources on extravagance and luxuries and frivolous things. And he says, if that's what they do to the thing that I consider the least important, I will never give them the things that are really important. This is amazing.

Let me turn to, now let's look at a few positive. We're looking at some positive examples. Let's look at Isaiah 58.

We must close here directly. These are promises. Tremendous promises.

Verses 10 and 11. It's in the context of fasting, but this is what he says. And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity.

John Wesley was not obscure. Until it was all said and done, everybody knew who John Wesley was. And I'm not saying you should seek for fame, but this is what it says.

Then shall thy light rise in obscurity and thy darkness be as noonday. What? If you reach out your hand to the poor. Well, in Hurricane Katrina, the Christians do some of this.

And what they do proves what I've been saying all evening. After Hurricane Katrina, Christians flooded the city with food, water, supplies, labor, and shoulders to cry on. And it was obvious to the people of New Orleans that the Christians were doing the lion's share of the work in restoring their city.

And a Jewish doctor looking on made this comment when it was over. There are no longer any agnostics in New Orleans. Eric Camille is a dear brother that visited our congregation from Tallahassee, Florida.

It was his first contact with Anabaptists. He looked up Anabaptists, Shippensburg Christian Fellowship came up, he traveled the whole way from Tallahassee with his dear wife to visit our congregation. He said to me, Anabaptism is beautiful.

It is absolutely beautiful. I did not know there were people like this exist, but the thing that surprises me is that you people keep it in the four walls of your church buildings. He said you folks should be down on the streets of the cities helping the poor, lifting the fallen.

He and his wife take what resources they have, and he is not a wealthy man, and they go down to the slums of the city on a regular basis, take food down there and prepare it on the sidewalks and feed the hungry. Every now and then they take a loaf of bread and hang it on every door in the poor part of the city and they are down there all the time. And he said, I don't understand you people why you're not taking this to the streets.

And he hasn't joined any of our churches as a result because he sees that as a tremendous blind spot. John 15 says that if we obey the Lord our joy will be full. Let me read you an account.

Sunday in our church when we were studying the story of the rich young man in Mark 10, I received the following email from one of our members. My wife and I went home emptied all our clothes onto the bed, got several bags of canned goods and all the baby clothes our son has grown out of in addition to the toys he doesn't play with anymore. I took several hundred dollars of cash that I was saving to upgrade the front lawn.

By the way, how much do you put into your front lawn? And I can't imagine it. I cannot imagine the money people spend on their lawn. And drove over to the projects downtown and prayed.

I prayed for the people I didn't know who were about to receive what I had too much of. In the first house was a man of 30 who had a baby and needed some work clothes. Perfect.

I had my clothes to give him and baby toys and clothes and he needed money for groceries so I gave him a hundred dollars. The next house had a couple who needed clothing for the wife and money for a car payment so I gave her my wife's clothes and a hundred dollars. We prayed with each family and told them we came with God.

I got such a rush out of this that we ran home, got more things to give away and my wife and I are consistently serving at the homeless shelter downtown and I'm going to start teaching art and graphics at the homeless learning center. He got a charge out of this. I ask you tonight, what do you get your kicks out of? What do you get your rush out of? Is it that new electronic gadget? Is it that extravagant automobile that you don't need that's way more than transportation that was bought to make a statement to prove something? Is that what you get your rush out of? Why don't you do this? You will be surprised at what it will do for you.

Take \$500, go downtown and do what this man did. See what happens. Tertullian identified the outpouring of sacrificial love as the key factor to explain the multitudes that came to Christ in those first centuries.

Albert Einstein said, the world is a dangerous place not because of those who do evil but because of those who look on and do nothing. We are to overcome evil with good. That's what we're supposed to be doing.

Gandhi one time was asked by E. Stanley Jones. E. Stanley Jones desperately tried to get Gandhi to make a commitment to Christ. And so he asked Gandhi one time, what is the hindrance to you responding to Jesus? And Gandhi said, the Christians.

Suppose the Mennonites repented of their materialism and became known for their sacrificial and extravagant generosity and obedience to Christ. Now, most people do look at us as people who are there when there's disaster. I mean, there's some of this going on.

But they also know that we have piles of money left. And we are known for our wealth. We are known for being people who have money.

Suppose we were known as people who have depleted ourselves of our resources and have been the most generous people on the face of the earth. You could help to change that. We could have a different generation.

Coupled with non-resistance, this would be the most powerful testimony in the world. Will we be remembered as the generation that rose up to conquer world poverty the best we could with our small numbers? And answer the tragedies of worldwide greed and oppression with Christ-like compassion? Or will we be written down finally when somebody writes our history as the most selfish generation that loved its soft drinks, fancy cars, cosmetics, extravagant clothes, expensive electronic gadgets, oversized houses, and costly vacations? This is serious. This is serious.

God is not mocked. He says, Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. And by the way, the emphasis there is not on the negative.

Would you turn to it? Galatians chapter 6. I mean, all my life when this scripture was preached, it was always preached in the negative, but that's not where the emphasis rests here. I want to inspire you. I'm not here to scold.

I'm here to inspire, and I'm preaching to myself. Galatians, verse 7. Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but, now here's the real emphasis. But he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially those who are of the household of faith. And you have Christian brothers and sisters around the world who are starving.

It's not the high cost of living, it is the cost of high living. And I'm amazed at what has happened in my generation. Let me give an example out of my own home.

We took a bath once a week. I grew up on a farm, and that wasn't unusual. That's what everybody did.

You took a bath once a week and changed your clothes, and mom washed on Monday morning all the clothes for a family of 13, and she was done with her washing. When my twin brothers were born, which they were the last in the family, my father thought my mother needed some help, so he went and bought her an automatic washer and an automatic dryer and put a bathroom in the house. And then we washed, took a bath every day.

And I recommend that, by the way. And I'm not recommending we necessarily go back, but I just want to show you what happened. Then we took a bath, all 13 of us, took a bath every day and put on clean clothes, and my mother washed every day with her automatic washer.

And she had less time than she had before. When I was a boy, we visited all over the community. During the week, today people visit maybe on Sunday, but you'd never go to visit someone on Tuesday evening, especially unannounced, and we never called anybody.

We just got in the car and said, let's go visit. We children would say to our parents, if we get all the work done early, will we go visiting tonight because we love to go visiting? Yeah, sure. So we'd all get in the car Tuesday night, we'd drive to the first place unannounced, and no, they're not home.

So we'd go out the lane, go to the next place, and we kept going until someone was at home. My father had not eight brothers and sisters. There were nine in his family.

My mother had ten brothers and sisters. There were 11 in her family. We visited all of those people maybe two or three times a year plus many friends.

There's nobody today that visits like that that I know of. Why? Because we have our automatic washers. Grandmother had a carpet in the front room.

The only maintenance that carpet got, by the way, was she picked up the lint every now and then, took it out on the line, and I remember this, and you took a carpet beater and you beat the dust out of it and then you took it back in and there it stayed for a whole year. So the children say, let's help grandma out. Let's buy her a vacuum cleaner.

So they buy her a vacuum cleaner. Now she doesn't have to take the carpet out and hang it over the clothesline anymore and beat the dust out of it. But what you don't know is now grandma's gonna put the carpet in every room of the house and she's gonna sweep it every day, every other day.

And that's what's happened. It's not the high cost of living, it's the cost of high living. And we have put ourselves in bondage with our luxuries and our high expectations of what life should be.

And the key to freedom from this deadly thing is to begin to be extravagant with our compassion and begin to sacrifice and somehow bring some sense of equity between us and the needs of our world. We are in a battle, and I'm concluding with a little story. In the late 1940s, the U.S. government commissioned William Francis Gibbs to work with the United States lines to build a navy carrier, the likes of which had never been built before, and it was to cost 80 million dollars.

This was to be equipped to carry 15,000 troops. In 1952, the SS United States was completed. It could travel at 51 miles per hour, faster than any other ship.

It could cover 10,000 miles without stopping for food or supplies. It could travel anywhere in the world in less than 10 days. It was the fastest and most reliable troop carrier in the world.

The problem is this. It never carried any troops. Somebody convinced the line to turn this ship into a luxury liner for heads of state and celebrities.

Until they got finished refurbishing it, it could carry only 2,000 passengers instead of 15,000. It had 695 state rooms, 4 dining salons, 3 bars, 2 theaters, 5 acres of open deck, and a heated swimming pool and fully air conditioned. And it was no longer a vessel for battle, but a means of indulgence so wealthy people could comfortably ride across the Atlantic Ocean.

Did you know the church has designed for battle? We're in a war. Christ wants to mobilize this whole audience for mission. I'm not talking necessarily about foreign mission, but that's included.

He wants to mobilize every one of you for mission for the needs we've talked about tonight plus the spiritual needs. Have we turned the church into a luxury liner? There's a song we sang at the beginning. It reads this way.

In your costly temples praying, let thy kingdom come, we pray, are but words of idle meaning if from these we turn away. The people I talked about here tonight. Are we willing to change the church into a troop carrier for battle? Are we willing to obey the clear orders of Jesus that we have a responsibility to the needs of our world? Are we willing to forsake comforts to meet the great need and danger in the inner

cities, disease ridden, third world countries and hostile regions of the Middle East? Are we willing to make those kinds of sacrifice? Are we willing to make the richest country of the world a means for exalting Christ through the investment of our resources? Pilgrims have lots to invest.

In the last century an American tourist paid a visit to the renowned Polish rabbi Hofetz Chaim. He was astonished to see that the rabbi had a simple room with a few books plus a table and a cot. The puzzled American asked, My, where's your furniture? Hofetz replied, where's yours? Huh, I'm just a tourist.

I'm just here passing through. The rabbi replied, So am I.

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