

King of Glory Lutheran Church
Mark 10: 17-31 Rich Young Man: Stewardship of Wealth and Possessions
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Jesus pushes us to examine our relationship with wealth. He loves us and commands us share generously.

I certainly hope that everyone is laughing after that video on tithing! It's true, isn't it? People tend to think about tithing in many different ways. But I'm sure glad that none of you have used that Manipulation Technique on me!

A pastor friend of mine shared the story when she got married, she had to tell her new husband that they had to tithe 10% to the church. It was a new concept to him. He said to her, "Which 10% percent? Is it just your salary or both our salaries? Is it before taxes or after taxes?"

As I said last week, God asks us to be good stewards of all of God's blessings: relationships, time, money, talents, and more. So...in case it isn't obvious yet...this is a sermon on money.

I know how many pleas each of our households get asking for money! And those requests start ramping up about this time of year. Feed someone Thanksgiving dinner. National Public Radio is having their money drive. Your favorite charity and mine and our least favorite charities too, send letters, they send emails, they hound us for financial gifts to support their causes.

We want to come to church and find a safe haven from all that. Yes? We don't want one more person to ask us to give money.

And we at church aren't Jewish. If we were, you'd get your invoice in the mail, and you'd simply pay and we would know what we had to work with.

So what if I didn't ask you? And what if we could re-shape the conversation so that it still felt safe to think about what you might be able to give to King of Glory?

In the story we just heard, the rich young man came to Jesus with a very important question. But the text says, he knelt in front of Jesus. He knelt. That was the position to ask for healing from a rabbi. Does this man know and feel the struggle in his heart between keeping the law and his bank account? He comes for healing.

How might that feel for us to come to Jesus and say, "I need some spiritual healing around finances. Lord, I want to know what you want me to do with all these requests coming in. I need to feed my house and pay my bills and it's stressful. Heal me Lord and show me the way."

Step 1. Come to Jesus for a sense of spiritual peace and healing for finances.

Secondly, the young man frames his question around what will grant him eternal life. Now he is not asking about getting into heaven as you and I might think about it. He is actually asking Jesus about how to be connected to God when the Lord will come again and the new age of all peace and prosperity and justice will commence for all people. That's the question. Therefore, right now, let go of myth that giving all our money away will get us into heaven. As Jesus says himself, 'No one is good, but God alone.' None of us – none of us can do anything about our salvation in the life to come. Remember Lutheran theology? We are fully sinner and fully saint. Because of Easter resurrection, which only Jesus accomplished, are we granted new life after leaving this earth. "For mortals it is impossible! Not for God." God gives us salvation in the life to come. We do not earn it. Financially or through behavior or any other means.

Step 3. Now let's name two truths. In verse 21, Jesus looks at this man and loves him. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus can be fairly harsh. This is the only person in Mark's Gospel that is singled out and mentioned that Jesus loves. Jesus looked at the rich young man and loves him. Loves him no more or less than the blind beggar or the leper in the temple. Therefore Jesus also looks at us with love. That's one truth.

Step 4 - The second truth, is that the man went away sad for he had many possessions. He loved his stuff more than God. How many of us struggle in the same way? How many of us love our possessions more than God and our relationship with God? It's the state of humanity and our sinful nature. We want the latest, the best, the fastest, the most beautiful, the biggest, the this and the that, and

But this is a safe place and we can ask God for healing and guidance, right? We can! And God looks at us with loving eyes and assures us that there will be guidance, there will be help.

The intention of the young man was to get help. He was devout, he was open hearted and came wanting to know more! He kept God's law which was supposed

to bring life to all. We can be as open-hearted and curious as he was! We can ask, praying and patiently listening for God's answer to us.

Do we think that money and talents and time and relationships all just fall out of the sky into our laps? No! Who do we believe gives us all our blessings? Every single one? Of course. God. The God whom we worship and adore and give thanks to.

Think about all the mail, TV ads and emails you get asking you for money. Overwhelming? Can be. Now picture yourself, myself, coming to God in prayer asking for healing our need and desire for money. This is step 5.

“God, I feel the tension inside. I know you give me everything I have. I don't create money. You've given me the talents to make money or receive it in retirement. I must have this amount in order to survive. I'd love this amount in order to thrive. You Lord, know what I need. You God will continue to take care of me. Help me to believe that, trust it, and trust you in all things. Plus I want to give. You ask me to and it feels great. Who do you want me to give to? How much? Heal my heart and help me know. Amen.”

I just gave us five steps to gain some peace about all those unending requests for gifts.

Step 1 – come to God for healing about money

Step 2 – remember that finances – doesn't have anything to do with our salvation

Step 3 – Remember Jesus loves us – challenges us and loves us

Step 4 – admit to God our struggle with money

Step 5 – pray. Pray and listen.

Now to Jesus answer to the rich man. He says, “Give it all away.” Give it away. Notice that He says, give it to the poor. He doesn't say, give it to the church! We don't know what happened to the young man. We never hear of him again. Maybe Jesus' challenge changed his life. Maybe he remained sad all his days. If you run into him, tell him about the five steps!

It's Stewardship Emphasis time at church. I don't know your bank accounts. But I do know that all of us, as we pray about our money and build our weekly, or monthly budgets, we outline items that have to be in those final columns.

Here are a few of ours at King of Glory.

These are monthly expenses: Mortgage is \$5000. Water is \$714. Phone and broadband is \$344. Electricity is \$495. Salaries are \$16,900. Our water bill increased due to the landscaping the city required us to put in, but absolutely adds curb appeal.

I'm inviting you to use these five steps and have a conversation with God. I pledge to you, I will do the same. If your account doesn't allow for a pledge and God wants you to take care of your own, do that. If you can and God nudges you towards a gift to our church we take cash, credit cards and checks. Stocks too, if you wish!

I will promise you this. Every gift – be it large or small is important to God and to King of Glory. We will be good stewards of your gifts. We will be transparent in our transactions. We will use your money to change lives and do ministry in Jesus name.

Dear friends, don't forget the poor. Live within your means and not beyond them. Come to God for healing remembering His love and listening for His guidance.

Amen