

Freedom From Serving Money

by Zac Poonen

We must make money our servant, not our master, and seek God's kingdom first and His righteousness in order to receive the true riches that God promises.

Duration: 40:00

Scripture: Matthew 1:21, Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13, John 3:16, Acts 17:30, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 4:19

Topics: "Financial Stewardship", "Spiritual Freedom"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of not letting money become a master in our lives, but rather to view it as a servant. It addresses the deception in some preachers who prioritize money over true spiritual growth, highlighting the need to seek God's kingdom and righteousness above all else. The message stresses the significance of being saved from sin, not just forgiven, and encourages believers to live in a way that glorifies God and builds a testimony of faithfulness.

Transcript

In Luke chapter 16 and verse 15, verse 13, Jesus said these amazing words which we must take very seriously. And that applies to all of us. People may ask, why are you speaking here about what pastors do? None of us are pastors here, but you guys are supporting these pastors who are disobeying God's word.

Why was Martin Luther so angry at the priests of those days who asked people for money for God to forgive their sins? Well, it's exactly the same reason why I am angry with preachers and pastors who ask poor people for money to get healing or to clear their debts. If you don't believe me, go and watch Christian television and see if that is not what all preachers are asking for and in most churches. What the Catholic priests were doing then, today Pentecostal charismatic preachers are doing.

They say they've got the real gospel. Almost every one of these television preachers who ask for money claim to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. And that's what convinces me that their baptism in the Holy Spirit and tongues is counterfeit.

Because the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues is to make us more like Jesus Christ. That means more free from the love of money. I know because when Jesus baptized me in the Holy Spirit many years ago and gave me the gift of tongues, which I have exercised for more than 40

years, it made me more like Christ.

It freed me from the love of money, not made me a lover of money. So that is why I say there's a counterfeit which looks like the real thing. And if you don't compare everything with the word of God, you'll be deceived.

I mean if you're going to buy gold or diamonds and you don't know head or tail of what gold and diamonds look like, you better be careful because those merchants will cheat you. You got to take an expert with you to show you which is real gold and which is counterfeit and which is real diamonds and which is just a piece of glass. So if you don't know the Bible well, you'll be deceived.

So here is one verse which is very, very important. Luke chapter 16 and verse 13, where Jesus spoke about two masters. There are only two masters, he said, in the world, especially for Christians.

No servant, he said, can serve two masters. To whom was he saying it? Verse one, to his disciples. He wasn't telling worldly people.

Luke 16, verse one, he said to his disciples a number of things. He first talked about a man who was unfaithful with money. And then he explained that at the end of that parable, the parable is all the way from verse two onwards up to verse eight.

Then he explained about money and he said, if you want God to give you the true riches, then verse 11, you have to be faithful with money. You can't get true riches unless you're faithful with money. What are the true riches? The true riches are likeness to Jesus Christ, freedom from sin, the anointing, the genuine anointing of the Holy Spirit, revelation on the word of God, et cetera.

If you want those true riches, you have to be faithful with money. If you're not faithful with money, you will not get the true riches. You'll only have the fake riches.

And then he said, no servant can serve two masters. And immediately, if you were to ask the average Christian out on the street, who are the two masters? They'd say God and Satan. But Jesus said, no, God and money.

He said, the two masters are verse 13, God and money, and you cannot serve both. You cannot serve God and money. It's very, very important to understand, and that is the message I would preach to all these preachers who are asking people for money.

And what is the result of this collecting of money, which they say is going to God? They say, give to God. But you know, if you were to research where all this money is going, it's going into the pockets of these preachers. They are becoming millionaires, millionaires.

I was just seeing a program today, which listed the 10 wealthiest preachers in the world, and most of them are millionaires, 15 million, 150 million. Where do they get all this from? Dollars, from collecting money from poor people. And those poor people are going and trying to repay their debts, which they got into debt by giving money to this preacher who has to buy his private jet.

And you know, that's what's turning so many people away from Christ. I remember seeing a program on Christian television in India where there was this preacher who, I saw it myself, showed this very well-known preacher, American preacher, who showed this private jet plane on the screen and said, I

need this jet plane to travel to preach the gospel. I don't have time to stand in queues and all that and check in and all that.

There's no time for all that. The need of the gospel is so great, I have to get into a private flight and go. But who's going to pay for this? You people are watching me.

And he said, if you give me, though this is some years ago, when the dollar rate was 149 rupees to the dollar. And he said that if you give me a thousand dollars, that is 49,000 rupees and send it to this address, I will put your name on a plate and put it on the front of the plane. And where is it going? Is this what Jesus said? Imagine some meeting while Jesus is speaking, Judas Iscariot getting up and saying, hey, Jesus is frequently walking from Galilee to Jerusalem, that's 70 miles.

Let's buy a chariot for him. How many of you will pay money now to buy a chariot for Jesus to go from Galilee to Jerusalem more comfortably than walking? It takes him two days to reach here. And you know what Jesus would have done? Jesus told Judas Iscariot to shut up and sit down.

Where are the people who tell these preachers to shut up and sit down? It's not the body of Christ today. There are only two masters, God and money. And you're either serving one or the other.

You cannot serve both. Because money was meant to be our servant, not our master. We can use money, but it must never be your master.

Money is a terrible master. It's a very good servant, but it's a terrible master. You know there's gold in heaven? Do you know where it is? On the streets, under your feet.

If you have learned to put gold under your feet today, you're ready for heaven. Because in heaven, gold is under our feet. We better get prepared for that.

But here on earth, they put it on heads, on the top of the head. That's the difference between earth and heaven. And here gold is on top, and there gold is under the feet.

Gold is meant to be our... money is meant to be our servant. God gave us money to be our servant. I'm not saying you shouldn't have money.

It's a very good servant. Everybody needs it. Even Jesus needed it.

He worked as a carpenter to earn money, but it was his servant. And how do you know whether whose servant you are? It's very easy to find out. I want you to listen very carefully.

If there are two people standing here, A and B, and they both say, Zach Poonen is my servant. It would be very easy for you to find out. You tell A, Mr. A, call Zach.

And you tell B, call Zach. Let's see to which one he goes. Find out immediately whose servant I am.

Now apply this. God and money. And God calls you somewhere, and money calls you somewhere, whom do you listen to? That shows you whose servant you are.

When the pull of money becomes more than the pull of God in your heart, you know you are, whether you know it or not, a servant of money. You may be going to the best church in the world. I've said that to people who sit in my church.

I say, you can sit in my church, CFC, and be a servant of money. Because it's not in one particular church, it's in the heart. And I said, I don't know whom you're serving in your heart, but you can discover pretty quickly whose pull you respond to.

God is pulling, and money is pulling, and you decide which one you're going to yield to. I decided that, and I live with that constant decision all the time. It's not a decision you take once for all.

You have to choose it almost every day, because money is such a thing we handle all the time. And you have to be very careful that it doesn't have a pull on you. That you don't lose your, one way you can find out is, if you lose a lot of money, do you lose your joy as well? I do a little business to support myself.

I work in a church in Bangalore, 42 years, I've never taken one cent as a salary there. I support myself like the Apostle Paul. But sometimes I've lost a lot of money, a few thousands, maybe through, it happens.

And I can tell you before God, I did not lose my joy. Because my money was in a bank account, but my joy was in my heart. I've traveled in buses and trains where I had my pocket picked.

But fortunately, my joy was not in my wallet, my joy was in my heart. He could only take my money, he couldn't take my joy. I want to ask you that question.

Sometimes you lose money, do you lose your joy as well? That shows where your heart is. And you can reverse it. When you suddenly earn a lot of money, you've got a bonus, does it increase your joy? These are very searching questions, I've asked them myself.

I say, Lord, I want my joy to increase when I overcome sin, when I overcome anger, when I overcome dirty thoughts, when I overcome complaining and murmuring, not when I get an extra bit of money from someone. If you're radical like this, you will become a true servant of Jesus Christ, even though you're not a full-time worker. No servant can serve two masters.

And I want to say to you, we are living in a day, you can take it or leave it, but it is true. And if you don't believe me now, you will believe me at the judgment seat of Christ that what I told you was the truth. We are living in a particular time in history where money is one of the major things by which the devil is leading God's people away from God.

So be careful, treat it as your servant. People say, does it mean we should earn only very little? No. I don't believe that we should always take the lowest paid salary.

No. Some people sometimes write to me and say, Brother Jack, I have an offer from this company and that company jobs, which one should I take? I say, who's offering you the higher salary? Take that. Because we're living in a world, there's a lot of expense.

If you can get a good salary, take it. I've never stopped anybody from looking for a job in Dubai or Doha or anywhere or the United States or any part of the world, I say. By all means, if you can get a good job, take it.

If you get a good salary, take it. But don't make that your master. To get a good salary is like having 10 servants in your house.

That's great. To get a low salary is like having one servant in your house. But both must be your servants in both cases.

Whether your income is less or much, make sure they are servants, not masters. It's a terrible thing if you have servants working in your house and they take over the house. They're not supposed to take over your house.

They're supposed to work in the kitchen or work in the yard outside to serve you. And I say, treat money like that. Let money be your servant and never your master.

That is a true disciple of Jesus Christ. That's how Jesus was. He never allowed money to be his master.

His master was his heavenly father. If he had a need, he would pray and tell his father. When you have a financial need, to whom do you go? I'm telling you, after 51 years of full-time Christian work, God has never let me down.

I've never in my life had to write a letter asking anybody for money. I trusted that God would take care of me because I said, Lord, my heart is set on seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness first in my life. And I have even said this, I said, Lord, if when I'm seeking your kingdom and your righteousness first in my life, you don't take care of my needs, then that I will be the first person in human history who God broke his promise.

And he did not meet this person's needs even though he sought God's kingdom first. It cannot happen. It cannot happen.

Heaven and earth will pass away. That word will not pass away. Jesus said, all your needs, my heavenly father will provide for you, even your physical needs.

Seek the kingdom of God first and his righteousness. And I believe that every Christian is to manifest that truth, that I've spent my life seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness, and God's added all my needs to me. We're not here to judge what somebody else earns.

We're happy if people earn. I'm happy if somebody earns 10 times as much as I earn. God bless him.

I will only tell him, brother, make sure they are your servants. Don't be excited when you earn a lot of money. It increases your responsibility.

Because the more you have, the more you have to answer to God for one day. Don't forget that. Money is something that God gives you, and he tests you to see what you do with it.

You didn't realize it was a test? It is a test. He gives us earthly things to see whether we can be faithful with them. And if you're faithful in those earthly things, he'll give you the true riches.

See what it says, Luke 16 and verse 11. Luke 16 verse 11 says, if you're faithful with these earthly riches that God gives you, that is your salary and whatever earthly wealth you get, inheritance or your business profits. That is something God has given to you to test you to see whether you are faithful in using it.

If you are, God will give you the true riches. And that is the main reason why so many Christians are poor spiritually. Why is it there's so little of anointed preaching from many pulpits today? Why is it we have so many preachers who are just entertainers, who crack jokes and make people laugh? Jesus never stood up in a pulpit and made people laugh and crack jokes.

Those are all today's entertainers who claim to be preachers. They're not preachers. They're entertainers.

They've learned from the rock world, rock music world, how to entertain people. It's because they don't get the true riches. You can't claim to have the anointing just because you say 50 hallelujahs in your message.

Somebody asked me this once, Brother Zach, why don't you say more hallelujahs in your message? I said, I've got so much to say that if I keep saying hallelujahs, you'll have to sit here for a much longer time. And hallelujahs are not fillers for my message when I'm thinking what to say next. No.

Where do I see Jesus speaking like that? My example is Jesus. Not these preachers who carry a mic and walk up and running up and down the platform. That's not how Jesus preached.

He didn't preach like that. He didn't even keep saying hallelujahs. He didn't say, blessed are the poor in spirit, hallelujah.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, hallelujah. He never used hallelujah in any of his messages because he had so much to say. Hallelujah means to praise the Lord.

Jesus praised the Lord more than anybody else, but he didn't keep repeating that. There's a verse in the Bible which says, you should not use it. In Matthew chapter six, he said, don't use vain repetitions when you pray.

So what I'm saying is there's so much of corruption today in preaching. It's not leading people to godliness. It's not leading people to be delivered from their sin.

So much of Christian preaching is entertainment. And that is because those preachers are not getting the true riches. Why are they not getting it? Because they are not faithful with money.

Jesus said that. He was ears to hear. Let him hear.

So what am I saying? Always keep money as your servant. You control it. Don't let it control you.

And at the end of your life, as we will all come to the end of our life one day, and all the secrets of men are made manifest one day as it will be manifest at the judgment seat of Christ, it should be manifest in your case. I want it to be manifest in my case. It should be manifest in your case.

Here is a man, here is a woman who spent his life seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness. He was not a full-time worker, but he spent his life seeking to glorify God in his earthly profession. He was upright in his job.

He never cheated anybody. He never told lies to make money. He was upright in his business.

He sought God's kingdom in everything. And God provided all his needs, his physical needs, his health needs, his financial needs, his children's needs, because he honored God. That should be your testimony at the judgment seat of Christ when your entire life is portrayed on a video screen for everybody to see.

Don't you have that longing? It doesn't matter whether you're earning one million dirhams in a year or whether you're earning only a hundred thousand. I don't know what you guys earn here, but wherever it is, it should be that that is not what you live for. You live for the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

And I'll tell you this, my dear brothers and sisters, I say this in love. If you take heed to what I say today and change the direction of your life, determined to make money your servant and not your master

anymore, when you stand before the Lord one day, you will have no regret at all. You look back over your life and you'll have no regret.

That's my calling is that. My calling is to teach people the truth in such a way that when they stand before Jesus Christ one day and their whole life is reviewed on a screen, they can look back at least from a certain point onwards in their life, they have no regret. All of us have failed in different areas up to a certain point, but from that point onwards, maybe from today, may it be said of you at least from today that from this day onwards, you sought God's kingdom first.

There's a lovely verse in Acts of the Apostles chapter 17, verse 30, which should encourage all of you so that no one goes away discouraged. There is no discouraging word in scripture. Discouragement comes from the devil.

I never accept a word of discouragement in my heart. Never means never. In the olden days when I was a young Christian and I did not know what a spirit-filled life was, I did not know what it is to live in the baptism in the Holy Spirit every day.

In those days, I'd be frequently discouraged, but it's gone now. It's gone completely. And I want to tell you, it is not God's will for you to live in discouragement.

Listen to this. Even if you have failed in your past life, let this word be an encouragement for you. In Acts 17, verse 30, God overlooks the times of ignorance in your life.

The time when you were ignorant that your attitude to money determined your attitude to God. Maybe you were ignorant of it until today. Maybe it's only today that you really came to know that you were serving money all these years, even though you claim to be a Christian.

Okay. Thank God you came to know of it today so that at least from today till the time Christ comes, you can start putting God first in your life and not money. I'm not saying you've got to give up your job.

Keep your job. Earn as much as you can by all means, but make sure they are your servants. Make sure it's under your feet.

Make sure your joy is not found in your bank account, but in Jesus Christ. Always, and you've got to fight it because the devil is always trying to take your joy away into something of this earth. I don't want my joy to be even in my health.

I thank God for very good health that God's given me in 78 years of my life. It's not my ability, it's God's goodness, but I don't glory in that. It doesn't make a difference to me whether I'm healthy or sick.

I will still serve God. So don't glory in these things of earth which will all perish. Let your glory be that at least from some point in your life, maybe from today onwards, you began to see God's kingdom first.

In the times of ignorance, isn't it wonderful to hear that right up until today you were ignorant and God says, I will overlook it. I will overlook it. I will not call you to account for it.

You were ignorant. But from today, God is now telling everyone everywhere to repent. To repent means turn around and put God first in your life.

And you know, I told you the church is called the body of Christ and it's not only preachers who are supposed to build the body of Christ. Every person who is born again, who has made Jesus Christ Lord of their life, can do something to build the body of Christ. Maybe you can pray for God's servants regularly.

Maybe you can give a tract to somebody. Maybe you can take a little booklet that hardly costs anything, that's blessed your heart and with a good prayer, give it to some friend of yours and pray that that man will come to salvation. Sure.

I remember hearing a very beautiful interpretation of John 3.16 from one of our village brothers in one of our village churches said this in a testimony and I'll never forget it. I heard it. He was a simple, uneducated brother who couldn't speak a word of English.

He was speaking in Tamil in his testimony and he said in John 3.16, he said, John 3.16 says, God loved the world and gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. And he said, there is a small world of people whom only I know because I've been speaking on that in that conference. I told all the people sitting there, if I can tell you, do you know there are some, there's a small group of people who only you know and nobody else in this congregation knows.

I can say that to every one of you. There are certain people whom only you know and nobody else in this congregation knows. Think about that.

Some people who work in your office perhaps, nobody else here knows them. Some of your relatives, nobody else here knows them. Some of your neighbors, nobody here knows them.

There's a small world of people who only you know and that's true of every one of us. There are certain people only I know, you don't know any of them. So this brother said, there is a small world of people, of a few people, who only I know.

And God so loved that little world of people, he said that he sent me, his son, into their midst so that they might hear the word of truth from me, so that no one, none of them should perish but have eternal life. Have you ever heard that interpretation of John 3 16? What a revelation to a simple illiterate brethren. God hides these things from the clever and the intelligent and he reveals them to faith.

There are amazing things God will reveal to you from his word if you are faithful with money. So let me say to you, there is a small world of people whom only you know and God so loved that world, he sent you, his son, his daughter, into that world so that some of those people may not perish but have eternal life. You don't have to be a preacher, you just got to pray for them.

And maybe on their birthday, give them a little booklet and say, here's a book, bless them. We've got a number of books that we've written, especially for those who have failures in their life or those who have never heard the gospel. It's your business to pray.

Don't just go around distributing facts aimlessly because most of them will be thrown in the trash can. Go with prayer and say, Lord, help me to be a witness in my life. Help me to make use of this one life you've given me.

I've lived for money long enough. Let me now live for God and his kingdom and put your kingdom first and not only your kingdom but your righteousness that in every area of my life I want to be Christ-like. That is God's will that every one of us become more and more like Christ every day till one day we see him face to

face.

So let me come back to what I said in the beginning. There is a need for a new generation of people in our time who will take a stand against all the corruption that's going on today in Christendom in the name of money and fooling people that God is interested in our money. And it's not enough to take a stand against it.

Your life must be a living testimony to the fact that that is a false gospel. The true gospel is Jesus has come to save us from our sins. So let me conclude with that in Matthew chapter 1 and verse 21.

I want to conclude with this verse. The very first promise in the New Testament. As soon as you finish the Old Testament, I told you the Old Testament gospel was plenty of money, plenty of health, plenty of children, plenty of cattle.

Your bonds will overflow. You'll never be in debt. All your earthly enemies will be defeated.

That's an Old Testament gospel. Deuteronomy 28. But that's finished with Malachi.

Now Jesus is calling us to be saved from our sin. He's not calling us to tithe. You know why in the Old Testament they had to pay that tithe? Because the old Israel was a government.

The head of the government was God. And just like in India anyway, you've got to pay income tax to the government. Why does the government of India collect income tax when the lowest level of tax in India is 10%? If you get more than two and a half lakhs, you've got to pay 10% to the government.

Why does the government collect 10%? Because that's the money they use to pay all the government officers in the different offices who are serving the country. That's where the income tax goes to serve, to pay all the government servants in the country and to run the government institutions. In the same way in Israel, which is a government, the Lord told all the Israelites, you must pay your 10% income tax.

That was called a tithe. An income tax, whatever you earned, it was not money those days, it was cattle, it was the grain in your fields, whatever, weigh out 10% and give it to the government servants. In those days the government servants were the Levites, who looked after the government work in the temple.

Israel was a government. So that's income tax. And throughout the Old Testament, they had to pay income tax.

But when you come to the New Testament, God is not the head of the government, he's a father. How many of you have to pay income tax to your father? No father asks for income tax unless he's crazy. Why is it there are so many people, preachers today, saying you must pay your 10%? They are bringing you back to the old covenant.

They are bringing you back to a God who's not a father, but the head of the government. You want God to be the head of your government or you want him to be your father? I'll tell people that God is my father. Why should I pay income tax to my father? You don't have to pay income tax to your father.

I remember somebody told a pastor who asked him to pay the tithe. He said, do you know that in the Old Testament only those who were circumcised had to pay that tithe? I'm not circumcised, sorry. Go and ask all the circumcised people to pay that tithe.

That is the first commandment, be circumcised, then pay your tithe. Why are you only doing the second thing? There's a tremendous amount of deception going on in the world today. Today, God is our father and he only asks for those who will give him anything joyfully.

He doesn't want any income tax because he came here not to collect money. Jesus did not come to collect money. The first promise in the New Testament is he came to save his people from their sins, Matthew 1 verse 21.

Always remember this. The first promise in the New Testament is Jesus came to earth to save his people from their sins. Do you know the difference between being saved and being forgiven? Forgiven is when you do something wrong, you ask for forgiveness, he forgives you.

But you do the same thing again, he forgives you. You do the same thing next week, he forgives you. But what is being saved from it? Saved from it is when he helps you to stop doing that wrong thing.

So when people tell me Jesus is my savior, I said really? Has he saved you from your anger? No. Has he saved you from murmuring at home? No. Has he saved you from lusting with your eyes? No.

What has he done for you? He forgives me. Ah, be honest and call him your forgiver. Don't call him your savior because he saved you from nothing.

Oh he saved me from hell, that's going to be in the future. What has he saved you from now? You see how we are fooling ourselves. It doesn't say in Matthew 1 verse 21 you shall call his name Jesus because he will forgive people their sins, that they'll keep on committing sins and he'll keep on forgiving them.

That is not the gospel. That is a false gospel. Matthew 1 verse 21 says you shall call his name Jesus which means savior because he will save his people from their sin.

The devil has hidden that. He hid it from my eyes for many years. Then I studied the scripture more carefully and I got saved.

He delivered me from sin one by one by one by one. It was like killing the giants in Canaan and occupying their land one by one. Not all in one day.

Little by little as I killed the giants I occupied their land. I want to encourage all of you my brothers and sisters, don't let the devil fool you of your birthright in Christ. To be an overcomer in your life, he wants your home.

Let me tell you this, to be a foretaste of heaven where husband and wife are saved from their sins and they can build a home which is like a foretaste of heaven for their children to grow up. Don't let the devil rob you of that birthright. God bless you all.

Heavenly Father, I believe there are many many many sincere people sitting here this evening whose hearts are open to respond to what they heard and I pray that you will not allow the birds of the air, the demons to come and take away what they heard. Before they go to bed tonight or even when they are lying in their bed tonight, please remind them of what they heard this evening and encourage them for there is no discouragement with you. Encourage them, tell them that you overlook their past.

Now you're calling them to turn to you with their whole hearts and to prove to an unbelieving Christendom that God is still the same today, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Bless every

family here, Lord. Help them to honor you.

I believe many of them are so sincere. Don't let them miss out on your will. Don't let them be cheated by crooked preachers.

Help them to be wise and to honor you. We humbly ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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