

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin
November 12, 2017

Series: A Generous God Creates Generous People with a Generous Vision

Find Financial Peace in Your Generous God

- 1. Confess the peace-robbers**
- 2. Trust the Peace Creator**
- 3. Claim Financial Peace**

Luke 12:13-48

Children's Message: Message from the Offering Plate

Today we are going to start talking about money because Jesus talked about money. Lots of times your moms and dads feel bad about money, especially when we talk about offerings. That's why I want to share something with you that you can share with your parents and help them.

When your moms and dads give an offering, they may be afraid because they don't know if they will have enough money, and so they don't give as much as they think they should. They may be embarrassed because they can't give as much as other people. They might even give a lot but want to show off how much they give.

So I've put offering envelopes in this container to show that. This is what we might see FEAR, SHAME, PRIDE. (I've written those words on offering envelopes with a yellow highlighter.) God can see that too.

But look what happens when I put this red cover over the offering envelopes. Can you see those words anymore? No... because the red cover keeps you from seeing those words.

This is what I want you to share with your moms and dads. That when they give out of love for Jesus, God looks at our offerings through Jesus. The red top can remind us that Jesus gave his red blood for our sins. And when he looks at our offerings, because of what Jesus has done, he sees our offerings as perfect.

This is what God promises in 1 Peter 2:5. As believers in Jesus we "offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Our offerings aren't perfect, but accepted by God for Jesus' sake.

Introductory Video

The Message

The words “peace” and “finances” don’t normally go together in one sentence. That’s not the case now. It wasn’t case when Jesus walked on the earth 2000 years ago. That’s probably why Jesus talked so much about personal finances.

I’d invite you to turn with me to Luke 12. The crowds that are listening to Jesus speak number in the thousands. Someone in that huge crowd cried out, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me” (Luke 12:13).

So begins a conversation in which Jesus confronts the peace-robbers in our lives.

The first peace robber? Family arguments about money. Many of us have experienced it especially when talking about an inheritance. Arguments arise because someone feels they aren’t getting their fair share or that another sibling is being too greedy.

Family arguments about money can come in many forms. Couples may hide bills from each other, argue about purchases, argue about credit card bills. Parents and children may argue about money. Who will pay for college? Who will pay for insurance? One child complains that his or her sibling is getting more than they are.

Jesus takes on another peace robber in verses 22-26:

Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? (Luke 12:22-26)

Don’t worry! Easier said than done. I just prayed with a friend at a small group meeting because he might lose his job. And Jesus says, “Don’t worry”?

Don’t worry when the bills total more than you will make this month? Don’t worry when your tires are worn out and the snow is coming? Don’t worry when the credit card bills continue to pile up with little hope of repaying them?

Worry is a huge financial peace robber for many of us.

You might think it is easier for us as Christians to find financial peace. But the very fact that we have a knowledge of God as our judge who is watching us can add to the financial burdens we face. Listen to what Jesus said that day in Luke 12:35-40:

³⁵“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have

them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.³⁸ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak.³⁹ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.⁴⁰ You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

The Apostle Peter then asks, “Jesus, is this meant for us who are following you or to the crowds who are listening?” Jesus doesn’t respond with a, “Hey, don’t worry about it!” but rather increases the financial pressure:

⁴² The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? ⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.⁴⁵ But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk.⁴⁶ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

Now isn’t that great! Jesus is going to come back and judge. So now we have another financial peace robber. We are going to be judged on the way that we use our finances!

Related to that is the challenge of much. Jesus said in the next paragraph:

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked (Luke 12:48).

Some of us are in a place in life where God has given us much. We’ve accumulated resources over the years, many of us in preparation for retirement. But the more God gives, the more responsibility we have. Ultimately all of us here face the “challenge of much.” Joni and I just watched a movie set in India. Compared to so many in third world countries, we are incredibly rich. Check out www.globalrichlist.com to see where you rank in the world. I am the the 5,596,447th richest person in the world!

But what is the ultimate financial peace robber that all of these are based on? Jesus spoke of it in response to the man who yelled out about inheritance. “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

He touches on it when he calls them, “O you of little faith!” (Luke 12:28). He challenges us in Luke 12:34: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

In the Sermon on the Mount he simply said, “You can’t serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24).

The ultimate financial peace robber is that our hearts aren't right. The Apostle Paul said that "In Christ all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form, and we are given fullness in him." But how often don't we want fullness or contentment in things rather than in Christ alone? We try to serve both God and money.

That idolatry can take different forms. It can take the form of greed or worry or fear. In a book by Henri Nouwen entitled *The Spirituality of Fundraising*, I realized that I was missing financial peace because I have been intimidated by people of wealth, as though the wealth God has given them makes them better than me. I didn't realize it, but I was using their wealth as the basis for my understanding of their worth compared to my own.

So what do we do with these financial peace robbers? The Proverbs say, "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

Let's confess these financial peace robbers, and let's trust the Financial Peace Creator. God has said, "Faith comes from hearing the message" (Romans 10:17). So let's listen carefully to the Peace Creator.

First of all, let's remember that the God of whom Jesus speaks is a God of infinite resources. Listen to what God says in Psalm 50:9-12.

- ¹¹ I have no need of a bull from your stall
or of goats from your pens,
- ¹⁰ for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the cattle on a thousand hills.
- ¹¹ I know every bird in the mountains,
and the insects in the fields are mine.
- ¹² If I were hungry I would not tell you,
for the world is mine, and all that is in it.

Think about it! Everything that you and I can point to, God says, "Mine!" Every possession that we have. "Mine!" Every toy that we see on TV that we'd like. "Mine!" Every ounce of gold in Fort Knox. "Mine!"

He is the God of infinite resources and he has already promised to give us more than everything we see.

- ³² "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

The Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. I need to hear that over and over again. First that he gives you the kingdom. I don't have to earn it by how good a money manager I am. I don't earn gifts from my Father.

He gives the kingdom. That doesn't mean that he is pleased to give us a something like a shack far removed from him somewhere in the farthest reaches of his kingdom. No! You and I are given thrones. Remember the last vision of Revelation 22 sees us living and ruling as kings and queens with Jesus forever!

How can this be? Because Jesus had already set his face to go up to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51) to die for us. Remember, the blood of Jesus covers all that we do. That makes your position in the Father's kingdom absolutely secure.

And your Father who "is pleased to give you the kingdom," not reluctantly, but joyfully, knows what you need.

You of little faith! ²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.

And he is most definitely the God who will not let you remain under the control of the false god. Why do you think that Jesus told those listening to him?

³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

One of the reasons that we give is to break the back of the devil and his financial peace robbers. We give as a confession of faith in the treasure of heaven that Jesus has won for us. We give to confess that we have a generous God of infinite resources who knows our needs. We give to say, "NO!" to the devil's lies and the peace robbers.

Is it impossible to find that financial peace? That is certainly what a young couple Chad and Ashley thought. Let's watch their story. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WRztWOEP3I>

Let's close message with a time of confession and challenge...

Stand if you don't have financial peace...

- Maybe you have disagreements about money in your family or even dishonesty and hiding financial issues like Chad and Ashley.
- Maybe you don't have enough money... more bills than you can pay.
- Maybe you aren't content with what God has given... greed is rising in your heart.
- Or do you feel guilty about what you give... is it enough?
- Or has God blessed you with much and you know "to whom much is given, much is required."

Most of us are probably standing at this point...

Let's confess that financial peace robbers have taken away our peace. Let's confess that the ultimate problem is that I've allowed money or the things of this world to control my thought patterns and have allowed them to become my god.

Now let's claim the blood red covering of Christ. Lord, you died for all my sins, and you can cover even my offerings and make them perfectly acceptable in your sight.

Now, Lord, grant me that peace of forgiveness, and let that peace flow over into every part of my life, including my financial life. Grant me financial peace.

Now... let's act to claim the financial peace that God wants us to have. Mark your connection Card for interest in Financial Peace in January... or Legacy Journey if you are wondering... God has granted me much and I want to leave a legacy after me.

Thanks be to our Generous God who can give us financial peace. Amen.

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My Personal Next Steps Toward Financial Peace

- Read again Luke 12:13-48, confessing the power of the peace robbers in your life and hearing the promises of the Peace Creator.
- Find Financial Peace with friends. On the Connection Card, indicate interest in the *Financial Peace* study that will be offered in January.
- Share Financial Peace with the next generation. On the Connection Card, indicate interest in *The Legacy Journey* study that will be offered in January.