



Pastor Gwen's Sermon  
8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
"Money Myths vs. God's Truth"  
Sunday, August 3, 2025

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock, and my redeemer. AMEN

In our Gospel this morning we have two stories about a man in the crowd. In the first one he asks Jesus to help him get his inheritance from his brother. This leads Jesus to the telling of the parable of the Rich Fool. This story has at its core, a warning about all kinds of greed. In fact, all four of our texts this morning go well together in giving us the idea that our wealth is not found on earth, but rather in heaven.

Ecclesiastes starts chapter 2 with the title "The Futility of Self-Indulgence". The word vanity creeps all over those verses. Our Psalm this morning tells us that we should not boast of our abundant riches. And Paul's letter to the Colossians tells us that we need to keep our mind on things from above, not on earthly things. And so, to help us do this, this morning, I would like to talk about money myths and God's truths.

Is money a bad thing? What about wealth? Can we ever have enough of it? And if we do, what do we do with it? Usually, I refrain from talking about money, but this week as I was doing my research and reading, I just felt that money was what I was supposed to talk about. As you are aware, we have started to talk about my retirement here at Christ the Servant. We are preparing our building to entice a new pastor. We are thinking about who we are, who we need to be and who we want to be in our community. The dinners that are being planned and the survey going to be taken all lend themselves to answer these questions. But for me, one big question is what retirement will look like. Will I have enough money to keep the household running when paychecks stop coming in? Some of you might remember those days prior to your retirement. Questions, questions, questions about all those earthly things we find ourselves humanly worrying about.

So here are some of the myths of money we should try to find clarity with from our parable of the Rich Fool. Most of which desperately need to be debunked.

Myth one: Money is the root of all evil. How many times have we heard that one? The Bible does not say that. What it says, in 1 Timothy 6:10 is "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." It is the love of having wealth that is evil in the sight of God. It is no sin to be rich or well off. It is the greed that is our downfall. We see this attitude in the rich fool as he is very wealthy and has no more room to put his bumper crop in his barns. He thinks to pull down those barns and build bigger ones. He plans to keep all his riches for himself. And we all know that God asks us to love our neighbor as ourselves. So wouldn't it be appropriate to help our less well-off neighbors instead of greedily saving it all for ourselves.

Now I do understand that wealth is relative. What I mean by that is that there are people who have less than we do and there will always be people who have more. It depends on our comparing our wealth with others. But how much can a person use before their life on earth runs out. Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Elon Musk, now they are some of the richest men in the world. I doubt they will ever run out of money, but that does not make them bad people. It is only what they do with their wealth and how they live their lives that is important.

Next myth is that money is the secret to happiness. I know some pretty monetarily wealthy people who are very unhappy. And I also think that you might agree that you know some rather poor, less than what you would say are rich people, that are very happy. I hear that if you just go to visit a Lutheran church in Africa, you will find many people with few possessions that worship God for hours on a Sunday morning for the wonderful life that He has given them.

Another myth about money is that money is related to intelligence. WRONG! There are many circumstances in this world today that allow people to have a decline in their wealth due to nothing they have done. The young person that inherits millions or the new athlete that can barely get out of college gets a huge new salary from the Green Bay Packers, the Milwaukee Bucks, or the Milwaukee Brewers. And no matter how smart I am, I cannot control the price of gas, nor can I make it rain on my garden. The Rich Fool's bumper crop was not due to his superior farming or mental skills, but most likely with a bit of dumb luck and rain.

Along with that myth is one that closely ties in. It is that the amount of money you have is directly related to how hard you work. Hard work is a good thing and I sure wish we had a little more of that European work ethic that is missing in America today. But working hard does not give us great wealth, at least most of the time.

Another myth is that money is directly related to honesty. Do you think it true that if you have a lot of money, you must be doing something dishonest or illegal? How many times do we think that of someone that is on the news displaying great wealth. And I know many, many people that are as honest as the day is long that are well off. No direct connection or correlation there.

A sad myth is that someday you will have all you need. Well, unless you win the Powerball lottery, I doubt that will be the case. I know when our ship came it, it was more like a little rowboat! We always seem to need, want, or use more, more, more. Underlying this myth is the element of greed. The more you have the more you need or the more you think you need. I remember getting our first TV set when I was young. Black and white, daddy put it in the basement as there was no use for such a thing in the living room, where people visited. And today we are watching movies on our laptops, our iPads and iPhone 16's with AI. And do we really need these things or just want them? Yesterday's wants are today's needs. True? And our rich fool wants to build bigger barns for his abundant crop so he can take it easy, relax, eat, drink and be merry.

And folks all of these myths are no longer in the picture when it is your turn to go to your final judgement. Our rich man dies and then who will get his stuff, his wealth. He was too worried about building new barns to be able to live life fully and joyfully, that he did not do that. He was summoned by God before he used his time to live life fully. He was selfish. He was greedy. He was cut off from God.

And so, what do we do to make sure that this does not happen to us? That we don't fall into believing those money myths I just spoke about. What do we do so that we don't fall into the greed trap our society so readily encourages us too! Jesus gives us the answer when he concludes the Rich Fool parable. The fool's life is taken from him, and Jesus warns, "So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God."

For a minute let's look at what it means to be "rich toward God". The answer is that we need to get our priorities in order. We need to put God first. I love what Matthew reminds us about the Shema, about following the great commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind". Also, it is as simple as this, Matthews says, "But strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things will be given to you as well."

To be rich toward God to me means that we should always be thankful for all the blessings God gives us each and every day. If we have successful careers, a barn full of crops, an awesome family, good friends, or a huge portfolio of wealth, we should first give thanks to God for allowing us these gifts. All blessings come from the one who gave his life for ours on the cross, who died a horrible death, was buried, and then rose again to give us life abundant here on earth, forgiveness of our sins and the promise of life in heaven someday with our God. Everything on earth and in heaven belongs to God. We are just passing through and get to use His riches during our short stint on earth. God's creation is amazing.

Secondly, we should return a portion of what He lets us use in response to his sincere and undeserved love and grace. The Bible might suggest 10% or a tithe.

Lastly, we should help our neighbors generously. Not only are we asked to love our neighbors as ourselves, but we are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit those in prison. And a note here in Chapter 6 verse 27, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." Our generosity should be extended to those people as well. God owns the world, and we are his servants and therefore are to live sensitively, caringly, and generously with others.

Our lives are not about piling up possessions, but rather having a relationship with the only one who can give us abundant life. Life is about building up the Kingdom of God so that all can experience His mercy and glory. It is a vice to think that we can possess something for the sake of possessing it, storing it in bigger barns or in houses so large they dwarf those of us living there. We should be recognizing God's generosity toward us. This is God's truth.

So, it is good to be a money myth buster. Money is the root of all evil. Wrong! Money is the secret to happiness. Wrong! Money is related to intelligence. Wrong! The amount of money you have is related to how hard you work. Wrong! Money is directly related to honesty. Wrong! And we could name so many more myths about wealth. All of them are not healthy ideals. They do not lend themselves to the behavior that God is asking us to have or display. We cannot allow these myths and how we handle whatever wealth God has given us to place greed or vanity or avarice in our paths.

What can divert us from this trap is that we center on Godly things. Prayer and worship, Scripture reading and partaking in the Sacrament, serving others, and encouraging others in their faith. This is what will keep us out of the hands of the evils of greed and keep us in line with what God is calling us to do with our lives. We need to hear repeatedly that there is a purpose for us here on earth in God's Kingdom. And God will supply our every need. God will fulfill the desires of our hearts as well. We must however keep our priorities straight. God has given us so much. Use what you have to glorify God and serve your neighbor. Your money, your time and your talents are gifts of God's love. They are the true sign of how God has made us rich. AMEN