

Detached From The Love Of Possessions

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true discipleship in the New Covenant, focusing on the need to follow all that Jesus commanded, including loving Him above all else, taking up the cross daily, and surrendering all possessions. It challenges the common gospel presentation and highlights the significance of striving to enter through the narrow door, not just a simple invitation. The sermon also addresses the issue of money, stressing the need to choose between serving God or money, and the importance of faithful stewardship and detachment from material possessions.

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Luke 14:26, Luke 13:23, Luke 16:13, John 2:13, Luke 8:3, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Matthew 6:24, 2 Corinthians 9:7

Topics: "True Discipleship", "Faithful Stewardship"

Description

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Transcript

We've been looking at some of the distinctive features of the New Covenant compared to the Old Covenant. Jesus said we are to go into all the world and make disciples, not just tell people, ask Jesus to come into your heart. You see, the average way the gospel is preached today is you say you're sorry for your sins, ask Jesus to come into your heart, now believe that he has come.

Just trust him. Now keep coming regularly to the meetings, get baptized one day. What's the result of so many of these people? Most of them don't endure.

That's because preachers have not led people on. Jesus said in Matthew 28, go and make disciples of all nations and then teach them to do every single thing I commanded you. That's the Great Commission.

So we decided to do that when we started CFC 48 years ago. And so conditions of discipleship, Luke 14, 26 to 35. All that Jesus commanded, Matthew 5, 6, and 7. So we went through those chapters for many, many months and we laid a good foundation for discipleship and teaching people to do all that Jesus

taught.

We have a whole series on that now, all that Jesus taught, about 70, 80 messages. And this is what makes the distinction between those who have the spirit of Babylon, which is just going to be destroyed, and those are going to endure till the end. Now I want to show you first of all Luke chapter 13 and verse 23.

You know, when I hear about all these so-called revivals going on here and there and millions getting saved and all, I have not just one question mark, hundreds of question marks on those reports. Luke chapter 13 and verse 24 and verse 23, someone asked him, Lord, are there only a few who will be saved? That's an important question. And he said, strive to enter through the narrow door.

It's not just simple, ask me to come into your life. No. Strive.

Have you ever heard the gospel being preached like that? Very few are going to be saved. So you want to enter in, you've got to strive. It's not so simple.

Just ask Jesus, come into your heart and relax. Because, he said, many will seek to enter and will not be able. In my entire life, I've never heard the gospel preached like that.

That you will try to enter and you won't be able to get in. That's what Jesus preached. So we decided to preach that.

We went to the conditions of discipleship. We looked at two of them last time. One is you've got to love Jesus more than every single relative of yours.

And that's something you've got to search your heart in all the time. Because you may start like that, but the time can come when you love one of your relatives more than Jesus. It says father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, anyone.

If you love any one of them more than Christ. In other words, if it's Christ or your father, you have to choose Christ. If it's Christ or your wife, you've got to choose Christ.

These are usually the conflicts are in these two areas. Or Christ or your mother, you choose Christ. Christ or your children, you choose Christ.

Can you honestly say to Jesus today, all of you sitting here, that in those situations in my life when I've had to choose, maybe most of you have not had to choose between you and your parents because they are far away and you don't have much. I notice in the United States, people don't have much contact with their parents in any case. But you and your wife, have you consistently chosen Christ above your wife? You've got to answer that to the Lord.

That determines whether you're a disciple. If you haven't, you've failed in the number one condition. Don't even go to condition number two.

Condition number two is to take up the cross every single day, Luke 9, 23. That's also in verse 27 here. Every single day to take up the cross, that means die to myself.

And we get numerous opportunities every day. And as you look back over your life, forget the whole year, in the month of August, just last one month, did you have opportunities to choose between what would

please Christ and what please yourself? And can you say you really sought the power of the Holy Spirit to please Christ and not yourself? Or do you please yourself? If we take these things lightly, and you don't repent of it, I mean we repent of serious sins. But if in a situation I have chosen myself to please myself and not Christ, that's a sin you've got to repent of.

And it's because many Christians don't take these seriously that they never become disciples in their whole life. And their Christian life is shallow, and after 20, 30 years, they still get angry, and they still lust in their eyes. Old men lusting after women, can you imagine that? They won't be honest enough to admit it, because they say, we ask, we ask, and we are forgiven.

We confess, and we are forgiven. Losing that temper, getting upset, and they don't take this business of dying to self seriously. But we want to go to the third condition, which Jesus said, and that is in verse 33.

You cannot be my disciple if you don't give up all your possessions. Possessions are what we possess and what possesses us as a relation to money and material things. And you find even a little child, if your little baby, as soon as it's born, his hand is clenched, you put your finger in there, it's grasping it.

That's how we are. Grasping for whatever we can for ourselves and possessing it. So I often use this illustration.

Here is having something, and here's possessing it. I can have a car, a house in my name, or possess it. It's mine.

And love it more than other things. So it's primarily relating to money and possessions. And it says, if you don't settle this, you'll be like a person, in verse 28-30, who started to build a tower.

So Christian life is like building a tower, but you didn't lay a good foundation. And so one day the whole thing collapses. And the foundation is these three conditions.

I want you to see what Jesus said about money in Luke chapter 16 and verse 13. This is very important because it's as important as the other two conditions. Luke 16-13, Jesus said, no one can serve two masters.

And most Christians in the world, if you go to them and ask them, who are the two masters in the world? I tell you, 90% of them will say God and Satan. And Jesus never said God and Satan. He said the two masters are God and money.

And put God and money in that sentence. Either he will hate money and love God, or he will hate God and love money. I'm just reading what Jesus said.

Or he'll be devoted to money and despise God. Or he'll be devoted to God and despise money. Have you put those things in there? Have you read it and faced up to it yourself? I faced up to it as a very young man.

And I said, Lord, I want to live for you and I want to serve you. And I can see that money is a tremendous alternative master to God. And the way I asked this question for myself was like this.

How do I know who's my master? Supposing here's A and here's B, two people both saying that Zach is my servant. Very easy to find out. Ask both of them to call Zach.

A calls me and B calls me. Whoever I go to, I'm that person's servant. It's that simple.

God and money. God calls me some way, money calls me other way. The one I choose is my master.

And if I compromise one in order to please the other, that one is my master. If I'm really serving God, I would make a complete break with money. Not that your bank account is zero, but it has no hold on you.

And you're not going to get all depressed if you lost some of it. And you'll be absolutely faithful with it because we are not faithful with money. Do you see what Jesus said here? There are three things Jesus said about money here.

Here he says in verse 10, if you're faithful in a very little thing, you'll be faithful in much. In the context, it means money is a very little thing. Do you believe that? It's a very little thing.

It is a very big thing in your eyes. Forget about discipleship. If you're faithful in that very little thing called money, you'll be faithful in serving God.

Secondly, money is unrighteous wealth. It's the unrighteous mammon. If you're not faithful with unrighteous mammon, who will give you the true riches? In other words, money is not the true riches.

The true riches are, I remember years ago asking God, Lord, what are the true riches in the Christian life? And the Lord showed me, first of all, likeness to Jesus Christ. Number two, the anointing and fullness of the Holy Spirit, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. And third, revelation on God's Word.

So I began to seek that. I said, Lord, I want to be like Christ in my life more and more. I know it won't happen overnight.

I want the real, genuine baptism in the Holy Spirit that sets me on fire and anoints me, that my words will be anointed when I speak them. And third, I will not allow money to rule over me. I'll be faithful like it says here, and I will not allow money to have a grip on me.

So to be faithful, it says here another thing in verse 12 about money, and that is money belongs to another. You know, I was telling you about the true riches. I didn't finish that.

The true riches are the baptism in the Holy Spirit, likeness to Christ, and revelation on God's Word. That's the other one. I said, Lord, if I'm really a disciple, when I read the Bible, I'll get revelation.

Not just understanding, like people go to Bible school and study and cram their heads with knowledge. Not that. Revelation is that which changes our life.

If a verse in Scripture has not changed your life, you have not got revelation on it. It's just history. That's the way I look at it.

When I read something that Jesus taught and I get revelation on it, it will change my life in that area. So the third thing it said about money is money belongs to somebody else. If you're not being faithful in that which is another's, who will give you your true riches? And then he went on to say about these two masters.

And when you look at Jesus' life, you find when people were, a woman caught in adultery, terrible thing. The Old Testament said that person, the woman, should be stoned to death. Jesus did not keep that

commandment.

Amazing. Have you ever figured that out? What the Pharisees said was right. Moses commanded that such a woman should be stoned to death.

That's the first thing he did not keep. Secondly, he said, he who is without sin among you, cast the first stone. Everybody went, but one person was left without sin.

And he disobeyed his own commandment to cast a stone and kill her. It looks as if he disobeyed, right? That's where you need to understand the compassion of God. Pharisees will jump on that.

Jesus was compassionate and said, has no one condemned you? I have a right to stone you. I said it just now, but I will not stone you. He was tremendously compassionate.

When he saw people preventing a man being healed in the synagogue, he rebuked all those people and he healed the man. When he saw a blind man and everybody said, go keep quiet, he said, come here and he healed him. Right through the Gospels, I see his compassion and his heart for those who are sick and in sin.

But when it came to somebody making money in the temple, he was a different person. I don't know whether you've noticed what it says there in John chapter, by the way, he drove the money changers out of the temple twice. First, at the beginning of his ministry, John chapter 2, Jesus began his ministry by driving people out of the temple who were trying to make money out of God's people.

Picture this in your mind, making money out of God's people. That's what infuriated Jesus, a righteous anger. And at the end of his ministry, again, you know, after he came in riding on a donkey into Jerusalem, he did it a second time.

This is just after the marriage in Cana, which was the beginning of his ministry. And then Luke 21, twice he did it. Why did he do it twice? And what was he upset about? There were people making money in the marketplace in Jerusalem.

He didn't trouble them. So go and make as much money as you like, cheat people, do whatever you like. But when you come to the house of God, don't play the fool with money.

Don't take advantage of others financially. So that's what he drove, drove people. And it says here in John chapter 2, that he sat down and he made a whip.

It's really amazing to imagine. Can you picture this in your mind? Jesus is in the temple and he asks his disciples, go and bring some thin rope or something. They're wondering, what does he want it for? And he sits there in John chapter 2, 15.

He made a scourge of cords. They're wondering, what for? And he drove all the people out of the temple who were making. He said, don't make my father's house a place of business.

We have to be very careful. This is why in CFC, right from the time we started in 1948 years ago, we decided we'd never take an offering. And now we have over 100 churches.

In none of those churches do we take an offering. I wonder whether there's any group of churches anywhere in the world where they never pass an offering bag around. I think we are the only ones.

But we keep a box there because we see once that Jesus sat next to a box and a widow came and put in some offering. So having a box is okay. This is completely anonymous.

Nobody's asking you to put it. In many places, they don't even know where the box is. Because that's not the main thing.

And the other thing we decided was that no one of the leaders would be paid a salary. We have more than 230 or more elders. I haven't counted the number.

But not one of them receives a salary, including me, for 48 years. We say, how do you live? How did Jesus live? How did Paul live? They trusted God. They trusted in a living heavenly father who had called them.

Now, if God hasn't called you, don't try it. You'll end up as a beggar. But when God called people, he took care of them.

And somebody would come and give money. Even a rich man like Herod Stewart Cusa, you read in Luke chapter 8, he gave his wife some money and said, go give it to Jesus. And Jesus took it.

So God provided for Jesus without his ever asking anybody in this. And same way with Paul. So we decided to follow that as well.

That we would never send a report of our work anywhere. In 48 years, you'll never see a report of what we have done in different parts of the world or in India. And if you go to the CFC website, you won't see a list of churches either.

It's only one church. People think there's only one CFC church. In the whole world, there's no list there because we're not here to promote ourselves.

And if you also go to the financial page, you'll see so many conditions. Many other places, they have give here, give here, give, give, give. We're trying to stop people from giving.

If you go to our church building, you'll see an offering box. And on top of the offering box are written certain conditions. If you don't fulfill these conditions, don't put money in this box.

Are you born again? If not, don't put money here. Do you owe money to anybody? If you owe money, give it to them. Otherwise, you're putting their money in this box.

Give it to them first. And have you set matters right with people? Somebody you have a quarrel with. Jesus said, settle that and then come and give your offering.

Are you in debt? Clear your debt. I already mentioned that. Do you have a need in your family? Take care of that.

God cares for you. We put conditions like that. And finally, are you giving cheerfully, joyfully, or out of some compulsion, feeling that if I don't give, God will punish me? No, no, no.

God won't punish you. This is what we have taught. And people have asked us, Brother Zach, does anybody put money with all these conditions there? I say, we have built so many buildings in India.

Never once have we taken one rupee from a bank. We've never been in debt. God honors those who honor him.

And money is the area where we approved it. And the result is, many families in the church who've been in financial need have said, hey, if this can happen in the church, it can happen in our family too. And they've experienced it.

So we are very, very careful to follow the example. Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. That means we don't let people know our needs.

Now recently, I sent out a circular about registries. It's an American custom. We don't have it in India.

But I thought, what is a registry, whether it's for a wedding or for a baby? It's not receiving gifts. It's asking people for gifts and telling them exactly what I want. If that isn't begging, I don't know what it is.

I mean, that man who stands in the street with a sign, I'm a homeless man, is actually more honest. He's not asking you for anything specific. Whatever you want, dropping.

The other day, we were driving on the road, and we saw a picture of a baby and a glass bottle with a lot of dollar notes in it at the traffic stop, collecting money from people. Here's a baby in need. That's what a registry is.

Can you imagine Christians doing it? So the test is always, what would Jesus do? Would Jesus say, next month is my birthday? So I want to pass a message around. I need a new robe. And there's one available in that top store.

It's a little more expensive, but get it from there. And I've got it in a tunic also. My sandals are worn out.

I think I need at least two pairs of sandals walking all the way from Capernaum to Jerusalem frequently. And pick it from that store, that one. Those are good sandals that last a long time.

Can you imagine Jesus doing this? We say we follow Jesus. Are we begging? Now, I know some of you were disturbed by that, but I don't regret one bit what I wrote in that mail. Because if I did it, and I got some of these things at my wedding, and when we had a baby, I look around, and I see something, and the Holy Spirit say, you got that by begging.

And I see something else in my house, and the Holy Spirit will say, you got that by begging. And something else in my house, you got that also by begging. And I look around and say, boy, what a lot of things I got in my house by begging.

I'd be ashamed. I don't want it. I appreciate a brother.

Some brothers really responded in a very good way to my mail. And here's what one person said. I feel so convicted that I've got all this money, which I didn't earn myself.

All a lot of stuff which I did not buy with my hard-earned money, so it's not righteous for me to have it. But I don't want to return it to the owners. I just total up this amount and put it in the NCCF offering box.

That is radical wholeheartedness. That's a disciple. So this matter of money is very real.

And if you take it seriously, I promise you, for my 57 years of full-time Christian work, God will take care of you. God will take care of your children. God will take care of every need of yours all through your life.

Be a living example of that, dear brothers and sisters in this church. This is a new covenant. This is not old covenant.

Amen.

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