

SERMON (3.2.2024, Jakub Mrázek) : WE DON'T SPEAK ABOUT MONEY, RIGHT?

Do we speak about money?

When we talk about money in the church, we usually only talk about tithing. But there is a much bigger message in God's Word that has to do with money. God is not interested in getting 10% of our income (which we sometimes think we should give to God), but God is interested in 100% of our finances and possessions because He cares about us.

God doesn't want to leave us alone, at the mercy of the troubles we may be experiencing in this, relying only on our own reason and the principles of "civil" thinking, but it is in the area of finances that we can experience the benefits of trusting God to take us as His children (whom He cares for) and show us the way to practically function and live in this world that cannot do without money, while keeping a sound heart and a clear head.

The Holy Spirit and money

Bible - Act: 2,41-47

It is therefore not surprising to see the theme of money and possessions very much in evidence in the way the early church lived its life. Those who were in Jerusalem at that time and could observe the first community of believers in Christ saw that they shared their possessions so that no one would lose.

Why is the Holy Spirit working so significantly in money and property? I think it is precisely because God is not concerned about our money and possessions at all. Why would He care about it? He is the Creator of everything, and He owns the earth and everything on it. Money (and much of our possessions) are just a placeholder behind which we hide our emotions, our feelings, desires, fears, and hopes... We build up financial reserves so that we don't have to worry about the future. We are constricted by debt because it makes us uncomfortable to be held in debt. We feel ashamed of bad financial decisions because we don't want to look like fools. We buy nice things to look like successful people. We try to preserve our standard of living, at least outwardly, to hide our financial problems and to make (not spoil) our impression with our social bubble... It touches our heart so much.

When Christians are flooded with God's Spirit and His influence - their attitude toward money and possessions changes dramatically. Because their hearts are dramatically changed! And that's what God wants to do with us, with you today - He cares about your heart and desires for you to experience His influence in finances as well.

Bible - Act: 5,1-5

This shocking story in Acts about the couple who sold their fields but gave the apostles only part of the money they made sometimes falsely gives us the impression that as good Christians we should act in some extreme way that requires giving up everything. We are a little concerned that trusting God on the issue of money and possessions will lead us further than we have the courage and willingness to go.

The problem with Ananias and Sapphira, however, was not what part of the money they were willing to give, but that they "hid" part of the money. They didn't want to give up that emotional power that money has over them and they wanted to impress people and God. But they were free to do what they wanted with their possessions. For it is not about property, but about the heart. But this did not undergo a real transformation for them, everything was actually a play.

If you care about your own heart, you will also have to reveal all your questions and matters concerning money and finances before God. There are 3 key principles that can help you do this, which change our thinking about money and possessions from a civil setting to a Godly setting.

To what do we trust about money?

- **Money IS A SPIRITUAL topic.**

The first principle can set you on the path to true freedom. A large part of our lives revolves around money. 1/3 of our day is spent making money; a lot of the other time is spent figuring out how to spend it. We must plan our income and expenses, save, pay off debt. We think and pray about how much money we can give and where we can give it. In fact, there is almost no area that finances do not affect. You may be fortunate that you don't have to deal with money, but money can hit any area and relationships in your life very hard tomorrow. That's when it will become apparent how things really are with you. Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon. No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will cling to the one and despise the other. (Matthew 6:24). Jesus makes it clear that there can be no compromise on the God-money axis. Either finances will come first, and you will subordinate the way you follow Christ to them, or you will have it the other way around - and use money to follow Christ more faithfully. But serving Christ, unlike serving possessions, brings real freedom.

- **God is the owner, we are the "asset managers".**

The second principle is crucial and can save you from a lot of unnecessary suffering. The Bible says:

"The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it, the whole world and the inhabitants thereof.

Even though God has entrusted all of creation to us and even told us to have dominion over it, He has never relinquished ownership of it. We are not owners, but stewards. Even if I earn money at work that comes into my account - it is not my money, it belongs to God, I am merely a steward who invested time, hands, skills, and energy (all of which are from God) and was able to earn that money because of it.

When we acknowledge God as the owner of everything we have, then every decision we make about how to spend our money will be a spiritual decision. Just changing that attitude will protect us from many bad decisions, but it can also open a lot of room to see God's working in our own lives and in our environment. In fact, it will strengthen our ability to be faithful in managing small and large things, caring for our own and others' possessions, building our character and strengthening our contentment.

- **Needs and desires.**

The third principle can teach you true satisfaction.

We need to let go of control of what is important and what is not out of our own hands and leave it in God's hands.

Jesus said: "3 3 Don't worry, then. Don't say, 3'What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What are we going to wear?' 33 seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:31-33).

God is predictable when He says He will provide for our needs. He is unpredictable in how He will do it. Our problem is that we often have a very specific idea of what God should do and how He should do it. We have a clear idea of what our needs are, and we want to be in control of meeting them.

But God is after our hearts. Therefore, He will always do two things - He will teach us to trust - He will use different and often surprising ways to take care of us, and He will teach us to be satisfied by teaching us to distinguish our needs from our desires. In the text we read Jesus makes it clear that we don't have to worry about basic needs. Basic needs include food, clothing, and shelter. Everything else is just our desires that don't need to be met. Every day we experience and can count on God to provide for our needs, but we also experience countless times how generous God is in giving us much that we desire above and beyond our needs. The wisdom to distinguish needs from desires will lead us to true gratitude and fulfillment.