

Sunday Sermonettes February 25, 2018

Introduction to the Sermonettes: God Gives us Freedom

This sermon is going to be about money. That probably sounds strange. Even though we don't usually talk about money that often, Jesus talked about money all the time. Jesus often spoke of how valuable a tool money could be, but he also cautioned that money could be a great temptation.

These two things really tie all of the blessings that God gives together. Whether we are talking about time, talents, money, or any other blessing that God gives on the earth they can either be a temptation to us or a blessing.

The devil can use these blessings to tempt us away from our Savior. This happens so subtly that we don't even notice that the gift has replaced God as the priority and the director of our life. We allow ourselves to become slaves to these things and our trust is in them and not in God.

God wants to show us his love. He wants these gifts to be blessings to us and not temptations. He wants to give us freedom from all the temptation and sin that cloud our use of these gifts with misery, turmoil and stress. He wants us to see our Savior and to use our gifts to thank and praise him.

This morning we will see that God wants to give us freedom when it comes to our money and possessions. He wants to free us from the worry that so often comes with those gifts. He wants to free us to trust in him and he wants to free us to thank him with all we have.

Sermonette #1: God Gives us Freedom: From Worry

Scripture: Matthew 6: 25-34

How much time in your life do you spend worrying about money? I think many of us spend a lot of time worrying about whether or not the ends will meet, if the check will last or if the bills will get paid. It becomes a part of our monthly routine we get the check, we look at it and we begin to worry that it will not pay all the bills.

When it comes to the money that God gives to us, we live with the constant fear of balancing our saving and our spending. If I spend this here, what will I not have to spend later? If I make this purchase, will I have enough to pay for that? If I give this to God, will I have enough for myself?

Unfortunately, instead of looking to God for freedom from our worrying, we look inside of ourselves for all the ways we can save a penny here or a penny there. We try to hold off on paying this bill or send that bill in a little bit late. We don't give an offering to the Lord for a month or three months. We congratulate ourselves that we have made it through another month.

God does not want worry and fear to be part of a Christian's life. He shows us just how worthless it is to worry in Matthew 6. **"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"** ²⁶ **Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?** ²⁷ **Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?**

²⁸ **"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin."** ²⁹ **Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.** ³⁰ **If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?** ³¹ **So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'** ³² **For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.** ³³ **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** ³⁴ **Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**

In this reading, Jesus poses some questions to us that make our fear and worry about money look silly. **Who of you can add a single hour to his life?** Does worrying help? No. It doesn't bring about an extra minute to worry about something that God has in his hands already.

If we didn't have a God like him in charge, we would have reason to worry. If you were God, could you make sure that all things continued to run? Would you be able to guarantee that the universe turned as it

should, that every person would be cared for, AND that every plant and animal would get what it needed? No, I couldn't and neither can you. But God is in charge and he has everything in his hands. Our worrying does not change how he will preserve and provide for this world and us.

Are you not more valuable than they? Will he not much more clothe you? We often think we are far superior to the plants and animals because we have these advanced brains that help us with so many things. But God tells us that when it comes to worrying, the plants and animals give us the example we are to live by.

God takes care of the plants, the birds and the animals. They have no supermarkets or Wal-Marts, yet they eat and are clothed because God takes care of them. Aren't we more valuable than them, will he not clothe and feed us, if he takes so much care for them?

Of course he will. By showing us all that he does for the plants and animals God wants to give us freedom from the fear that often comes from money. He wants us to see all that he does and know will he certainly do that and much more for us. God wants to give us freedom from worrying because he will give us all that we need.

Sermonette #2: God Gives us Freedom: To Trust Scripture: Psalm 145:15, Mark 12: 41-44

Worry and fear always come from a lack of faith and trust in God. Whether it be in big ways or small, we don't think that God can or will take care of us.

My wife can tell you that I prefer to drive. There are many reasons I like to drive, but the main reason I like to drive is that I don't trust anyone else to take me safely to where I am going. Some say I like to be in control, that may be true, but I think it comes down to trust. I simply don't trust someone else behind the wheel.

This is the same thing that we do with God. We don't trust that God is as good as his promise to take care of us. We only trust ourselves to make it through our lives. Even when God is richly blessing us, we don't trust that God's promise is enough, we want more money to make sure that everything is Ok.

What is enough money? Whatever number you have in your head right now, I can guarantee that it will not be enough. I think there is enough history of the world to show that people who have a \$10 want a \$20, \$20 want \$100, \$100 want \$1000, \$1000 want \$10,000. We want more and more money because we think that money will answer and solve all of our problems.

David says, "**The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.**"¹⁶**You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.**" He does not say, the eyes of all look to their money or possessions and they satisfy their desires. Money brings with it its own problems. David says the eyes of all, that includes us, look to you – look to the Lord--- and he takes cares of all their needs.

God wants to give us freedom from worry, he wants to give us freedom to trust in him. True faith and trust do not come from an abundance of money or possessions, true faith and trust comes from the heart that believes and trusts in the promises of God. We read from Mark 12. **Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.**⁴² **But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.**

⁴³ **Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.**"⁴⁴ **They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."**

Jesus was teaching a lesson to the disciples that day. It was a lesson about freedom of the heart. Who had freedom to trust, the rich people or the poor woman?

The Lord had given this woman freedom from fear. It was freedom which trusted in him. This faith and trust showed itself in a thank offering that was greater than all the money that the rich people brought because her offering truly came from faith. She gave all she had trusting that God would provide for her.

God wants us to look to him on him, his promises and his grace, so that we have freedom from fear, freedom to trust in him for all that we need.

Sermonette # 3: God Gives us Freedom: To Thank Him With all We Have Scripture: 2 Cor. 5:14-17

What do you lack? Think about it, what do you lack? Some might have thought about a big ticket items like a house or car, you might have thought about other things that you lack. But when we look at our lives and ask ourselves what we lack, it usually is some want and not a need. God has richly blessed us with an abundance of money and possessions.

We have been blessed so richly that even when we think we are not running out of money, we still have so many options. We can cut back on some bill like cable or internet, get another job, sell a car, sell a house, cash out the 401K even if there is a penalty. We have been blessed by God with money in our pockets or bank accounts, but we have also been blessed by God with many other assets as well.

We don't lack treasures, we lack thankfulness to God for the treasures he gives. We aren't as thankful as we should be because we don't think about our money and possessions as gifts from God, instead we think of them as the proper reward for the work we do.

Our thankfulness to our Savior often disappears when it comes to our money. We say that we want the Gospel to be spread throughout the world, but when it comes to supporting that work with money or time we just don't seem to have enough of either.

Paul tells us that our whole lives, including how we use our money, is an act of faith to our Savior Jesus. Either we are praising and thanking Jesus with the way we use our money, or we are not. ¹⁴ **For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.** ¹⁵ **And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

¹⁶ **So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.** ¹⁷ **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

God wants to give us freedom from the fear and worry that stands in the way of true trust in our lives. He wants to set us free so that we can be thankful with all the gifts that he gives to us.

Our thankfulness does not begin with a bigger amount that we write on the check or take from the bank because pastor told us to or because the church is not paying its bills. Our gifts of thanks must start with and be motivated by Jesus. Paul says, "The love that Christ has shown us compels us to no longer live for ourselves but for him."

Every Sunday we get to hear the greatest news that the world has ever known. This message is not centered on the world or anything in the world. It is not a money-centered message it is a Savior-centered message. We get to hear the good news that our Savior loves us and because he loves us, he sacrificed himself to save us from our sins. We are reminded that we do not need to fear because we know how this life will end. It is not scary, it is joyful because Jesus lives we will live. We don't need to fear because the same love that has forgiven us fully and gives us eternity freely is the same love that makes the promise to us that he will provide for us through every day of our life, until our life begins with him in heaven.

Jesus has given us freedom from worrying about our money. He has given us something much more powerful to trust in. He gives us himself. Because we have freedom from the power of death and hell, freedom from worry because we have a God to trust in who is giving us all we need. We are free to live a life of thanks to God for all of this in what we say and do.

We are free to be joyfully generous in the way we use the tools of time and talents to God's glory and..... yes also in the way that we use our money and possessions to God's glory.

Freedom of the heart does not come with a price tag. Jesus never said we have to give a certain amount to show how thankful we are. Jesus doesn't want money first and hearts second, he wants hearts of faith first and gifts of time, talents and treasures that flow out of those hearts of thanks.

God give us hearts that are free from worry and doubt, that trust in you for all we need. May we be free to thank you with all we have; our time, our talents, and especially our money and possessions.