

Jesus is better than money

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Preacher: Devin Toh

- [0 : 0 0] Keep your Bibles open, and we'll be taking a closer look at that passage, Luke 12, a little later on. But I want to take you back to my childhood.
- I was six years old, walking down the local shops, holding my grandfather's hand. But that day, we would be going somewhere I had never been before.
- In we walked to the local TAB, to the TAB. This is a place where you can place a bed on the horses. And from the moment I stepped into the TAB, I loved it.
- It was a dreamland. I would study the form guide. I would study the jockeys. I would study the horses based on different types of grounds. I would study the history of all these horses, the jockeys, everything.
- And as my horse was strolling to a comfortable victory, I thought to myself, I could do this for the rest of my life. This is the only thing I want to be doing.
- [1 : 0 5] I had previously wanted to be a train driver. Now, I just want to be a professional gambler. I want to be in horses for the rest of my life. And the reason I knew that I loved money at that stage is because I don't even like horses.
- I'm just not interested in horses at all. I've been to Flemington about three or four times to watch the Oaks and stuff. I've never seen a single horse. Only interested in the gambling.
- I wonder what role money has played in your life because it's certainly drawn me in. So this is what I want you guys to do. I want you to get out your wallets.
- Can you get out your wallets now? I want everyone to get out their wallets, hold it in front of them. All right, you got your wallets? All right, this is what I want you to do with your wallets.
- I want you to give your wallet to the person sitting next to you. I want you to swap your wallet. How does that make you feel?
- [2 : 0 6] All right. Now, what I want you to do with your wallets is I want you to look in... No, no, no, don't look inside the wallets. Don't look inside the wallets. Give the wallets back.
- Give the wallets back. Who felt just a little bit nervous? Man, I don't want anyone to see inside my wallet.
- You know why we feel nervous? It's because for us money must be kept in the private sphere.
- We don't like to talk about how much money we have. We don't like to talk about bank balances. We don't like to talk about how much our house costs. We don't talk about how much money we earn. We don't talk about how much we spend our money.
- Why? It's because we all recognize the power money has over us. And therefore, we don't want anyone to know.
- [3 : 0 5] Money is a divisive topic. Over history, it's polarized societies. It's polarized families. For many of us, it's an awesome thing. My love for food and coffee just cannot be sustained without money.

I went on a trip to Europe a few months ago. That could not have happened without some money. It also helps alleviate poverty, feeds families.

It pays for expensive medication that some of us desperately need. William Wilberforce, the great British politician, was only able to abolish the slave trade with some incredible financial backing.

That's the truth. On the other hand, some see money as an evil thing, as a bad thing. And we see the terrible effects of money on our society, how money can grip, how money can consume someone.

We see profit-hungry corporations exploiting workers, paying them a pittance. It's an absolute joke. While their prices of their clothing skyrockets.

[4 : 14] That's the effect of money. So for some of us, the solution has been to get rid of it. To give it all away. To live a completely minimalist and destitute lifestyle.

That's admirable. It's very admirable. But for most of us, we admire those type of people at a distance. We don't want that for ourselves deep down. We don't want that kind of a ghetto life, do we?

And the Bible acknowledges this tension too. The Bible speaks of money as both a blessing and a danger. So the Bible talks of the goodness of money.

Proverbs 10, The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor. On the other hand, the Bible warns of the dangers of money.

1 Timothy 6, For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. But regardless of what you think about money, it is clear that money makes the world go round.

[5 : 16] The person that lives a destitute lifestyle alienates himself from society. They cannot participate in society. So what we do then is we spend the rest of our lives working.

And we do it primarily for money. I know some of us have other reasons for working. You know, I like to help people. I like to do this. I like to do that. But I'm not doing law.

I'm not studying. I didn't study five years. I didn't work in tax law for the joy of justice. I did it for money. I did it because it pays the bills. But some of us, we take this even further.

And when I look at society, I see a society now that has become so consumed by money. Money is now the primary consideration for how we make all our decisions in life.

What will earn me the most money? Or for us Asians, what will save me the most money? I love Oz bargain. So what we do is we pick the job that pays the most.

[6 : 23] We pick the job that gives us the easiest path to progression, to promotion, even if it costs us our lives, even if I have to work 24 hours in the day just to get it.

Some of us feel so trapped in our jobs because how they structure the bonus payments keeps me just wanting to come back just an extra year. Some of us get so consumed by our investments that our eyes are always fixed on the stock market.

Our eyes are fixed on interest rates, on housing prices, which is very ironic because I thought the purpose of money was to give you time rather than to rob you of it.

Money completely controls our culture now and it is madness. But you know what's worse? We are helpless to do anything about it.

The global financial crisis. The GFC in 2007 was the worst financial crisis since the 30s. This happened 10 years ago. In seeking to realise this American dream, people took out risky homelands, high interest rates, even if they didn't have the means of repaying them.

[7 : 40] So you know what happened? Banks, of course, took advantage of this. They offered the homelands. But you know the rest is history. Individuals could not afford to repay these mortgages.

Housing prices plummeted. So banks lost all their value. Governments struggled to bail these banks out. And world economies were in tatters.

This was 10 years ago. It's not that long ago. And yet, analysts state that 52,000 Australian households every year are in risk of default on their mortgage.

We know the history 10 years ago. But we keep doing the same things. Kate, a woman, a 37-year-old woman of six, considered driving her car into a tree because she lost over half a million dollars in gambling.

It's estimated that 400 Australians per year commit suicide due to gambling-related issues. We know the problems.

[8 : 51] We know the stats. And yet, Australia spends \$23 billion a year on gambling alone. Up 7% from the previous year.

Up. We know the stats. But we keep doing it. We keep doing it. Jesus, too, recognizes that there is a problem.

But before he gives us his solution, he must first diagnose the real issue. So Jesus then talks about money more than he talks about hell.

Jesus talks about money more than he talks about heaven. About a quarter of Jesus' parables devoted to money. Why does he speak so much about money?

It's not because he needs your money. He doesn't need it. It's because Jesus knows that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[9 : 51] That's why he cares. Money has become our treasure. So when Jesus talks about treasure in this passage from Luke, what does he mean?

How do I tell what my real treasure is? Well, I want you to complete this sentence, which is also on the slide. What, if I could only have this, would it all be worth it?

Really similar to Harry's question before. What would you pay any price to obtain? What do you consider most valuable in the world that you would give your time, your thoughts, your energy, all to this thing?

Because if you think about it, money is actually quite a simple value proposition. Take this \$100 note that Hannah generously gave me before. I was considering burning it and seeing how you guys reacted, but because it's Hannah's money, I'll give this \$100 back.

But you see, there's nothing valuable, there's nothing actually impressive or super valuable about this thing. It's a piece of plastic, right? The only thing that makes this valuable is about what this represents, that I can purchase things of a certain value with this piece of plastic.

[11 : 02] So what that means is that money was actually never meant to be an end in of itself. But what it does is it allows me to purchase what I really want, what I really treasure.

It's not an end in itself. So money then is simply a front, isn't it? It's something that reveals some deeper treasure beyond money. It reveals something. So give me your credit card statement, give me your bank statement, and we'll be able to tell what our real treasure is.

But for most of our society, it's revealing that money actually exposes two big treasures in our lives. Significance and security.

Firstly, significance. We are so controlled by our money because many of us, more than anything in this world, deep down, we just want to matter. We want to mean something.

It's the reason we spend so much money trying to impress other people. It's the reason why super high-end fashion exists. It's the reason why we Instagram these expensive lifestyles, because deep down, we want to matter.

[12 : 10] Money is a means of getting our significance. It's the whole idea behind a midlife crisis. Does my life mean anything? Well, I better start spending then.

It's madness, isn't it, when you think about it? That's what we do. We fill our lives with materialism, trying to make our life mean something. And the Bible is brutally honest in this regard.

The human need for significance, importance can never be satisfied by wealth. I want to introduce you to a guy called King Solomon. King Solomon's a king in the Old Testament, and he's that annoying guy that always wants to one-up you.

Oh, Solomon, I bought a new house. I got five in Turak. Solomon, bought a new car the other day.

It's really nice. Check it out. New car. I got chariots. Solomon, I got chariots, bro. I don't need a car. Oh, Solomon, I just, I got married the other day.

[13 : 18] I got a wife. Bro. Bro. I got a harem. Have you ever heard of a harem before? If you haven't, that's because you're not Solomon. Yet you see, for all Solomon's wealth, for all his accomplishments, what does it do for him?

Listen to what he says. Solomon's wealth. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done, what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless.

A chasing after the wind. Nothing was gained under the sun. Solomon realizes his inability for wealth and materialism to satisfy his soul.

I'm sure you've experienced this. New things last, they have that great effect on us for about two weeks. This Samsung Galaxy S8, the iPhone X, will only amaze you for a few weeks.

You know, at the start, I don't want to get fingerprints on the screen. I won't let anyone else touch it. Next minute, I'm on the toilet with my phone, searching for a new one. Sometimes we, you know, we buy a new pair of shoes, and they're white, and they're beautiful.

[14 : 31] No one's going to step on them. I'm not going to step outside of the house. These shoes are so white, so beautiful. Next minute, they're brown. They're outside of the house.

I don't even do the shoelaces up anymore. I just kind of step into them. It doesn't last. Another reason, another place we put our money, is insecurity.

So for many of us, we're not spending our money, we're saving it. And don't be fooled. Just because you're not spending your money on toys or on stuff, doesn't mean you're not using money for another purpose.

So even if you're putting all of your money into a bank account, into a term deposit, you're actually spending. You're spending on your security. It's the reason we put all our money into mortgages.

It's the reason we struggle to repay these, because we're spending so much on our security, and it's not working. That's what Jesus wants to show us in Luke 12 today.

[15 : 34] I wonder if you can relate to this man in the parable. So follow along with me at verse 16. And he told them this parable.

He thought to himself, what shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.

Then he said, this is what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns, build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.

And I'll say to myself, you have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy. Eat, drink, and be merry. It's exactly what the rich man wanted.

He wanted security. He was already rich. He just had another killer year in the fields, but instead of thinking about anyone but himself, he makes it his life endeavor to build, to smash down his old barns, build bigger ones.

- [16 : 37] Then he can enjoy life. He can eat, drink, and be merry. According to a recent British study, money is the greatest cause for anxiety in people's lives.
- It causes us the most anxiety. Why? Because we're relying on money as our true form of security, and it's not working.
- It's doing a terrible, terrible job. The reason money doesn't give us this security we want so bad is because money was never designed to take that purpose.
- Jesus says in verse 25, but God said to him, you fool. This very night, your life will be demanded from you.
- Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? What good is money? What good is investments when you cannot take it with you when you die? All the cash, all the mortgages, ultimately serve a very short-term purpose, don't they?
- [17 : 44] Cannot carry it with you beyond this life. And the GFC showed the world that really can't do much for you now sometimes. That's why this rich man is called a fool.
- He had only planned for this life. He knew nothing about planning beyond this life. Maybe for the next 20, 25 years, yes, but no more than that. It's the problem with using money as a means to obtain security and significance in our lives.
- Money was never meant to be the answer to those questions, was it? See, money, instead of giving you what you want so bad, giving you these two things you want, it enslaves you.
- Anxiety, worries, addiction. That's why the Bible warns so explicitly against the love of money.
- When money is used to satisfy these ultimate desires, they enslave us, because that is what a treasure does. And the problem with money is that it is a terrible master. It will disappoint you, and it will take your life.
- [18 : 56] So what's God's solution? Does he even have a solution? Well, I'm glad you asked. See, all religions are trying to deal with this problem, aren't they?
- Most religions acknowledge that there's a problem, that we are enslaved to money, but they offer very different solutions. So for the Buddhists, the way of overcoming this enslavement is to stop treasuring anything at all.
- So the goal is that as I'm freed from all desire, as my attachment to affections towards things decreases, then I'm truly free. Because to be free of desires is to be free of enslavement.
- That's why you see monks who give everything away. They don't own anything. It's their desire to be free from material attachment. And for them, when they're finally free from everything, that place is called nirvana.
- But the problem with this thinking is that it just doesn't feel or doesn't, it's not true of our human experience.
- [19 : 58] It doesn't make sense of our reality. Because we know deep down that we are creatures who are hardwired for affections, who are hardwired for desires and passions.
- And these are good things. The Bible affirms desires and embraces them. Listen to how David expresses his desires towards God. My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord.
- My heart and my flesh cry out to the living God. So Jesus says, the answer is not to deny our affections and to not treasure anything.
- But instead, his solution is that we obtain a greater treasure. We find a deeper treasure.

We read this in our passage at verse 33. Sell your possessions, give to the poor, says Jesus. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out a treasure in heaven that will never fail.

[21 : 02] Where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. See, for Jesus, the solution is not the denial of treasure, but the need for a lasting treasure.

A treasure in heaven. Jesus' solution now is that he must become your ultimate treasure, your greatest affections over anything else in this world.

And at this point, it just seems a bit counterintuitive. Because if Jesus asks us to redirect our treasure towards him, doesn't that just mean we're enslaved to something else?

Switch treasures, it doesn't really matter. It's a great question. And you're absolutely right. Redirecting our treasure absolutely does mean that you will be enslaved to Christ and Christ will become your master.

But there's a huge difference. Jesus is different to every other treasure in this world.

[22 : 01] See, every other treasure in this world demands that you die for it. Money demands that I give my life up for it to take hold of it. But Jesus is the only person in this world who says, I have already died for you.

He's the only treasure that dying to him gives life rather than takes life. Every other treasure in this world says, die for me. Only Jesus can say, I have died for you.

And as Jesus stretches out his hands on the cross, and as he dies for you, he defeats sin, he frees us from death so that we would truly live and that we would truly be free.

And through his death, we get this treasure in heaven, eternal life. I was at a conference last week and it was just, it was a conference with some amazing Christians in business who were doing some really cool things for God with their businesses and with their jobs.

And it was quite encouraging, but there was this one guy who encouraged me the most. This one guy was a founder of his own company and they've started to get into virtual reality and it's doing some incredible things.

[23 : 21] The business is starting to make some incredible coin. It's doing so well. And at that moment, I thought, mate, this guy can pay for my drinks. I'm not spending anything up here.

He's a baller. He can pay for my drinks. He can pay for my meal. Until I realized that actually all of his money goes into a trust. It doesn't go to him.

This trust is to be used for purposes to serve God and his ministry. It doesn't go to him. The trust he cannot touch for his own purposes.

Why would anyone do that? Why would you? I couldn't do that. Why would he do that? It's because he has a treasure in heaven and he wants to share that treasure with the world.

That's freedom. All other religions say that, or well, some of the other religions say the absence of desire is freedom. Only Christianity can say that true freedom is finding complete satisfaction in your highest treasure.

[24 : 23] Because if Christ is my treasure, I don't need to buy stuff to make myself feel important. Consider the ravens, Jesus says in 24. Not a nice bird.

Not a great bird. Look at this bird. They're useless. They don't sow. They don't reap. Yet God feeds them. And yet, how much more valuable are you than these stupid birds?

This much more. That Jesus wouldn't just feed you. He would give his life for you. He would die for you. He wouldn't just give you food. He gives you himself.

That's value, guys. That's not toys. That's not stuff. That's not perception. That is a definitive and an unchanging act of the love of God.

God loves you. And if Christ is my treasure, I don't need to find security in the number of zeros in my bank account. Verse 27.

[25 : 29] Consider the flowers. They don't do anything. They don't labor. They just stand there. They just stand there. And yet, God clothes them.

And not just in a functional way. He makes these flowers beautiful. So beautiful that a girl might even like you if you would give a flower to her.

That's how beautiful a flower is. How much more will he clothe you, God's child? A child that stands to inherit the world, inherit the kingdom.

That's freedom, guys. It's freedom from worry. It's freedom from money. And knowing that I already have complete significance, complete security in God frees me to lose my money, frees me to lose my life.

That's why Jesus' solution in Luke 12 is to sell all your possessions, give to the poor, so you will have treasure in heaven. It's because holding so loosely to your money, not having such a deep attachment to things demonstrates that you truly have a heavenly treasure.

[26 : 40] I'll happily give my money away because I know I'm already blessed with the greatest treasure one could possess. It's what the gospel does. It changes everything.

And it leads to radical generosity. Sometimes we Christians, we don't even get it, you know. Instead of real generosity, we look for the minimum possible to give.

10%? Do we need to give 10%? I'm just curious. Is it 10%? Is it pre-tax? Is it post-tax? Maybe I'll need to kind of do the sums, get some Excel spreadsheets to work out how to minimize my giving.

Tax loopholes, accounting loopholes. But you see, when we really, truly get the gospel, our standard of giving, our standard of generosity is not 10%. Our standard of generosity is the cross.

That's our standard of generosity. It's our standard of giving. Where Christ gave everything for us so that we could have treasure in heaven. And when Christ becomes my treasure, it leads truly to contentment.

[27 : 51] A couple of years ago, I got this really good prayer rise from work. And I was so happy as I heard about it from my boss. I was smiling. I was happy. I was like, yes. I came out, I was like, yes.

Until I realized what everyone else got. They got more than me. They got more than me. me. Mr.

Hot. My delight turned to anger. The first thing I started, I started looking for new jobs on seek.com. It's the first thing I did.

I was so angry. And from that, at that very moment, I knew I wasn't free. I wasn't free. I was enslaved. I was enslaved to money.

Money had become my measuring stick. Money became the way I measured my self-worth. It became the way I measured the worth of other people. But when Christ is your treasure, it frees me, doesn't it, from these points of comparison.

[28 : 55] It means I don't envy people who are richer than me. It means I don't look down on people who are poorer because my identity is in Christ, not my money. It's the freedom now to share and be generous with those who have less.

It's the freedom to celebrate with those who have more because I have a treasure in heaven that cannot perish and cannot fade. Money doesn't control my view of myself.

Money doesn't control the view I have of others. It's what I want for you guys, freedom. Jesus doesn't promise you a big bank balance.

He doesn't promise you a nice job. He doesn't promise that you'll own your own home. He promises you something so much better than that.

He promises you freedom. Freedom from the burden of anxiety and from guilt. Freedom from materialism. Freedom from emptiness. But there's only one solution.

[29 : 56] Christ must become your treasure. And it requires a change in your life. It requires you to understand that your treasure has been misplaced.

and it requires you to redirect your treasure to Jesus. The Bible has a word for that. It's called repentance. Turning away from your identity sought in other things, placing your identity in Christ.

Remember, don't forget that Jesus counted you so valuable. So valuable that he died. Yes, displaying his glory and yes, counting you infinitely valuable.

So won't you join me? Won't you join me in turning away from your money as a solution and come and experience true freedom from the one who gave his life for you so that you could truly live.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you first for your generosity in sending your son who is most precious to you so that we would live and we would be reconciled to you.

[31 : 06] Help us to consider the pull money has on our lives and help us to find that you alone must be our treasure. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.