

WWJU: Greed
Matthew 6:24
Sunday, May 3, 2026

What would Jesus undo? That's what we've been talking about for the last several weeks and that's what we're going to talk about this morning.

And, as we've talked about the last few Sundays, the question of what Jesus would undo derives from the question we're all familiar with: what would Jesus do? What would Jesus do if he were me? And the reason we ask that question is because Jesus is the image of the living God. Now, we were all created in that same image ... out of God's love to live in God's love. But humanity has chosen not to live there. We're fallen. We've chosen to rely on ourselves rather than God. And in that state, we cannot do what Jesus did. We cannot live like Jesus lived or do what he instructed us to do. It's simply impossible.

So, God sent Jesus to bring us back; to live the kind of lives we were created to live, perfectly in love with God and everyone else, and then to die and be resurrected to enable us to live that kind of new, bountiful, and eternal life for ourselves. To put it simply, when we entrust ourselves and our lives to God through Jesus, we receive God's Spirit. And that Spirit works within us, and with us, for the rest of our lives to change us ... to transform us more and more into the image of Christ; to enable us to actually do what Jesus would do.

But this process of transformation requires a lot of undoing. We and the Spirit working together have got to undo the ways of thinking, speaking, and acting that we have absorbed from the fallen culture around us.

And, as today's scripture makes clear, one of the things we've got to undo is greed.

Now, the context for today's scripture is the Sermon on the Mount. And in this sermon, spanning chapters 5 to 7 of Matthew's Gospel, we see Jesus addressing issues like power, accomplishment, human approval, and money.

And, of course, the reason Jesus addresses these issues is because these were the ways the culture of Jesus' day measured success. Pretty much everyone in that culture, including the most influential religious leaders, just assumed that that more power, the more status, the more money a person had, the happier and more blessed they were. In fact, they considered power, status, and wealth as gifts from God.

Which isn't that far from what OUR culture believes, right? You may remember the bumper sticker, "the one who dies with the most toys wins." That's the idea. Our culture, like theirs, defines the good life as one of comfort, ease, safety, and security. And the only way that's going to happen is if we make it happen, by accumulating as much power, as much acclaim, as much money as we can. Just as with those 1st Century Jews, our culture is trying to convince us that our eternal destiny is in our hands; we can—and indeed must—work to create our own happiness and contentment.

Which is what makes Jesus' actual teaching in this sermon so interesting. Because Jesus' take is almost exactly the opposite. You see, the sermon on the mount is all about what God's kingdom looks like or, as Jesus says in John's Gospel, what it looks like to live eternal life—the kind of lives we were created to live. It's about what the good life *really* looks like. And,

according to Jesus, bountiful, eternal life—true joy and contentment—is almost exactly the opposite of what our culture teaches us.

So, for instance, instead of teaching us that we should dominate our enemies, Jesus preached that we should love them; that when they attack us, we should be willing to even turn the other cheek. He preached that instead of promoting ourselves, we should do our giving and our praying and our fasting in secret. He preached that in God’s upside-down kingdom, it’s the downtrodden, the hungry, the destitute who will be blessed.

And he preached that accumulating money is not the key to happiness. Instead, we should ... ²⁰... *store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust^[1] consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.* ²¹ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

And, in saying this, Jesus is just pointing out what we already know, but are unwilling to admit to ourselves. Money really doesn’t buy happiness. There are all kinds of studies showing that once you get past the point of having enough money to meet your needs, money doesn’t bring lasting fulfillment. In fact, it does the opposite. The more you’ve got, the more you’ve got to worry about, the more you’ve got to protect, and the more you want. I’ve shared with y’all before what John D Rockefeller, who was at that time the richest man in the world, said when asked how much money would be enough: “Just a little more.”

And his is consistent with our own experience. When we buy that thing we just absolutely have to have, we often get an endorphin hit. But it wears off pretty quick. And then,

the next time, we've got to get something bigger, shinier, or more expensive to get the same effect. It's just like a physical addiction.

Yet for some reason, even though we know from experience that more, more, more doesn't work, we still run after it, thinking maybe this time it will. It's like the AA definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting a different result.

Chasing after money and stuff doesn't deliver on the promise of joy and contentment in this life. And in today's scripture, Jesus points out the same goes for our eternal life. Because, even if it were true that the one who dies with the most toys wins the game of this life, the fact is that when that game is over, everything goes back in the box. We're not taking any of it with us.

Now, I want to be clear. Jesus *wasn't* anti-money. Money was useful in Jesus' day and it's useful in ours. It is a tool; a means to an end.

But Jesus also recognizes that because of its centrality to our physical existence, money is maybe uniquely dangerous. In fact, it's the danger he talked about more than any other during his earthly ministry. The more of it we have, the easier it is for money to morph from a means of accomplishing good things, into an end in itself. Instead of using money to live, we are tempted to live to make money.

So, Jesus states the obvious: ²⁴ *"No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."*

In other words, there can be only one ultimate priority in our lives. It's going to be God, or it's going to be something else. It's impossible to put both God and money at the top. We've got to choose.

And, of course we know the right choice. It's God. God is our REAL treasure. It's only by putting God at the top that we're able to live truly happy and contented lives. To be truly content and fulfilled in our lives, we've got to undo the grip of greed in our lives.

But how do we do that? Well, as we've been talking about in this sermon series, the key to the kind of transformation that enables us to begin doing the kind of things Jesus would do is spiritual practices. Through spiritual practices, we allow God's Spirit to work within us to Undo the training we've been receiving from our fallen culture our entire lives. We begin to train our spiritual muscles to be more like Jesus.

And the key to rejecting greed is one of those spiritual practices. In fact, it may be the most important of them all: generosity. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, famously said to make all you can, save all you can, and, critically, to *give* all you can. When we hold our money and possessions lightly, when we can give them away without stress and worry, we lessen money's hold on us. And, as we do that, we Undo our greed, and become more like Jesus.