

What Would Jesus Do About Money

Luke 12:13-21

There are some questions I like to ask people that I think are fun to ask and also give a lot of insight into a person. These are great when you are going on a long drive with somebody. I first ask what they would do if they found \$100 dollars. Don't tell me you would turn it into the cops or that you would give half to the church. Don't overthink it. It's never going to happen. Just humor me. Then I ask what they would do with \$1000, then a million, then unlimited funds. What would you do if you had billions of dollars? 😊

People answer those questions in all kinds of ways, as you can imagine. Some people rattle off the clothes and purses and houses they would buy because they have thought about it a lot before. Other people genuinely have a hard time knowing what they would buy beyond the basics. Some people would go immediately to the motorcycle store. Others would go to the gun store or the dress store. Some go immediately to the grocery store. Those are my people! But I remember asking my mother that question one time years ago and she immediately said, *"Oh, Todd, don't ask me that question. Don't do that to me!"* And I didn't understand why she didn't want to play that game. I thought it was fun but she didn't want any part of it. And I've thought about that several times over the years and I finally think I understand now. My mama was old enough to understand and wise enough to realize that money...is a problem. Money is a problem.

Yes, I hear you and you are right. Not having money is also a problem. Poverty is a problem. Of course it is but you and I have both seen what happens when somebody all of a sudden gets a lot of money. That's why lottery winners are rarely happy for very long. I did some research – I googled it – and quickly found a long list of lottery winners and what happened in the years after they won. They call it the curse of the lottery. Over and over and over again, you read about people that won lots of money and soon regretted it. Let me tell you about just one. **Billie Bob Harrell Jr.** Life was good in June of 1997 when Harrell Jr. and his wife Barbara Jean held the only winning ticket to a Lotto Texas jackpot of \$31 million. After his big win, the [Houston Press](#) reported Harrell Jr. purchased a ranch, as well as a half-dozen homes for himself and other family members. He, his wife and all his kids got new vehicles. He made large contributions to his church. If members of the congregation needed help, Harrell Jr. was there with cash. But then his life started unraveling and his spending and lending spiraled out of control. After splitting with his wife, Harrell Jr. locked himself in his upstairs bedroom, stripped away his clothes, pressed a shotgun barrel against his chest and pulled the trigger, investigators said. According to the [Houston Press](#), shortly before his death, Harrell Jr. confided to a financial adviser: ***"Winning the lottery is the worst thing that ever happened to me."*** ([The tragic stories of big jackpot winners \(abc15.com\)](#))

Yea, yea, I know. You're different. It wouldn't be that way for you and you wish you could get you some of that kind of trouble. I hear ya. I know the feeling. And I want you to know right off the bat that having lots of money is not a sin, nor are you cursed. Not having money is not a sin, nor are you cursed. Money is not sinful one way or the other. The problem always comes with your attitude toward money. Let's turn to the **Gospel of Luke** this morning to continue our study on what would Jesus do. So far, we have seen what Jesus would do about temptation, anger and worry. And today we look at what He would do about money. And before we go any further, I have to tell you...I don't like it. I don't. I don't like talking about money and I really don't like preaching about it. And that is why I very rarely ever do. The problem is that pesky dude, Paul, who tells me in **Acts 20** that I need to preach the whole counsel of God (or the whole will of God).

So, since the Bible talks a lot about money and Jesus Himself talked a lot about money, let's just see what he said in **Luke chapter 12, verses 13-21**. Here, Jesus is teaching and preaching to thousands of people when He is

interrupted by a man in the crowd. Let's pick it up in **verse 13**. *Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."¹⁴ Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."²⁰ "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?'²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."*

Reading this whole chapter you see that Jesus was interrupted by this guy and it reminded me of the very first time I ever preached. It was at a nursing home in Ft. Worth and a little old lady in the back kept hollering out, "That's a lie!" Well, I can tell you that it's hard to recover from that but Jesus used it as a teaching moment. Some of your versions start out **verse 13** with the word, "Rabbi" and that is correct too. It can be "teacher" or "rabbi." They thought of Jesus as a teacher and, as such, He was respected and whatever He said carried weight. So, this unnamed guy in the crowd just can't wait to talk to Jesus personally and so he just hollers out, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

Then Jesus just comes up with this story or illustration about how not to relate to money. In my Bible it's called the Parable of the Rich Fool. And in this parable we see the man's attitude toward money and stuff is all wrong. First, his thought is only for himself. Look how many times the man says, "I, I, me, me, mine, mine." I will do this and I will do that. I will build more barns for **my** stuff. His attitude toward money was selfish. He only thought of what it could do for him. Now, in this story that Jesus tells, it doesn't say that the rich man ever did anything necessarily wrong to get all of this. He was a shrewd and hard-working farmer and God had blessed him with another huge harvest. Good for him! The problem was not that he had a lot of stuff or that he got it in an improper way. The problem was his attitude of selfishness about all that stuff.

Ben, don't they grow a bunch of corn up in Nebraska? Have you ever grown corn? I have grown it in a small garden before and I learned that it will cross-pollinate. What that means is that if you plant one kind of corn in one hill and another kind in the hill next to it, when it is time to harvest, you will have a mixture of the two kinds of corn. I recently read the story of a man in Nebraska who was displeased with his corn crop so he spent some extra money on an extra-high-yielding kind of seed and planted it. At harvest, the corn crop was incredible; better than ever and better than his neighbors who also planted corn on both sides of him. So, his neighbors asked him to sell some of the seed corn so they could grow it too. But the man refused because he wanted the advantage over his neighbors when it came time to sell. But the next year his crop was not nearly as good. And the next year it was worse than ever. And it dawned upon the farmer that his prize corn was being cross-pollinated by the inferior grade of corn from his neighbors' fields.

Was it a sin for that man to not sell to his neighbors? I don't think in and of itself it was wrong. It was just his attitude that was wrong. And because his attitude was wrong, he and his neighbors suffered. In **1 Samuel 16** it says that God looks at the heart. He sees your attitude. Does that scare you or bring relief? It's usually one way or the other. Have you ever had a kid with a selfish attitude? A friend of mine was telling me a while back about taking his toddler daughter to go get some ice cream. He said he got one flavor and she got another and so he asked to have a lick of her ice cream. What do you think she said? "No. Mine!" He said, "I had just bought that ice cream. I did. With my money. Out of the goodness of my heart and wanting my child to be happy. And this child – who I created – has the nerve to tell me no, that it's her ice cream?!" That's kind of humorous for a toddler but it's definitely something

we adults should have grown out of a long time ago. Selfishness is immaturity and it's the wrong attitude to have about money.

The other wrong attitude the farmer in Jesus's story had was his attitude about the future. Look at **verse 19** again. *And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."* Now, what's the problem there? Is it wrong to plan for the future? Is it wrong to eat? Is it wrong to drink? Is it wrong to be merry? No. None of that is wrong. What's wrong is the attitude that this life is all there is. What's wrong is thinking that your stuff or your wealth will guarantee you another breath, much less another day or year.

In 1926, the inventor of the cathode ray tube, Lee deForest, said, *"Theoretically, television may be feasible, but I consider it an impossibility--a development which we should waste little time dreaming about."* In 1943, Thomas J. Watson, Chairman of the Board of IBM said, *"I think there is a world market for about five computers."* In 1962, a recording executive said, *"We don't think the Beatles will do anything in their market. Guitar groups are on their way out."* ([Sermon Illustrations.com](http://SermonIllustrations.com))

So...smart guy...what does the future hold for you? What is your attitude toward the future? Who or what are you really relying on? The farmer in the story was relying on his wealth and that is what the world and probably your financial advisor would tell you to do. Store it. Save it. Invest it. And you can live a long, happy life. Until you die. And what if you die tomorrow? Then some other fool is going to have your money to store, save and invest. And you're sitting in Heaven thinking, *"This sure is nice but I wish I had stored up more treasures here, you know, since they'll last forever."*

So, what is it that we can do to make sure our attitudes are right about money and about the future? Well, Jesus tells us the answer at the very end of His parable. In **verse 21** Jesus says, *"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."* Rich toward God...rich toward God. I bet I read that a hundred times this week trying to figure out the secret. So, I looked it up in my giant 52 lb concordance and found...nothing. The word rich means to be wealthy or have a lot of money.

Well, how can I be rich toward God? Does that mean we have to give God all our money? Is this where I stand up here and say that if you will just give all your money to the church that God will bless you? Give your generous gift of just \$500 dollars and we will send you a handkerchief I have prayed over and all your financial worries will be over. Right? Am I the only one that has seen those guys on TV?

See, the first problem with that is that like I said last week, God already owns all your money. He owns the church's money. He owns the church and He owns you and me. He owns it all and He paves the roads of Heaven with the most valuable substance we have so I don't think money is what God wants. I think He wants your attitude. And the attitude that He wants is the attitude of not caring how much it costs to be God's servant.

Isn't that what being rich is all about? Not caring how much something costs? If you have millions and billions of dollars and you go to McDonalds, do you worry about how much a Big Mac costs? I do! I mean, have you been to McDonalds lately? I remember when a Big Mac and fries and a drink were like 5-6 bucks. Now it's 13 and change. That's crazy! I can't afford to eat that poison. But if I was a brazillionaire, I wouldn't care how much that poison cost. A Big Mac or a big house or a big yacht. Who cares if you're dripping with cash, right?

Being rich toward God means not caring how much it costs to do what He tells you to do. And that may or may not include what to do with your money. It might also include how to use your time or how best to use the talents God has given you, or how to best use the opportunities that God gives you.

Let me give you an example. Let's say it's Monday morning and you are at work. You're busy. Lots to do. You're blowing and going and knocking stuff out but it's taking all you have. Then you see that weird, lonely guy from

accounting walking toward. You know he doesn't have any friends. He mumbles. He kinda smells weird. He likes to talk about his cats. You know the guy.

He comes over and says, *"Hey, what ya doing?" "Working. Lots to do."* He says, *"Hey, I know you're a Christian and I've really been struggling lately and..."* What do you do? How do you respond? *"Go away, pocket protector boy!" "Talk to me after work." "I'm calling HR."* What do you say to this guy?

Now, I'm not saying you always need to quit working and stop everything you are doing for a two-hour conversation. But maybe, like Esther, God has placed you there for such a time as this. Maybe you can use your break and let this guy say what's on his mind. And allow your attitude to be, *"I don't care how long this takes. I'm going to listen."* Maybe God wants you to spend some time with this guy.

Or maybe it is your money God wants some time. Maybe God is prompting you to go to Walmart and walk down those back-to-school aisles and pick up a few things for the Operation Christmas Child boxes. And you can just allow your attitude to be, *"I don't care how much it costs. I know God is asking this of me so it's okay."*

Maybe God is asking you and prompting you to use your God-given talents to help the church in some way. I don't know what that looks like. Maybe you can teach or preach or clean bathrooms or sing really loud during worship. Maybe you can write the inmates on the Carolyn's Ministry list. But whatever it is, your attitude should be, *"I don't care how much this costs me. I am being rich toward God."* And like we saw last week, we know that God owns everything. He controls everything and He provides everything so if you see yourself running low on time, money or energy, you know that God will supply all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:19)

See, that's the secret to having a right attitude about money, about life, about the future and about God and yourself. God has put me here to do this thing so if He owns it, controls it and provides it, what am I waiting for? I don't care how much it costs me in money or time or energy. I know God is not going to ask more of me than He will provide and I know God is LOADED! This life is not all about me and I know that I am not guaranteed another breath. So, God, tell me what you want me to do.

Can you hear God talking to you like that? You have to be pretty close to Him to hear Him most of the time. He rarely shouts and when He does, it's usually too late to get the blessing He wants to give you. Usually, as it has always been, God will speak in a still small voice. Don't expect to hear Him audibly. It's usually a feeling of peace when you do something or no peace when you don't. And that is the Holy Spirit speaking to you. He wants to have that close relationship with you so that you can tell the difference when He is speaking and when it is your own mind and will that you think is speaking. And if the Holy Spirit is living inside of you and if you are right with Him and have no unconfessed sin, He wants to communicate with you.

If you have never felt that and if you don't have that kind of relationship with God through His Son Jesus, I need to talk with you today. Today is the day that you ask God to forgive you of all your sins and you repent – turn away from – that lifestyle. Then just allow Him to come into your life through the Holy Spirit and start changing you. It will be an obvious change. The people around you will see something different in you. Your life won't be perfect and you won't be perfect but you will be a new creation. His word tells us that and we have seen it in our own lives. Do it today as the music plays.