

## SERMON TEXT

*Jesus said, ““*

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:32-34)*

## MONEY AND FEAR

I invite you take some money out of your pocket or purse and hold it in your hand. It can be a dollar bill, a quarter, a twenty dollar bill, whatever. (Don't worry, I am not going to ask you to give it away or do anything other than look at it.) This morning I want to talk about the fears that we have when it comes to money.

Fear can be a powerful force in our lives. We can be afraid of what other people think about us, we can be afraid of cancer, we can be afraid of driving over a bridge. I suspect, though, that one of the greatest fears that many of us struggle with is the fear that is connected to money. So, as you look at the money in your hand, think about your fears.

Floyd Jackson, a 42 year old air force officer, says the main thing he learned as a child was that money “could you make you happy.” His parents were poor, and they blamed all their problems on not having enough money. Floyd determined he would have lots of money when he grew up. What he wants most now is more money, because he believes money will make him happy. When he was asked if he had any fears about money, he laughed and said, “No, just the lack of it.”

Like Floyd, you may fear running out of money. You may be afraid of what will happen in the stock market. Fears about money can be irrational. For example, people earning 20 times what people in African nations earn can be

afraid that they are on the brink of starvation. Our families and our life experiences influence our thoughts and feelings about money. If you grew up in hard times, you know firsthand the anxiety of scarcity. Because of that experience, you may have the urge to hold on to money and the very idea of letting go of money or a possession is frightening. On the other hand, if you grew up in the midst of affluence, the very notion of being frugal with money may seem strange to you.

Talking about money can be threatening - perhaps because we connect money with our security and wanting to be secure is a powerful desire. When we are dealing with security we are dealing with a matter of the heart. Maybe that is why Jesus talked so much about money. Jesus knew that money can mess up our relationship with God and cause problems with our faith. When we become more concerned about growing the money in our pension fund than we are concerned about growing our relationship with God, we have a faith problem. When the judgments of the stock market mean more to us than the judgments of God, we have a faith problem.

In the First Commandment God addresses matters of the heart. Martin Luther helps us to understand that the First Commandment is about who we fear and love and trust the most. Is it God? Or is it money? Are the fears that you have about money stronger than your fear of God? Do you love money more than you love God? Do you put more trust in your money and what your money can do for you or do you put more trust in God? Whenever we fail to put God first in our lives, we break this commandment and come under God's judgment.

That's why we need to really hear the word Jesus speaks to us today. Listen again to what he says. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom!" (Luke 12:32)

There is no need to be afraid when it comes to money, because God is going to take care of you! In fact, Jesus says, God delights in giving you what you need!

I think about the woman who lived in Zarephath. Hundreds of years before the time of Jesus there was a severe drought in the land of Israel. The

prophet Elijah came to this woman's house and asked for something to eat. The woman said she had only a handful of flour and a little oil in a jug - just enough for one last meal for her son and herself. Elijah assured her that God would take care of her and that is exactly what happened. Everyday there was enough food for the woman, her son and Elijah to eat. (This story is found in 1 Kings 17)

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Don't worry about tomorrow, he says. Each day God will provide what you need. Food, clothing, shelter - God will provide.

Listen to these words in Philippians chapter 4, "God will fully satisfy every need of yours according." What a promise! God will fully satisfy every need of yours!

If you wonder about that, look at the cross. Jesus suffered and died on the cross because he is fully committed to you! Because of what happened on the cross you can be sure that nothing will ever interfere with God's promise to take care of you.

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom!" You are God's little flock and it is God's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom!

Look at the money in your hand again. Look at it and say to yourself, "You have no power over me; God does and he has promised to take care of me. I'm not going to be afraid."

