April 15, 2018 “What would Jesus say…to the 1%”

Jesus said to them, “Watch out! Guard yourself against all kinds of greed. After all, one’s life isn’t determined by one’s possessions, even when someone is very wealthy.” [Jesus said,] “Who are the faithful and wise managers whom the master will put in charge of his household servants, to give them their food at the proper time? Happy are the servants whom the master finds fulfilling their responsibilities when he comes…But suppose that these servants should say to themselves, My master is taking his time about coming. And suppose they began to beat the servants, both men and women, and to eat, drink, and get drunk. The master of those servants would come on a day when they weren’t expecting him, at a time they couldn’t predict. The master will cut them into pieces and assign them a place with the unfaithful…Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.

—Luke 12 selected verses

“Guard yourself against greed”
To all people, and especially the 1%, Jesus said, “Guard yourself against all kinds of greed.” How much do you want in life? How much of what you want do you need? Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5 identified greed as a type of “idolatry,” of loving things more than God. Jesus’ sad parable reminded us that “one’s life isn’t determined by one’s possessions.” The day comes for all people when the only question is, “Who will get all the ‘stuff’ I’ve accumulated?”

➢ One option never seemed to occur to the man in Jesus’ story. The principle in Acts 20:35, the only direct quote from Jesus not in any of the four gospels, seemed to have never crossed his mind. Looking at his huge harvest, he never said, “I’ve got more than enough —I’ll give some to people who need it.” How easy or hard is it for you to be generous with the money, time or “stuff” you have? What wishes or fears get in the way of generosity?

• Does God ask you to give to godly causes because God needs the money, or because you need to give? (If in doubt, cf. Psalm 50:9-10.) How do you understand Jesus’ challenging phrase about being “rich toward God”? What steps can you take, in your day-to-day life, to increase your “stock” of this kind of inner wealth? How can you model and teach that approach to life with your children or other people with whom you have influence?

Prayer: Lord God, I can best guard myself against greed when your Spirit is living within me, guiding and shaping my life. Please shape me into your self-giving image. Amen.

Wallets that don’t wear out for eternal treasure
TUESDAY 4.17.18  Luke 12:32-34
We often see ads for RFID wallets and purses that block electronic signals to keep scanners from stealing our account numbers. That wasn’t an issue in Jesus’ day. But he contrasted all types of human, earthly “wallets” or purses, which wear out, with putting our treasure in heaven. Amid almost
weekly stories about data breaches, we may find it easier to think of God’s domain as the ultimate safe place, where our treasure can last for all eternity.

- Where do you keep the largest part of your “treasure”? Is it in a safe deposit box or bank vault, in your house or houses, parked in your garage or garages, or in an array of special events tickets or exotic travel destinations? None of those is “wrong,” so long as they do not devour so much attention and affection that they detach your heart from God’s gift of eternal life in God’s kingdom. In what ways are you depositing “a treasure in heaven”?

Jesus said that for his “little flock,” there is no need to fear. God delights in giving us the kingdom. In Matthew 6:27, he added the practical observation that worry does little good. Can you recall things you spent a lot of time and energy worrying about that never happened? How does worry differ from wise foresight and precautions? What are some more fruitful, sustainable ways of facing life’s challenges than worry?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, worry can be addicting. The more I worry, the more I seem to find to worry about. Guide me into a life shaped instead by faith and hope, trusting your eternal goodness. Amen.

**Been given much? Much is demanded**

**WEDNESDAY 4.18.18  Luke 12:35-48**

Jesus used this story to remind his disciples that we are God’s servants. We are responsible to use God’s resources according to God’s will, rather than our own. His story reflected the Roman legal system where, in most cases, masters held absolute, life-and-death power over their servants. Jesus was not saying God acted just as Roman masters would. He was emphasizing the importance that we be responsible stewards of whatever God gives us.

- In Genesis 12:2-3, God said to Abraham, Israel’s founding father (and likely one of his day’s 1%), “I will make of you a great nation and will bless you….all the families of earth will be blessed because of you.” Jesus continued to teach that with blessing comes responsibility: “from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” What are your biggest blessings? In what ways are you using them to bless others?

- “Punishments [in Jesus’ story] vary depending on how much the disciple knows; but none of Luke’s readers who hear these parables could claim they didn’t know the master’s will.” * Jesus said a great deal more about the proper priority and uses of wealth than about many other topics on which most Christians claim certainty. If last weekend’s sermon (you can click here [cor.org/sermons] to watch it) or this week’s GPS readings have challenged you, then you clearly know the master’s will. What will you do about it?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I know what you taught about how I should relate to my possessions, and how I should use them to bless others. Give me the inner freedom to act on your teaching. Amen.


**Jesus offended money-loving Pharisees**


Jesus told of a careless, dishonest steward who faced firing. Asked for a final report, the steward instead “cooked the books” more, earning himself favor by costing his master more money. Jesus said, “The master commended the dishonest manager because he acted cleverly.” Did Jesus favor cheating? No (it’s a parable). The swindler won the master’s (grudging) admiration for pursuing his
crooked values with all his energy. Jesus asked: if even a swindler can look down the road, wouldn’t you be wiser to use wealth for eternal purposes than for short-term earthly gain?

- Pastor Bruce Larson wrote, “This rogue bought friends with money. Jesus is suggesting we act with the same kind of foresight and use our money for that which is lasting.” * What are some ways you can pursue things that will truly last? What would it look like for you, as Jesus’ follower, to seek to live out Jesus’ values every day with as much ingenuity and vigor as the servant gave to assuring he’d have people who “owed him” after his firing?

- One writer suggested that this parable could inspire stagnant ministries to think original thoughts, make new friends across old barriers, and throw needless caution to the winds. Where do ministries and organizations that you are a part of need creativity and a focus on ultimate goals? How can you be a force to bring the servant’s shrewdness (and perhaps more of your earthly treasure) to bear on kingdom causes you care about?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, am I giving my best energy and creativity to my service for you? Help me apply as much thought and energy to your kingdom’s purposes as I do to my career or retirement. Amen.


The rich should pay heed to the prophets
FRIDAY 4.20.18  Luke 16:19-31
This is the third of three “rich man” parables Luke included (we read the other two earlier this week). The story had two main characters—“a certain rich man” and a poor beggar “named Lazarus.” (Spoiler alert: the poor man, but not the rich man, got the dignity of a personal name.) The “certain rich man” shared not even a crumb with Lazarus, the poor beggar “at his gate.” Once earthly life was over, the beggar got to be by Abraham’s side, while the rich man, in misery, begged him to warn his brothers away from his painful fate.

- Jesus’ story used popular ideas about heaven and Hades to teach that God cares more about how generously we do (or do not) treat the poor than about the size of our bank balance. Lazarus, the beggar, received joy and love in the end, while the rich man (like Jacob Marley in Dickens’ A Christmas Carol) faced a dismal afterlife. What influences have helped you choose values (social, financial and spiritual) based on “Moses and the prophets”—and Jesus? In what ways has living in Jesus’ kingdom shifted your values?

- Jesus’ teaching about wealth and poverty extended the message of the Old Testament prophets (cf. e.g. Isaiah 1:15-17, Amos 2:6-7). After his first mission trip to Malawi, Resurrection member Brian Hague wrote “The River” (click here (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tnp25sUeKSk) to hear the song). How does your heart respond when you see suffering people at your “gate” (which today is the size of our whole planet)?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I’m tempted to think that because I cannot give to everyone, I may as well not give to anyone. Save me from the rich man’s foolish, destructive choice. Amen.

Choose life eternal over any and all possessions
Jesus said that what we sometimes call “business as usual” has no enduring value. “[Jesus’] followers can finally expect relief and salvation (Luke 21:27-28), and possessions won’t matter.” * In Luke 17:32, he referred to a tragic story from the early Old Testament. Before destroying the wicked city of Sodom, God sent messengers to warn Abraham’s nephew Lot to flee destruction. But “because Lot’s wife could not let go of her life in Sodom, she looked back and perished, becoming a
pillar of salt (Gen 19:26).” ** Jesus had many disturbing ways of asking whether we own our possessions, or whether in reality they own us.

- On a world basis, most of us in the United States are among the wealthiest 1% of the population. (This website, (investopedia.com) updated in February 2018, says anyone who makes $32,400 a year or more is in the top 1% of incomes in the world.) Whether you make it to that cutoff line or not, how much do you believe God has given you in life? How close are you to doing all the good you can do with what God has given you? What role does fear play as you seek to determine what good you can do with your resources? What practical steps could you take in the next 12 months to increase your generosity? (For helpful practical ideas and deeper reflections, read Pastor Hamilton’s book Enough: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity.)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, if you had only cared about your own comfort and convenience, you would never have come to earth, and I’d have to live without hope or forgiveness. Make me less afraid of giving, and more open to the joy of generous living. Amen.

**Family Activity:** Gather with your family with two backpacks, some paper, a few large, heavy rocks and a couple of thick markers. As a family, write down many of your blessings that meet basic needs (items like shelter, food, water, health care, education and transportation) on the paper. Place these pieces of paper in one backpack. Have each person try on this light backpack. Acknowledge its lightness and how each of these blessings makes our lives better. Then have everyone take a stone or two and a marker. Write down the same words on the stones with “No” in front of each. Place them in the second backpack, and pass it around. Use its heaviness to imagine and discuss what life would be like without each of these blessings. Discuss places and situations where people do not have these, and what their life must be like. Read Galatians 6:2 and Matthew 25:35-40. Talk about what you can do for others to lighten these heavy burdens. Thank God for your blessings. Ask God to help you lighten others’ burdens.


**Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer**  Prayers for Peace & Comfort:
- Cheryl Jefferson Bell and family on the death of her stepbrother Eugene “Geno” Evans, 4/8
- Family and friends of Ed Donahue on his death, 4/8
- Family and friends of Rebecca Barth on her death, 4/8
- Marcy Langhofer and family on the death of her mother Carol Flynn, 4/7
- Paul Leffert and family on the death of his wife Vicky Leffert, 4/6
- Family and friends of Susan Kearney on her death, 4/5
- Gwen Gepford and family on the death of her mother Nancy Hughes, 4/4
- Mary Houser and family on the death of her aunt LaVerne Houser, 4/4
- Dick Smith and family on the death of his son Todd Smith, 4/2
- Gayle Hickman and family on the death of her father Ron Douglas, 3/24