

The Best Things in Life are Free - Luke 16:1-13
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22nd September 2013

Talk about mark down sales! The first debtor owed 3000 litres of Olive Oil and that was slashed to 1500 litres - that is half price!!! Everything must go! The second debtor owed 30 tons of wheat that was reduced to 24 tons - now I don't know what the percentage drop that is but it is impressive! This is the best sort of sale! Better than any sale that we have seen at Prouds, Kmart or Michael Hill Jeweller! Imagine if you had a \$100,000 bank loan and one day you had a call from the bank manager saying 'Hi Sir or Madam, we have here a record that you owe us \$100,000 what would you say if we reduced that by half? After all ladies and gentlemen - it is just money. We can't eat it, it won't keep us warm, it can't give us love and it will never make us happy.

It is interesting that early in The Beatles career they released 2 hits in a matter of 2 years with very contradictory messages. Guess? The first one was 'Money'. 'The best things in life are free, but you can save that for the birds and bees, I want Money. That's what I want.'

And the second was - 'Can't buy me love'. Say you don't need no diamond ring and I'll be satisfied, tell me that you want the kind of thing that money just can't buy. I don't care too much for money, cause money can't buy me love.

But if money can't buy us love - why do we love it so much? We convince ourselves that if only we have enough money that all our problems will go away. We muse over what we would do if we won lotto.

Money is a necessity in this world. We do need it - and God knows that. It is when money is our goal, our purpose and becomes our master that we need to step back and remind ourselves. It is just money.

Money makes the world go around, it can help us buy things and surround us with things that we convince ourselves gives us value. This could be anything from buying a new car - how many of you have seen people up to their eyeballs in debt and still go out and buy a new car. Or it could be your matching Shelley tea set that glorify your mantle. Money can buy houses, electricity, food, clothes - God knows that we need these things. Houses, electricity, food and clothes are not our God - but sometimes we are tricked into thinking that they are.

I suppose what we need to do is look at what money can't buy. 'Tell me that you want the kind of things that money just can't buy'.

It cannot buy honesty - in fact money generally does the opposite. It is amazing how much money can change a person. In the Ancient world an honest rich man was an oxymoron - there was no such thing to the minds of the Gospel writers. A rich person had taken more than their share. They eat, drink and are merry while others go without. We must always remember the context of the Lukan community - they were poor. Spending the money on papyrus to preserve the Gospel was more important to them than money. Honesty and the rich in today's world has been turned topsy turvey in comparison to the gospel message. These days we are more likely to take advice from the rich, go to get rich quick seminars and excuse them for breaking their promises because they are rich and powerful.

Money can't buy happiness - it really can't. I cannot tell you the amount of eulogies that I have heard where the loved ones of the deceased have talked to me about their kind and loving relative and how happy and full of joy they were. How they were always generous with time and affection - who always welcomed them no matter what. Do you know the amounts of times that I have heard about the deceased's money?

Money can't buy love. It really can't. It never has, and it never will. The affections of the heart are not for sale.

So what of God's Kingdom - what should we do with our money? Jesus says 'I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings'. Now that doesn't mean that you should buy friends, but rather to use what we have to be a blessing to others. Also not that Jesus says 'so that when it is gone', he doesn't say 'stockpile it so you can gaze lovingly at your bank balance.' It is there to be spent and the best way to spend it is to spend it on building up the Kingdom in the world. Because in God's world money has no value. God's currency is all the things that money can't buy. Love, joy, honesty, honour, hospitality. Things that have been forgotten in this age of consumerism. We teach our kids how to save money more often than we teach them how to act with love, honour and dignity.

The currency of God - and we best learn how to live in that economy instead of being side tracked by money.

My Father always told me that if he couldn't use his money to help his family and to build up God's Kingdom in the world - that it wasn't a point to having it. Myself having lived my adult life below the poverty line - I have to watch out that I do not enjoy seeing my bank balance rise, because I do. And I always have to ask myself what is more important the things of God? Or my money.

We cannot serve both masters - God or money. We have a choice.