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The Foolishness of Giving

929-A

Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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The Foolishness of Giving

The preacher stood up to deliver his message and prefaced what he had to say by boldly announcing, “I have never preached on this subject before.” With that he most eloquently proceeded to deliver what he considered to be one of his most fiery expositions on this hitherto untouched doctrinal delicacy. Throughout the congregation, sleepy heads began to nod, (you’re familiar with that) and an occasional snore was heard from some of the elderly, and even from one or two of the illustrious Elders.

By the time his thirty minute all-time first had reached its flamboyant conclusion, most of the flock were either asleep or angry. After a proud and pious Amen, the cocky clergyman stepped down to greet his complimentary clan, and the first of his supportive sheep to greet him was a wise old woman who sat in the second row. “Pastor, you mean to tell me you’ve never taught that subject before?”

“Yes, my dear,” the Reverend proudly responded, “that was a first for me.” To which the wise old woman answered, “Too bad you had to ruin a perfect record.”

Now, as best I can remember, this is the first time I have ever taught on this subject, and I have this funny feeling I am about to ruin a perfect record. I probably ought to leave well-enough alone.

But never one with enough sense to know when to quit, or better still, when not to start, I have elected to do it anyway. The subject is giving. You know, money, that sort of thing. See, I’ve already lost most of you! I can tell, little trap doors go, click! I’ve always avoided the subject for several reasons.

1- Immediately upon announcing the subject, you lose a whole section of saints who are gun-shy, and justifiably so. The religious media has in many cases taken two servings of emotions, two helpings of desperation, thrown in a little gospel, and the result has been enough to paralyze a whole section of the spiritual nervous system at the very mention of the word

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money. And many churches and Christian groups have done their share by inaugurating pressurized fund-raising campaigns that put Christians on an unnecessary, unscriptural guilt trip if they don't pledge at least X % of their income to a building campaign or special fund. People are gun shy and justifiably so. So I just avoid the subject like the plague. Secondly,

2- Because of the above-mentioned abuses, those who speak on the subject by itself, and are foolish enough to announce it going in, are immediately assumed by some to have ulterior motives. It's assumed that the message is a preface to a fund-raising drive or some kind of "Plea for Pesos", or "Crusade for Cash". So let me begin by assuring you that we're not raising money for anything, and we're not going to ask for anything, and we're not asking anyone to give anything when we get through. Okay? In case you are new or a visitor here; we don't have pledges or pledge campaigns in this church. Nor do we knowingly plead or beg for money. It's God's church, God's money, we're God's people. And we believe, if we preach the Word the way He called us to do; He'll move in the hearts of His people and give us exactly what we need. He always has in the past; we don't think He's going to stop now. That's not intended to be a judgment on those who do it differently, it's just a statement of our policy; in hope that you'll relax and just listen to the principles in the Word without either prejudice or fear. And for those of you listening in the tape ministry; may I take this opportunity to remind you. That not only is this lesson not intended to raise support; we would rather like to use it as an occasion to remind you that the tapes are yours! And that those who receive them are in no way obligated to give anything. Nor should they feel in any way guilty if they listen and don't contribute. God knows who needs to contribute, that's His business. And He's oh so faithful to meet our needs. So everybody relax. We're not asking for anything. The third reason I hate this subject is because;

3- I'm not naturally a giver. I don't have the gift of giving; I have the gift of MTEOUT. Now MTEOUT stands for **M**oney **T**hat **E**vaporates **O**n **U**nnecessary **T**rinkets.

I'm tight on the big stuff. I won't buy clothes or shoes or cars or furniture unless my life is being threatened; but you just put a motor or a bell or a shiny aluminum case on something nobody needs, and I'll buy it. I have four Polaroid cameras at home. None of which work, all of which are obsolete, but they're beautiful! If

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you wrap something in a fancy wrapper and mark it half-price, I'll go for it every time. I'm not a saver, and I'm not a giver, and I don't like this subject!

But somehow, Proverbs demands that it be taught. And so, as we wind our way to the second section of our final face of wisdom... "How to Give Your Life Away", ready or not; here comes at least a two-part lesson on money. The first of which we will look at this morning, it is entitled: "The Foolishness of Giving". Our outline is in three parts. You say, "That's a relief, there's usually four". But these are three longer ones!

I- Looking Again at the Foolishness of God"

II- Principles from Proverbs on Giving

III- Treasures from God's Point of View

From there we'll go on next week into what I hope will be more interesting. A study from the New Testament on how the Christian and how the Christian Church ought to look at giving money. But for this study, let's take a look at the foolishness of giving. You say, "foolishness"? That's right, foolishness, because God's concepts of handling money are downright foolish. You say, "Wait a minute, isn't that blasphemy?" No, No, God said it, so it's true! The dictionary defines foolish this way;

Lacking good sense or judgment; ill-advised; devoid of coherence; ridiculous, inane.

And God clearly says of His basic theology, when compared to man's basic philosophy, man will conclude the ways of God are lacking in good sense or judgment, are ill advised, devoid of coherence, ridiculous, and inane.

You talk to an unbeliever who does not have the Holy Spirit resident within him to communicate truth. And you try to talk to him, for instance, about God's principle on submission to authority and see what he says? Or God's principles on marriage and divorce, or God's principles on moral fidelity, or lying, or integrity, or judgment, he'll call you a fool! My friend, you take the principles we are going to look at this week and next about giving, and lay them out before an unbelieving world, and they're going to laugh you into oblivion. They're foolishness! Ridiculous, impractical, unworkable, unnecessary, illogical, unthinkable!

Why, they are 180 degrees off dead center; the very opposite of the world's basic philosophy. And I say to you; that's good

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news! That's the best sign you are on to something good when God's principles are concerned; if they are diametrically opposed to what the world says. You see, what Jesus is going to ask us to do is to nail your possessions to a cross, to crucify them. And the cross, my friend, is foolishness to man.

"I know very well how foolish it sounds to those who are lost, when they hear that Jesus died to save them. But we who are saved recognize that this message is the very power of God."
(I Corinthians 1:18 The Living Bible)

Where is this wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

"For since in the Wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the *foolishness* of what was preached, to save those who believe."
(I Corinthians 1:20,21 NIV)

"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit, they are *foolishness* to him. He doesn't understand them, they are spiritually discerned.

...But we have the mind of Christ.

(I Corinthians 2:14, 16b NIV)

"Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, by the world's standards, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise."

For the wisdom of this world, is "foolishness" in God's sight.
(I Corinthians 2:18,19 NIV)

Isaiah 55 adds this touch,

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord,
neither are your ways my ways.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my
ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your
thoughts.
(Isaiah 55:8,9 KJV)

In other words, if you're here in the room with me, or are listening this study, or reading this message and you are not a Christian, these principles are going to sound foolish, because God's concepts of giving are foolish to the natural mind.

You've always been taught to get what you can, and keep all you can, and buy all you can. That it's up to you to get it, it's certainly up to you to keep it. And therefore you give away only what will indirectly help you, either by helping your taxes, easing

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your conscience, impressing your friends, or helping a cause, that, in one way or another has helped you. Your giving, you have been taught, must be done to achieve maximum personal benefit, derive maximum personal glory. Above all, it's yours to give and it's yours to keep. And whatever you give ought to get credit for, right? Wrong!

Then along comes some boring Bible class teacher with a big black Bible and he begins to tell you, "it's not yours in the first place. And that the major reason you have it is to give it away—that the more you give, the more you'll be blessed. That if someone else has a need, it's your need! That God is pleased when we give it all away, my friend." Your first thought is that an X-ray, put to that teacher's hairless head, will prove that such thoughts only emanate from a crazy cranium. And this guy just may be a candidate for the funny farm.

I'm aware of all that. So at the outset, I'm warning you. This is all a bunch of foolishness to the mind of the natural man. And I have no problem if you reject what I say. I only ask you to consider what the Scriptures say, and thus virtually all of this study will simply be reading to you passages from the Word on the "foolishness of giving."

Now, as always, the first step in our perennial procession in pursuit of precepts is that personal powerhouse of principles, the book of Proverbs. We will simply read passages in Proverbs that deals with giving, and we're going to stop and pull out whatever principles might apply. And we'll take them in the order they are found in the Word, beginning with Proverbs, chapter three. So if you will, take your Bible, open it to Proverbs chapter three and our study of the "Foolishness of Giving" will be underway.

My Son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments,

For length of days, and long life, and peace, they're gonna add to you.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck, and write them upon the tablet of thine heart:

So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." *[In other words, it won't hold you up, don't lean on it!]*

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In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Be not wise in thine own eyes [*you don't have all the answers*] fear the LORD, depart from evil.

It shall be health to thy body, and marrow to thy bones.

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase.

So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. (Proverbs 3:1-10)

Now let's paraphrase and condense that passage very quickly. It's an incredible passage, it says something like this;

Child, stay in the Word! That's the secret to living a successful life." As you do this, rest the whole weight of your life on Jesus. Don't trust your own wisdom. Use His logic in every facet of your life. He'll take the responsibility for directing every facet of yours. Don't consider your own wisdom as anything worth having; just lean on God, and run from sin.

That's the secret of success! And here's the next step. Whenever you receive anything, money, possessions, anything else, first give to God what's His. Put Him at the top of your list of creditors. If you honor God by doing that, He'll honor you by meeting your needs, exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. Now, that's what it says!

1- Even though it is contrary to your own understanding trust God with your money. It's His anyway. Start out by giving back to Him what honors Him, and give it to Him *first*. Then you spend only what's left. That's foolish, you say. First, we see need to see what we need to live. Then whatever is left, we consider giving away, right? Wrong!

You see, God's foolish principles of giving begin, by beginning with God when you get, whatever you get, whether it be thousands, hundreds, pennies, welfare, food stamps, dividends, whatever. The first part belongs to God. (Really, it *all* belongs to God.) So you honor Him by *first*, off the top, determining what He would have you give to further the Kingdom, and you give it first!

2- God's the one who ultimately makes you successful (verse 10). And one key determining factor will always be the spirit with which you give what you have away. Now this is contrary to the natural mind. It is foolishness! But God says its true.

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Now, we're obviously not to bribe God by giving to Him so that He'll give to us. We're going to see that in a moment. Now obviously, if our hearts are not right, no amount we give will matter; we'll see that, too! But assuming that we're giving to honor Him, and assuming we're giving from a pure heart, God promises to honor us by blessing us physically and spiritually. I don't understand it all, you may not understand it all, but it's there! Let's take what we do understand and apply it!

One of the best known passages in Scripture, in this regard, is Malachi, chapter three. Someone came up to me after the first Sunday school and said, "You mean that great Italian prophet "Ma Lock Kiy" But be that as it may. Turn to Malachi chapter three and let's examine again the correlation between our faithfulness in giving and God's faithfulness in blessing. We'll begin by reading verse 6. Now if you want a memory verse that's both powerful and short, take the first half of this verse.

Malachi says this;

For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But you say, Wherein shall we return?

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? *(I will answer God says,)* In tithes and offerings."

Ye are cursed with the curse: for ye have robbed Me, this whole nation.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and *[test]* prove Me, now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, *[see]* if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out *[such]* a blessing there shall not be room enough to receive it *[You won't be able to handle it, the bottom will break out of your basket.]*.

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye are going to be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts.

(Malachi 3:6-12)

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Now we don't want to make that verse say anything it doesn't. Throughout the years it has been a bit abused. But neither ought we to overlook what it says! What it says is; the person of God and the principles of God never change. They are eternal, they are immutable. And one of these eternal principles is; when you fail to give God what is rightfully His, in His sight, you're a thief! It's what it says, we know it says that! But conversely it says; if you give to God what is rightfully His, and leave the results to Him, He has some incredible promises.

- 1- He will rebuke Satan in your behalf (Now I didn't say that, God did.)
- 2- He will protect the fruits of your ministry and the fruits of your toil from premature destruction by the enemy.
- 3- He'll make you a testimony to those about you ("You shall be called blessed") All because you honored Him by giving Him what was His in the first place. You say, "What a promise! What a passage! What a God!

In other words, there is a direct correlation between the way you give and the way God blesses you. I don't understand it all, you may not understand it all, but it's there! There is a lot about it we need to come to understand, and the New Testament, we trust, will shed some light on it as we study together in the next lesson; but Proverbs insists and Malachi confirms there's a definite cause and effect relationship between the two. And God says, if you don't believe it, test me! Now God doesn't say that in too many places in Scripture, but it is true, because God said it is. Each one of us needs to stop and take a healthy look at how we give, and why we give, and how much we give. You say, that's foolishness! Yes, it is!

The next proverbial passage to ponder is in the same chapter, beginning with verse 25. There we read these words:

Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it,

Say not unto thy neighbour "Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee." *[I'll give it to you, if you can give it to him now—loose translation.]*

(Proverbs 3:25-28)

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These principles emerge, principle number 3,

3- Fear of great tragedy is unbecoming to the Christian. The Christian who lives in fear that the stock market will crash or that his job will be lost, or that there will be a great depression, simply *is not* living in the realm of God's victory. And the Christian is not to live in fear of the latter days either, when the wickedness will be judged, and great tribulation shall come upon man. That's not our problem! We're children of the King! Whatever He allows is for our good. One thing is certain. He will not let us fall.

4- One reason we don't fear collapse is because God has us by the foot. We're safe! Now I know it's comforting to know God has us by the hand, but I think it's extra comforting to know that God has us by the foot. And He's going to see that our step is steady even when the whole world around us is crumbling into the ocean. With that in mind, principle number five became natural,

5- You give what you can now! If you have it and there is a need, you give it now. Don't hoard it or put it away in case some great disaster comes, or that God might forget who you are. God becomes responsible for the future. Some translators even carry this principle on and use it and apply it to the matter of paying your bills and creditors. Says, you don't say to your creditors, "Sorry, I just don't have enough to go around," after you've taken it and met your own needs first, and done things you didn't have to do. God's child honors God by paying his bills on time, even at the risk of personal hardship. He doesn't skip paying bills or giving to meet others (needs) in order to put it away for a rainy day. God says, "Pay it now, while you've got it!" Pay while you can. If a rainy day comes, you've got a loving God that owns an umbrella store. He'll take care of that. You say, that's foolishness! Yup!

Our next stop is Proverbs chapter eleven beginning with verse 24. And there we read these words,

One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly (*he's a tightwad, loose translation*) but comes to poverty.

A generous man will prosper; but he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. (Proverbs 11:24,25 NIV)

6- Real wealth is the product of giving; real poverty is the product of hoarding. This principle surfaces like a glistening

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diamond. It reinforces principle #2 explains how it works. The world says if you want to be rich, hold on to everything you can! Want to be poor? Let loose and give it all away. God says reverse that. Flip it over, turn it upside down.” You say, “that’s foolishness”. Sure it is!

But oh, what divine foolishness! It says that the more you give, the richer you are. The more you cling to what you have, the poorer you’ll become. And spiritually you’ll become even poorer because you’ll miss the treasures of heaven. Even if you could cling to it like some of these eccentric millionaires of days gone by, you’d die just as they did, literally living as paupers surrounded by wealth. It’s a law of God! You want to be rich? Learn how to give. Until you do, no matter how much you make, you’ll be one of life’s poor people in God’s sight.

7- God doesn’t need gifts from unbelievers to run His kingdom.

The Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases Him.

The detests the way of the wicked, but He loves those who pursue righteousness. (Proverbs 15:8,9 NIV)

Ken Taylor says,

The Lord hates the gifts of the wicked, but delights in the prayers of His people. (The Living Bible)

The principle is that His is a spiritual kingdom and it is supported by those who have His Spirit. The gifts of unbelievers make Him sick. What He wants is their heart, not their money. And Christian organizations that campaign for money in the secular community to support their work ought to ponder this passage. When God supports His work through His people, He gets the glory, and the people get blessed. When His people go outside the family of God for funds, Satan gets the glory, and no body gets blessed! You say that’s absurd. Yes, it’s just plain foolish! It is part of the foolishness of giving.

8- God’s impressed with character and relationships, not with things.

Better is a little with fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

This vital principle teaches us that God is more impressed

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with a humble man who has nothing than He is with an arrogant man who has everything. And He would rather see a family eating in harmony, surrounded by love, eating leftover vegetables, than to see them dining on prime rib in the midst of contention, confusion, and strife.

He's more impressed with a church that's filled with love and operates in a little building, than He is with a great cathedral that impresses man, but where there is the absence of the power and the love that changes man. So if you have to choose between a job that will make you lots of money but might cost you your integrity or your family; it's better to stay struggling and through your struggling communicate character to your family by remaining content. The choice is made! You're better off with fewer things and more of Jesus. (Loose translation) *"Better a Big Mac where love is than a T-bone eaten in an ungodly atmosphere."* You say that doesn't compute. Trade possessions for character? That's ridiculous! It's downright foolish. Yes, that's what it is!

9- God prefers righteousness to money.

If you think that is foolish try principle number 9. It's in chapter 21, verse 3;

To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. (Proverbs 21:3)

The Living Bible says:

"God is more pleased when we're just and fair than He is when we give Him gifts."

You say, "Wait a minute, you just said, 'God blesses us according to our giving. That real wealth is the result of giving wealth away.' And now you say God would rather have righteousness than money?" That's right! God wants us to give, but, He is not moved nearly so much by our giving as He is by our living. A hefty contribution from someone who has not repented of known sin in his life, who substitutes riches for repentance, doesn't fool God.

10- God can't stand to be bribed by what we give.

The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable; how much more so when brought with evil intent!

Ken Taylor says,

God loathes the gifts of evil men, especially if they are trying to bribe Him.

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If our objective is to so impress Him with our generosity that He might forget our disobedience, we have misunderstood His character. He isn't moved by our money—and He certainly isn't bribed by it!

11- A borrower is in bondage to the lender.

The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. (Proverbs 22:7)

In other words, just as the rich rule the poor by virtue of the power they possess so the man or the church who borrows becomes the servant of the ones from whom they borrow. You don't borrow money needlessly. If possible, you don't borrow money at all, and you certainly don't borrow money to have money to give away. You will have just met one man's needs at the expense of another's freedom. You say that borrowing is a way of life. But it's not the way *true* life does it. He says don't do it. I know, that's foolish. I told you it would be.

So God has outlined for us in Proverbs some extremely valuable principles to govern how and when we give. Do you remember what they are?

1- Give first, the first fruits belong to Him.

2- How we give and how much we give will have a effect on how He chooses to bless us.

3- The believer has no cause to fear either the great depression or the great tribulation.

4- God has his hands around our feet; we're not going anywhere.

5- God doesn't intend for us to stash it away for a rainy day if someone needs it now; and God expects us to pay our bills when due, not postpone them for another time.

6- Contrary to the world's philosophy, the more you give, the richer you are. The more you hoard, the more you are destined for poverty.

7- God doesn't delight in the gifts of unbelievers. He expects His children to support His work in order to receive His blessings and bring Him glory.

8- If there's a choice, God prefers character to things. (Quality of life to quality of living standard.)

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9- He is not so much impressed by how much we give as He is by how we live.

10- He can't stand to be bribed.

11- Neither does He condone borrowing as a tool to enable us either to give or to live. The borrower becomes a slave—a slave to the one from whom he has borrowed—and God wants His children to become servants of the Most High, free only to do His bidding.

I told you they were foolish, but they are the higher ways of this incredible God we serve. And He never pretended to offer a gospel that conformed to our ways. His ways are too much higher than ours. His thoughts are as much higher than our thoughts. They are as different as heaven is from earth. They are in two different realms. Heaven and earth are so far apart, they are in two different places, and they are operated on two sets of standards. One set by God to glorify Himself and bless others; the other set by Satan to glorify self and bless self. They aren't compatible. Light and darkness have nothing in common. Neither do Satan's concepts of giving and God's concepts of giving. They are diametrically opposed to each other. The reason is, that just as we live in two different worlds, the currency of those worlds cannot be interchanged. The treasures of earth won't spend in heaven. You can accumulate heavenly treasures while you're here and send them ahead to be deposited in a special account that is guaranteed by the FDIC; **The Father's Deity In Christ**—but you can't store up earthly treasures and take them with you; they would be worthless in heaven. And so God is determined; that when you die, whatever you haven't given away, goes bye-bye. It stays behind. In other words, "You can't take it with you."

Four New Testament passages clamor for our attention, in closing, if we are to understand the principles found in scripture, the principle of treasures. Let's look at them in closing:

- In Matthew 6:19-21 we read the **choice**
- In Matthew 19:20 we read the **cost**
- In Luke 12:15-21 we read the **compromise**
- In Luke 12:22-34 we read the **calling**

We can't do them justice in the space that remains, but what we can do, at least, is touch on them and let them set the tone for the next study.

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First of all, look at the **choice**.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, you know the story, where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and snatch it away.

But lay up for your self treasures in heaven, moth and rust can't corrupt there, and thieves can't touch it if they wanted to.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
(Matthew 6:19-21)

The simple choice is, we can't store up both kinds of treasures simultaneously. You're either doing one or the other. Either investing in eternity and eternal rewards will be yours, or you are investing in this life. And when this life is over, if you are fortunate enough to keep it that long, it will decay, corrode, and be destroyed. It doesn't mean it's wrong to have money. It doesn't mean there aren't many people who have a lot of money and give the most for God's glory. This isn't a condemnation of riches; this is an explanation of the use of riches. A guy with \$10,000.00 who is living for what that money can buy, and protecting it as though it were his life; is in far greater danger than the man with ten million, who knows it can't buy happiness and is investing it in people for eternity. And I have found that often those with the greatest problems with treasure are concerned; are not the very poor. They've never tasted the narcotic of possessions and so they're not consumed by increasing them. Nor is it the very wealthy. For like Solomon they've tasted it and found that the more you get the more you want, but it doesn't satisfy. Only Christ satisfies.

I think the greatest problem seems to be among those of us in the middle classes of life who have tasted just enough to want more and not enough to realize how futile it is to give your life away for things. We're the culprits! We get caught up in the pleasure race and we forget the treasure race. And lose the whole thing.

The second passage tells us about the **cost**. Matthew 19:20 says there's a young man who started to come to God, talk about his good works and be accepted. So, Jesus turned to him and He asked him about how he kept the law, realizing that God couldn't be his greatest treasure because his possessions were. So Jesus made this startling request,

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[Son], if thou wilt be made perfect [whole], go and sell everything that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: come and follow Me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. (Matthew 19:21,22)

The problem wasn't that he had too much money or too many possessions; the problem was that his possessions had him. So Jesus just gave him a choice, the choice had a cost. The interesting thing about the cost was that had he done what Jesus was suggesting, sell it all that he had and give it away, Jesus promised him he would be rich. He'd have treasure in Heaven. But, you see, the young man couldn't comprehend giving away treasure he could touch and see in exchange for treasure he couldn't. So he walked away. And he walked away from eternity. Money was on the throne of his life and there wasn't room for Jesus.

Thirdly, look at the **compromise**. It's found in Luke chapter 12, verses 15-21,

And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness *[stinginess]*, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: *[he was a successful farmer.]*

And he thought to himself saying, what shall I do because I have no room to bestow my fruits? *[What am I going to do? I've got more than I can handle.]* (Luke 12:15-17)

Now remember the principles we learned in Proverbs. He could choose to give them away and become rich, or he could hang on to it and become poor.

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there I'll bestow all my goods.

And I will say to my soul, *[he was talking to himself by now]* I will say to my soul, Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said to him, *Thou fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of the: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. (Luke 12:18-21)

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He had choice; so do we. He made a compromise; so do we. He padded his bank account, and settled down to enjoy all the creature comforts he thought he just had to have. He began talking to himself, and he said, "Self, what am I going to do now?" Then he answered himself, that's when it gets dangerous! He said, "Self, I'll keep it for myself, and I'll be rich at last."

But God said, "Friend, you stored up your treasure in the wrong vault. It's recall time! Let's count it all up, and what's left on earth, you're going to lose it all. Now, what you've sent ahead of you, you're going to have for all eternity."

Then lastly, let's look at the **calling**—what God's really calling us to do where treasures are concerned:

And He said to His disciples, Therefore I say to you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

If you then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not; they spin not; and yet I say to you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith?

And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

For all these things do nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth ye have need these things.

But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell that ye have, and give alms; [*You say, "I beg your pardon?" Sell what you have and give it away.*] provide yourselves bags which wax not [*cannot get old*], a treasure

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in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth,
neither moth corrupteth.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
(Luke 12:22-34)

Here's our calling. It has four parts:

1- We are to stop being possessed by our possessions. We don't have anything to worry about. God feeds the ravens, God clothes the lilies, and we rank a bunch higher than they do. God says, take a deep breath, take a deep look at the rat race you're in. And if you are losing what's worth having in order to get something you can't help losing, what a waste.

2- We are to start being possessed by a holy desire only to do the will of God. We are to seek the Kingdom. We are to give our energy and our attention to meeting the needs of people and furthering the Kingdom on earth.

3- If need be, we ought to be willing to sell what we have, take the money and give it away to further the Kingdom. If we do this, we can have an unfailing treasure in the heavenlies that is untouched by the market crash, the Great Depression, or anything else. And it'll be there waiting. It's a spendable commodity, a treasure that can be cast at the Master's feet at the Bema Seat of Christ. Then we will have the more with which to worship Him. We'll have traded the temporal for the eternal and we'll have become rich.

4- The focus of our hearts will be aimed wherever treasure is. We store up treasure here; that treasure will begin to captivate our thinking, it's all we'll think about! It will control our desires and it will own our hearts. But if we store up treasures in heaven; giving ourselves and all we have to people and to furthering of the Kingdom, the focus of our hearts will be on people and the Kingdom, not on ourselves, on what we have. We will have transferred our investments; and we will have transferred our allegiance in the process.

You say that's idiotic. No, it's foolishness. Utter foolishness! The foolishness of God. But it's wiser than the wisdom of men.

The wisdom of men says store up and place your confidence in something that's going to pay. That's what the wisdom of man says! God's wisdom says give it away and store up treasures that will be waiting for you when you get to heaven, treasures you can

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use to worship Him.

In our next lesson we'll take a look at trumpets and left-handed giving; at how to support a man in the ministry; how to get on a justified guilt trip; how to make God happy; what to do with leftovers; Jack Benny and the Christian penny; and an open letter from Paul entitled, "Dear Corinthians, about that offer of yours."

In the meantime, we have gained just a little knowledge on the subject of giving. I'm not suggesting we all go out and sell everything we have this week and give it away, you wouldn't do it anyway! But I am suggesting that some of us need to evaluate our attitudes towards our possessions in the light of God's Word, and take a careful look at where our treasures are. Because wherever they are, that's where our hearts are!

And if God *should* ask us to sell even a part of what we have and give it away, or just not buy something we want in order to send more treasures ahead to Heaven in order to be free to follow Him; could we even cope with that? I know, I know, foolish!

But I cannot help wondering if God isn't scanning His people looking for a few fools; fools who are just foolish enough to take Him at His Word when it comes to the foolishness of giving. I'll leave you with this thought:

What kind of treasure are you storing up?
What drives you in life should be clear—
An insatiable hunger to hold on to things,
To get all you can while you're here?

Or is your life driven by a hunger to give?
To give at whatever the price?
For the treasures you seek are eternal;
Your life is invested in Christ.

If need be, you're willing to sell what you have
If need be, you'd give it away.
You'd forfeit some pleasure to lay up some treasure
That all would be yours some day.

Yes, those kinds of questions are foolish
To the natural mind, they're not fair!
But, oh, Beloved, Heaven awaits.
Live to send treasure there

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Lest you open your eyes and say, "what a waste!"
That I lived by the world's kind of rule
When I should have been willing to give it away
And at last, become God's kind of fool!!

Father,

*Thank You for the foolishness of the Gospel. Thank You
for willingness this week to begin searching Your Word.
And may we be willing in the process to become fools for
Christ's sake.*

In His Name we ask it,

Amen.

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