

THE DANGER OF WEALTH

Mark 10:23-31

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the 1980s one of the most popular movies was called “Wall Street.” It was about a legendary Wall Street businessman named Gordon Gekko. The most memorable part of the movie was a speech he gave. “The point is, ladies and gentlemen, that greed – for lack of a better word – is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the very essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms – greed for life, for money, for love, for knowledge – has marked the upward surge of mankind.”
2. Greed is good? Is that true?
 - i. Greed certainly made Gordon Gekko a lot of money, but it also landed him in prison for corruption.
 - ii. What is greed?
 1. Greed is the love of money. Money is not evil. Being rich is not a sin. But loving money is a sin.
 2. To put it in more spiritual terms, greed is putting money before God. It is worshiping your money. It is making your money your god.
 3. To put it another way, greed is relying upon money for happiness and security. They don’t seek God, because money is all they want. And they don’t need God, because money is all they need.
 - iii. So, according to the Bible, Greed is not good.
 1. Psalm 10:3 “... the one who is greedy curses and despises the Lord.”
 2. Lk 12:15 “Watch out and be on guard against all greed...”
 3. 1 Timothy 6:10 says greed (the love of money) is the root of all kinds of evil.
3. Why is greed is dangerous?
 - i. Greed can ruin your character. It can cause you to do sinful things, selfish things, hurtful things, for more money. Why did Judas betray Jesus? For thirty pieces of silver.
 - ii. Greed can ruin your marriage. The number one cause of divorce in America is fights about money.
 - iii. Greed can ruin your relationship with your children. Not many parents would but a lot of parents don’t spend enough time at home because they are chasing money.
 - iv. Greed can also ruin a church.
4. God has a plan for Church Acadiana.
 - i. He wants us to reach the lost and make disciples.
 - ii. He wants us to make it hard for people in Acadiana to go to hell.

- iii. Down the road I hope to see hundreds of families gathering each Sunday to worship and study God's word together.
 - iv. I hope to see hundreds of men gathering monthly for Men's Bible study, learning how to be spiritual leaders in their homes.
 - v. I hope to see hundreds of kids memorizing scripture and learning to navigate their bibles with confidence.
 - vi. I hope to see dozens of Home Groups scattered all throughout the community where people are experiencing Biblical fellowship.
 - vii. And the next phase in God's plan for our church is the construction of our first building. We have five acres in the middle of Youngsville, the fastest growing city in the state, where hundreds of homes are being built as we speak. And we are raising money to put a Christ-centered, gospel-preaching church right in the center of it.
5. How does God plan to accomplish this work? Through us.
 6. But if greed gets ahold of your heart, of my heart, of our church, God's plan for Church Acadiana will never be realized.
 7. How can greed ruin a church?
 - i. In a greedy church, the pastor doesn't preach the whole truth for fear of losing tithers.
 - ii. In a greedy church, the pastor doesn't confront church members who are living in sin for fear of losing their tithe.
 - iii. In a greedy church, people don't tithe.
 - iv. In a greedy church, people don't give sacrificially.
 - v. In a greedy church, people don't give of their time and energy and talents to serve.
 - vi. In a greedy church, the people aren't willing to spend a lot of money on evangelism, on advertising, on ministry, and on missions.
 - vii. In a greedy church, the people spend a lot of time fighting about money.
 - viii. In a greedy church, rich people are given preferential treatment, and poor people are ignored or rejected.
 - ix. Greed can ruin a church.
 8. My purpose this morning is not to rebuke you. You're not a greedy church. Actually, as we come to the halfway point in our, we are ahead of schedule.
 9. But I hope you know that we have an enemy. He hates what is happening in our church. He will do everything he can to prevent us from moving forward. And one of his primary strategies to hurt a church is with the sin of greed.
 10. Because God can't use a greedy church. He can't work through a stingy church. He can't bless a tight-fisted church.
 11. So this morning I want to equip you for battle. I want to give you the weapons and armor and the battle skills to defeat the enemy.

II. TEXT: Mark 10:23-31

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 The disciples were astonished at his words. Again Jesus said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

26 They were even more astonished, saying to one another, "Then who can be saved?"

27 Looking at them, Jesus said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God, because all things are possible with God."

28 Peter began to tell him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."

29 "Truly I tell you," Jesus said, "there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel,

30 who will not receive a hundred times more, now at this time—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and eternal life in the age to come. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

III. TWO INSIGHTS ABOUT WEALTH

1. The problem of wealth.

- i. **Mark 10:23** Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"
- ii. What is Jesus saying? Wealth is a big danger to your relationship with God. The richer you are, the harder it is to live for God.
- iii. This applies to both Christians and non-Christians. Wealth can prevent non-Christians from turning to Christ, and it can prevent Christians from living for Christ.
- iv. Notice Jesus didn't say "greed" is a danger; He said "wealth." Simply being wealthy, or rich, is a big danger to your relationship with God.
- v. Let's look more closely at three terms in this verse: Circle "hard," "wealth," and "kingdom of God."
 1. "Kingdom of God"
 - a. = eternal life; heaven. It is very hard for those who have wealth to go to heaven. But this also applies to Christians. It is very hard for wealthy Christians to live according to kingdom to principles (to live for God).
 2. "Wealth"
 - a. It is very hard for those who have wealth to go to heaven. It is very hard for those who have wealth to live for God. Later in the passage Jesus uses the term "rich."
 - b. Who are the wealthy? What does it mean to be rich?
 - c. This passage immediately follows after Jesus' encounter with a young man who refused to give up his money to follow Christ, because "he had many possessions" (10:22). In this context, wealth simply means having many possessions.

- d. If that's the case, that describes everyone in this room, and most people in America.
- e. According to World Vision, extreme poverty means living on about \$2 a day. Over 700,000 million people in the world live in extreme poverty. What about us? The average American lives on \$164 a day (sunmark.org; wolrdvision.org). Most Americans are rich.
- f. A lot of us are wealthy, but we don't feel like it. Two reasons:
 - i. We spend more than we make. If you spend more than you make, you will feel poor, no matter how much money you make. But your problem is not income, but outflow.
 - ii. We compare ourselves to people who make more money than us. Just because you don't have as much money as your neighbor doesn't mean you aren't wealthy. The owner of Stuller Settings doesn't have as much money as Elon Musk, but he's still rich.
- g. In one sense, being rich simply means having more than you need. Poverty is not having what you need. Most of us not only have what we need, but more. That means you're rich. Maybe not as much as the next person, but you're reach.
- h. Here are a few statements to help you determine if you are rich. HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE RICH:
 - i. Rich people throw away the food in the refrigerator to make room for more food.
 - ii. Rich people have a house, and then a house for their cars (garage).
 - iii. Rich people have a special room in their house just for their clothes (closet).
 - iv. Rich people look at their closet full of clothes and say, "I don't' have anything to wear."
 - v. Rich people go shopping and spend money simply for entertainment.
 - vi. Rich people have so much stuff that they rent extra spaces to store it all. I have a friend who rents 9 storage units because he has so much stuff.
- i. Most of us are wealthy, which means Jesus would say about us, "It is going to be very hard for us to go to heaven; or to have a healthy spiritual life."

3. "Hard"

- a. Why is it hard for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God, or to live for God?
- b. Because wealthy people are tempted by greed. They are tempted to worship money; to love money; to put money before God. Poor people aren't tempted to worship money because they don't have any; but wealthy people are.
- c. And you cannot become a Christian unless you forsake all other gods. You cannot live for God unless you put God first. You can't live for God unless you make Jesus boss and surrender control of everything in your life to Him.
- d. Notice that Jesus didn't say, "It is very hard for alcoholics to go to heaven; or drug addicts; or adulterers; or homosexuals; or transgenders; or murderers." He said it is very hard for the wealthy to go to heaven, because money is the hardest thing to surrender to God.
- e. If tithing is a big deal, if giving to Build to Equip is a big deal, if it is very hard for you, don't think you're weird. That's normal. Money is the hardest thing to give to God.
- vi. What is the danger of money? Money is a big danger to your relationship with God, because wealthy people are highly susceptible to greed.
- vii. That means all of us are facing a big challenge. Because we are so wealthy, it is going to be hard for us to live for God. Spiritually speaking, the odds are stacked against us.
- viii. So what's the solution?

2. The solution to wealth.

- i. **Mark 10:24-25** 24 The disciples were astonished at his words. Again Jesus said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."
- ii. How hard is it for a rich person to be saved, or to live for God? It is easier for a camel to through the eye of a needle. Do you know what a camel is? A camel is a huge animal, about 10 feet long, 6 fee tall at shoulder height, and about 1,000 pounds. Do you know what the eye of a needle is? A needle is used for sewing and making things like clothes. The eye is a tiny hole at the top of the needle where you put the thread. Jesus said it is harder for a rich person to go to heaven than it is to put a camel through the eye of a needle.
- iii. This was illustrated in the story right before this text. A rich young man asked Jesus what he needed to do to go to heaven. Jesus said, "Sell all your possessions and give them to the poor." The young man rejected Jesus and walked away. He would rather loose his soul, than loose his money. He

would rather go to hell than go broke. He would rather have Ben Franklin than Jesus Christ.

- iv. That story illustrates the power of greed. Money is so dangerous, so strong, that it can keep you from heaven. And if it can keep unbelievers from heaven, it can certainly keep believers from living for God and experiencing God's best. It can certainly keep our church from following God's will and doing what God wants us to do.
- v. You might say, "Pastor Andy, I don't struggle with greed?"
- vi. SIGNS YOU STRUGGLE WITH GREED
 - 1. You get upset or uncomfortable when the sermon is about money.
 - 2. You refuse to tithe.
 - 3. You advertise your generosity.
 - 4. You often fight with your spouse about money.
 - 5. You often sacrifice your character for money: You often lie, cheat, steal, or do sinful things to make money.
 - 6. You sacrifice your relationships for money: You work so much that you don't have enough time for your marriage, your children, or church.
 - 7. You often worry about money.
 - 8. You often use credit to buy things you don't need.
- vii. Is there is a solution to the problem of wealth? Is there a way for a rich person to guard against greed?
- viii. **Mark 10:26-27** 26 They were even more astonished, saying to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27 Looking at them, Jesus said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God, because all things are possible with God."
- ix. All things are possible with God. With God's help, a rich person can be on fire for Jesus.
- x. What is the solution to wealth? Depend on God. We need to desperately depend on God. We can't do it on our own.
- xi. How to Depend on God to Overcome Greed: 5 things.
 - 1. Give it to God.
 - a. Make a commitment to give God total control over your finances.
 - 2. Obey God.
 - a. Obey God's commands about money.
 - b. Let me give you two:
 - i. Stop ill-gotten gain: Stop making money in a sinful way – lying, cheating, stealing, breaking the law, prostitution, selling drugs, making and selling pornography, etc.

- ii. Start tithing: God has commanded every Christian to give the first ten percent of your income to the local church.
- 3. Pray to God.
 - a. Ask the Lord for help. “Father, I can’t handle the temptations of wealth and greed on my own. Please help me. Help me to be fully devoted to you in spite of my affluence.”
- 4. Focus on God.
 - a. What really matters in life? Eternity matters, not today. Character, not comfort. Pleasing God, not impressing people. Integrity, not image. Serving, not being served. Imitating Jesus, not celebrities. Jesus matters. Church matters. Evangelism matters. Marriage matters. Family matters.
 - b. But all day long the devil is trying to get you to believe that the most important thing in life is money and possessions. The Myth of More. If you have more, you’ll be happy. If you buy this or that, you’ll be happy.
 - c. And we are surrounded on all sides by people who have been deceived by the devil.
 - d. How can we avoid the current of culture?
 - e. Stay focused on God so that He can remind us of what really matters.
 - f. Do whatever you have to do to stay focused on God all day long. Read your Bible daily, or several times a day. Go to church on Sunday. Go to Home Group. Listen to worship music. Listen to sermons. Read Christian books.
 - g. To overcome to the sin of greed, you have to stay focused on God to be constantly reminded of what really matters.
- 5. Trust in God.
 - a. Trust that God will provide for your needs if you give him control, no matter how sacrificially you give to God.
 - b. Trust that living for God is more rewarding than living for money.
 - c. Look at the rest of this passage again.
 - d. **Mark 10:29-30** 29 “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said, “there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundred times more, now at this time—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and eternal life in the age to come.”

- e. Jesus promises that whatever you give to Him, or give up for Him, will be returned to you 100 times. That's a 1,000 percent increase.
- f. And this is not merely a promise of heavenly rewards. Yes, when you turn from the god of money and accept Christ as your Lord and Savior, you do get eternal life, the richest blessing of all. But notice the words "now at this time." Christ promises to pay you back 100 times in this life for anything you give to Him, or give up for Him.
- g. Some theologians believe that what Jesus meant here is that Christ will pay you back with the blessings of a church family, in which you will find many new brothers, sisters, parents, and shared material possessions.
- h. I'm not sure how this works out, or what this means exactly, but I choose to believe it.
- i. The point is this: You can never outgive God.
- j. And you have to believe that if you want to overcome greed.
- k. We fear surrendering our money to God because we think we will have less; we will be worse off. Jesus promised that you will gain; you will be better off.
- l. It's like the promise of tithing. In Malachi 3:10-12 God promised that if you bring the tithe, He will bless you beyond measure. If you tithe, you won't be ten percent poorer, you will be immeasurably richer.
- m. To overcome the danger of wealth, you have to trust in God's word. He will provide. Whatever you give to Him, He will pay you back 100 times more.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. What is the problem of wealth?
 - i. Money is a big danger to your relationship with God. It is very hard for rich people to live for God.
2. Why? Because wealthy people are highly susceptible to greed.
3. What's the solution to wealth?
 - i. With God all things are possible.
 - ii. If we will depend on Him, He can do great things through us.
4. God wants to do amazing things through our church. We're in the middle of an important building campaign. But the enemy is going to attack. Watch out for the danger of wealth.