

Message: “Wisdom and Finance”. Week 2 of “Enough Series”

Presented by Rev Kristen Lowe on 01-14-2018

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

With credit to Adam Hamilton – Church of the Resurrection

Luke 15:11-16

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So, he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

Matthew 6:24

“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.

Proverbs 21:5, 20

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to want. Precious treasure remains in the house of the wise, but the fool devours it.



Where Did All Our Money Go?

When my daughter was little, she was fascinated with the dollar store. Just think, every single thing in the store is only a dollar! She wanted very badly to take her birthday money and buy something. I said, “What do you think you need?” She said, I don’t know until I see it.”

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Have you ever shopped that way? My problem is going to the grocery store without a list. Did you know that Grocery stores are set up with booby traps? This is a real thing!

1. They put the milk at the back
2. Pumped in air when you walk in
3. Large Grocery carts
4. Produce at the front – maze before checkouts
5. Bulk items – whether or not they are a bargain
6. Changing layouts

This happened to me just this past week. I wanted an avocado for a recipe. An avocado. I came home with 47 dollars worth of other stuff.

We live in a time when it's too easy to spend money. Last year I attended Financial Peace University and discovered a whole host of hacks to help me live in financial freedom. One of the things they suggest right off the bat is to use cash. That debit card desensitizes us. We don't actually see the money, so it's not like really spending it.



I suspect that if I had cash on hand, I would have thought twice.

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Living as Prodigals

From Jesus’ description in Luke 15:11-16, we see that the prodigal son had the habits of squandering and spending. The word *prodigal* does not mean someone who wanders away or is lost. It literally means “one who wastes money.” A prodigal is one who wastes money, who is a spendthrift. Many of us struggle with that habit as well. We’re not worried about tomorrow. We want it *today*. The problem with that kind of thinking is that, for most of us, the “famine” eventually comes. It comes when we have spent everything we have and even a little bit of next year’s income. So we use the credit card and charge it, and we go a little further into debt. Finally, we come to a place where we “find ourselves.” We have nothing left, not even any credit, and we can’t figure out how we are we going to make it.

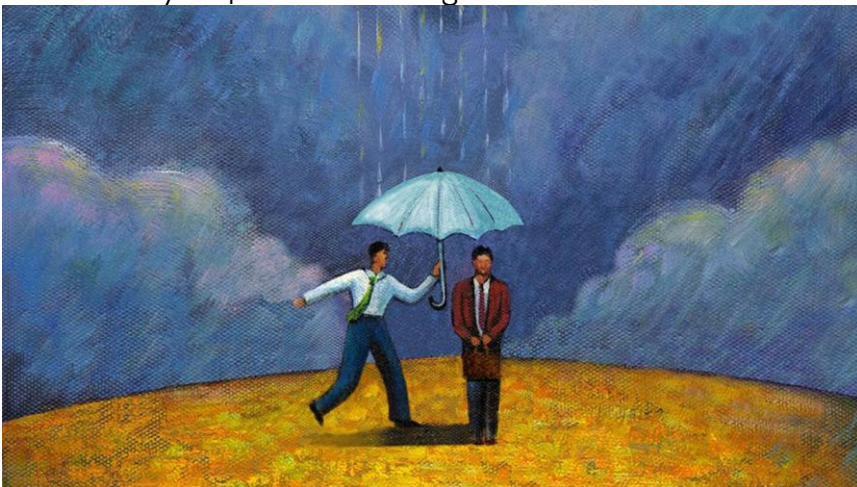


Clarifying Our Relationship With Money and Possessions

We don’t exist simply to consume as much as we can and get as much pleasure as we can while we are here on this earth. We children of the most high God! We have a higher purpose. We need to know and understand our life purpose—our vision or mission or calling—and then spend our money in ways that are consistent with this purpose or calling.

Be Clear About Your Purpose and Calling

Society tells us that our life purpose is to consume—to make as much money as possible and to blow as much money as possible on things we don’t need.



The Bible tells us that we were created to care for God’s creation. We were created to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We were created to care for our families and those in need. We were created to glorify God, to seek justice, and to do mercy. Our money and possessions should be devoted to helping us fulfill this calling. We are to use our resources to help care for our families and others—to

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serve Christ and the world through the church, missions, and everyday opportunities. We have a life purpose that is greater than our own self-interests, and how we spend our God-given resources reflects our understanding and commitment to this life purpose or mission.

Set Worthy Goals

Being able to accomplish the greater purposes God has for our lives requires some measure of planning. We need to set some short term, medium term and long term goals. What do you want for yourself? You need a plan to get there. Some may think that this Biblical frugality limits freedom when in fact it creates less of this:



And more of this:



The Necessity of a Budget/Spending Plan

Once we have set some financial goals, we need to develop a plan to meet those goals. A budget is a spending plan that enables us to accomplish our goals. When we budget, we should apply six key financial principles to help us manage our money with wisdom and faith:

Pay your tithe and offering first.

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Six Key Financial Principles

to Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity

1. Put God first in your living and giving. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)
2. Prepare a spending plan and track all expenses monthly. (Proverbs 27:23-24)
3. Simplify your lifestyle; live below your means. (Matthew 6:19-33)
4. Provide immediately for an emergency fund. (1 Timothy 6:9-12)
5. Pay off all credit card debt and use cash, not credit cards. (Proverbs 22:7)
6. Practice long-range saving and investing habits. (Luke 14:28)

1. Put God first in your living and your giving. Give your tithe and offering from the “top” of your paycheck, and then live on whatever remains. (My story)

2. Create a budget and track your expenses.

Creating a budget is simply developing a plan in which you tell your money what you want it to do. Tracking your expenses with a budget is like getting on the scales: It allows you to see how you are doing and motivates you to be more careful with your expenditures.

3. Simplify your lifestyle (live below your means).

Because this discipline is critical to the success of any financial plan, next Sunday’s sermon will be devoted to this topic.

4. Establish an emergency fund.

An emergency fund is an account separate from checking or long-term savings that is set aside specifically for emergencies. Dave Ramsey recommends beginning with \$1,000 and building that to three months’ worth of income.⁴ When you have this amount, you won’t need to use your credit cards anymore.

5. Pay off your credit cards, use cash/debit cards for purchases, and use credit wisely.

As you are building your emergency fund, begin to pay off your credit card debt and start using cash or debit cards for purchases. Some experts suggest starting with the credit card that has the highest interest rate. Others suggest paying down the smallest debt first, experiencing that victory, and applying your payments from the first card to the second, and so on, creating a snowball effect to pay off the cards as soon as possible. Cut up your cards as you pay them down so that you are not trapped or leveraged by your future for present-day pleasure, as the prodigal son was. If you must use a credit card, such as when traveling or making purchases online, be sure to pay off the debt monthly. If you are unable to do this, then it is better for you to cut up your cards and stop using them altogether.

6. Practice long-term savings and investing habits.

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Saving money is the number-one wise money management principle everyone should practice. We do not save merely for the sake of saving. There is a word for that: hoarding. Hoarding is frowned upon in the Bible as the practice of fools and those who fail to understand the purpose of life. Saving, on the other hand, is meant to be purposeful. There are three types of savings we should have:

- 1) Emergency savings,
- 2) Savings for wants and goals, and
- 3) Retirement savings.

Jesus spoke more about money than almost any other subject. He realized that we live in a materialistic world with many snares. If you want to know more about financial peace and how to achieve it, sign up for this spring's financial peace university. I promise you it will be worth your while.