

## 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 10am Dangers of the Love of Money

Service led by Andrew Attwood, talk by Roger Homes,

Bible reading by Heather Homes, Testimony by Martin Lewis

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[Andrew Attwood:]

Welcome again to St. John's Church, whether you're a member or just visiting, it's good to have you here with us. It's lovely to spend some time [with you], even though the sun isn't shining quite as brightly as yesterday, it's always good to be meeting on a Sunday. There is a handful of things that we need to deal with in terms of information for today. But as usual, if you can have a Bible pen, some A4 paper preferably, that'd be really good. In your Bible, keep your finger in 1 Timothy 6. That's where we're going to be going today. Later on Roger Holmes is going to be doing the talk later on. And that's pre-recorded and Heather will do the reading and Martin Lewis will guest appear [with] a personal story, so that's something really good to look forward to. But before then, a couple of notices. Michelle, did you want to share that notice to do with the youth event?

[Michelle Harris:]

Yes, Denise sent this out to everybody, which is basically a message for parents of young people. So this Friday coming, at half past seven, we're gonna have a massive youth event, and it's run by Tom Millington. He used to work for Kenilworth Youth for Christ. And so he and his church 'Jubilee' in Solihull have set up this big event with six churches involved in it. Tom is going to lead worship, Laura Hancock from British Youth for Christ is going to be doing a talk. And then we're going to use the breakout feature of Zoom to break into our own church groups to talk about what she said and things like that as well. And then we'll all come back together for a final celebration. And that will be it, so people need to get in contact with me to get the Zoom link. So if you could do that sooner rather than later, that would be great. And obviously we want to get as many of our young people on there as possible, because it'll be a really, really good event.

[Andrew:]

Thank you, Michelle, that's really good. It's just so encouraging that despite the limitations of our circumstances, we're still able to do all kinds of different stuff, even kind of locally, regionally. Thank you, Michelle.

Other notices, just to include, would be to encourage you again to watch at 6pm and I think Rob Latham is going to be leading Evening Prayer and talking this evening.

Another thing that I wanted to kind of bring to your attention, though, is Wednesday Bible Study. We're aware that people sometimes need a bit of help getting into scriptures but when you've been away from people that might need some impetus from somebody else. So what we've done, and you might even notice

this on the YouTube channel you're watching this on right now, there is a recorded Wednesday Bible Study that myself, Michelle, Denise and Karen Mills put together, and we recorded it live-streamed to YouTube, this last Wednesday. And we're just going to, in small chunks, work our way through the Sermon on the Mount. That's Matthew 5 to 7. And we thought it might be nice as a gift to whoever wants to watch, to join us every Wednesday, live-streamed at 12 noon, to work through a little bit of Bible together. I had a quick look the other day to see how it looks as a viewing experience. And it's, I think, pretty helpful. So, Wednesdays at 12, even if you're at work, some of you might want to kind of eat your sandwiches and watch some things during a break. So that's Wednesday Bible Study, 12 o'clock every week until we've done the Sermon on the Mount, and then we'll review. So I think that's all the notices I wanted to give.

The next thing I wanted to do, to help us get focused now, is this: I wanted to show you: everything's bursting with leaf and life at the moment. This is a small branch from the huge, the humungous, beach hedge that goes across the front of our house and down the side of our house. And I'll be honest with you at this time of year, there's such a huge amount of joy in me to see so much beautiful, beautiful leaf emerging. And I just wanted you to have a think, either on your own or in your household groups, what is it at the moment about spring that you really, really love? If you're on your own, have a think about it, maybe even write it down on a piece of paper, or in your groups have a conversation. What do you really, really love about spring? Just spend a minute or so having a think, what is it [that you love]?

[Pause]

### **Activity**

Okay, so now we're going to head into our service. The first thing I wanted you to do was something that the children can join in with. And we'll continue with that perhaps during the talk time. But also this is something for the adults to engage with. What I want you to do is, to take your sheet of paper and a pen. And I want you to place your hand on the paper. So flat down on the on the desk, or wherever you are, and draw round your hand. Draw round your hand so that there's space on the paper near each finger for you to still write something. So draw around each finger all the way through to make a silhouette of your hand, with space beside each finger so that you can write a phrase.

So hopefully you've got a sheet of paper and you've started to draw around your hand. Now what I want you to do is to write beside each of your fingers these words: Near the thumb, I want you to write "Me and God". And then near your long first pointing finger, the word "direction" and then your biggest finger, the finger that we kind of read around people with, "Those I Love", your little finger, perhaps with a wedding ring on, for those who are married, that have gold there, write the word "Money" and your little finger, your weakest finger, write the word "Health". So you've got "Me and God", "Direction", "Those I Love", "Money" and "Health". And we're going to use that later, adults, as a way of responding and praying, but for the children who might want to do an activity, I have wondered if you might decorate a hand. I had a very quick go at decorating my hand and cutting it out. And I thought, I wonder if I could challenge the children to do four hands? Six hands? I don't know, maybe just one beautifully decorated hand. But that's something that I'd like you to explore later on. And for the adults, hold on to this for later, because we're going to use that in our response time after Roger has spoken.

### **Prayer and Praise**

Now let's move into a time of prayer and praise. We're going to be looking at Psalm 131. So we'll need that on the screen now. Psalm 131 says this.

<sup>1</sup> My heart is not proud, LORD,  
my eyes are not haughty;  
I do not concern myself with great matters  
or things too wonderful for me.

<sup>2</sup> But I have calmed and quieted myself,  
I am like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child I am content.

<sup>3</sup> Israel, put your hope in the LORD  
both now and forevermore.

Let's keep that slide on the screen. And I'd like you all to say this with me again. We're going to say this twice. And it's going to be a prayer, and a prayer of openness and a prayer of commitment. So say with me again. "Lord, my heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content. Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore."

And once again, "my heart is not proud, Lord, my heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content. Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore."

Let's just be still for a moment.

Let's calm ourselves in the presence of God.

Let's rest in God like a child in God's arms.

Just breathe and rest.

And just breathe

and rest.

And Father God, we invite your presence to be with us this morning.

Would you wrap your arms around us?

Would you teach us contentment in your company?

We leave the bigger issues of our lives and the wider world to one side for now.

And we rest, trusting in you

So again a moment of quiet,

Lord would you prepare us in the quiet, to be open to hear your word

to sense to your presence, to hear your direction?

We give ourselves to you, Lord.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So we're now going to listen to Roger, Heather, and Martin. Thank you.

## **Talk**

[Roger Homes:]

Well, good morning, everybody. Certainly we are in unprecedented circumstances at the moment. I'm actually recording this on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. So by the time this goes out, circumstances may in fact have changed. I've been asked to speak about the dangers of the love of money. And I thought I would do a quick introduction before I ask Heather to read the passage through to us.

So as a young man, I used to collect notes and coins. And some of those were from around the world. And I always had a hope that one day, at least one of them might actually end up being worth quite a lot of money. Unfortunately, for me, that never actually happened. I can remember as a young man going to the local library, and taken out a book by John Paul Getty called *How to Become a Millionaire*. And it was a family joke that if you asked me to open my wallet, that actually moths would fly out. So I had a bit of reputation as being bit tight with money.

I think our society finds it quite difficult to talk about money. It's kind of a very private subject, almost a little bit of a taboo subject, for a lot of people, even sometimes amongst couples, and yet Jesus spoke a lot about money. Just to give you a few examples, were told not to store up for ourselves treasures on earth. That's in Luke 12. There's the parable of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19. And then Luke 12:34 says, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Sometimes we can be a bit frightened about money, particularly if we're in a situation where actually we don't have enough, or we might even feel guilty, when we have more money than perhaps we need. People that have grown up in poverty can sometimes hoard money. I know my mum grew up in a family of six children during the war in East London in a council house. And later on in life, she started to hoard things, some of which she passed on to us. A lot of what I'm going to say today, I've taken from a book by Richard Foster called *Money, Sex and Power*. And that's a very good book and a useful source of reference, if you want to follow up what I've said today.

My plan for my talk today will be to talk about some of the bad side of money first of all, and sometimes the power that it can have over us, then look at the good side of money, and then finish off with the conclusions and prayers.

I'm going to ask now Heather to read from 1 Timothy 6, verses 3 to 10.

[Heather Homes:]

### **The Love of Money [NIV UK 1984]**

<sup>3</sup> If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, <sup>4</sup> he is conceited and understand nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions <sup>5</sup> and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. <sup>9</sup> People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

[Roger:]

Thank you, Heather. So the first point I want to make is that it's the love of money that's the issue rather than money itself. You know, it's not wrong to have money. Remember that God lavished riches on Solomon, and Jesus Himself went to the lavish feast of Cana, in John 2, where he famously turned water into wine. Paul says in Philippians 4 verse 12, that he is as much content with plenty, as he is in hunger and want. Greed though, we're told, is a form of idolatry by looking at Colossians 3, verse 5 says there,

<sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

So it's interesting that greed is put in the same category as some of those other sins. Money, or rather the thirst for it, can have real power over people's lives, cause people to act in ways that they otherwise wouldn't, possibly sometimes to climb the career ladder. I know one of the guys that I used to work with, his famous motto was "upwards and onwards". And he said, to him, life was basically about acquiring assets as you got older.

Often people that have little money spend a lot of their time talking about money, thinking about how they could possibly make money. And unfortunately for some of them, they end up gambling, or doing things like lottery and spending their money that way. I wonder as the current crisis carries on and deepens, whether that'll be more true of people. Thomas à Kempis said that "it is vanity to seek riches that shall perish and put one's hope in them."

I think sometimes in the past, we've been tempted, all of us, I think, to some extent, to judge people based on their net worth. Interestingly, the coronavirus has caused us to rethink that, that people that do what might previously be seemed to be menial jobs, now, the real importance of those I think is being more realised. Certainly Jesus never judged people based on their wealth. He seemed to actually actively seek out the weak and the poor, those who had little importance in society. An example of that would be the Samaritan woman. Also the woman that poured perfume on his feet.

Money though can bring power, power over others. And that's why Jesus says in Matthew 6:24, you cannot serve God and mammon. Money can become a rival god, inspiring devotion. It's interesting when you take me back to the Abba song, the song called "Money, money, money, it's a rich man's world." The rich young ruler was devoted to his money. He couldn't sell his possessions in order to follow Jesus. So Jesus ended up remarking that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Famously, we saw the effect of greed in the 2008-2009 credit crunch, when banks initially were falling over themselves, to lend money to those that couldn't repay it. And then of course, it all fell down. I guess for those in positions of responsibility in business, it's very difficult sometimes when you have to make decisions about putting people before profit. I guess that's something that's going to become a lot harder, when finally the coronavirus is finished and people go back to work and business people have to make very hard decisions.

The second point I want to make is that money can be used *for* God. You can be used to help other people to assist those in need and to invest in other people too. The Good Samaritan, of course, used his money to help the man who had been beaten up, even though he was a stranger to him. Zacchaeus agreed to give away half of his wealth to the poor, once he'd met Jesus. And I think giving is a very, very powerful way of freeing us from the love of money, to show that money no longer has control over us. Martin Luther said, there are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, the mind, and the purse. Ultimately, everything we own is from God and belongs to God, and that we are only temporary

stewards of them: of our house, our car, our savings accounts. So rather than asking how much of my money should I give to the Lord, perhaps we ought to ask how much of God's money should I keep for myself?

Giving, of course, must be done with the right motives, in love, rather than to get a return. 1 Corinthians 13 and verse 3 says,

<sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

I think the idea of giving is something that's affected me quite a lot recently and tested me in a way, because, unfortunately, last year, I lost my mum. A number of you will be familiar with probate. And eventually, we will get a bit of money from that on my mum's estate. And the question I have to ask myself is, am I willing to give away 10% of it? That will be a substantial amount of money compared to what we normally give. And so that's something that's a challenge to me, I would say. But I really want to say that money can be a stumbling-block for people and I think giving is a very good way of showing that it no longer has control over us.

I am now going to ask Martin to do a brief testimony of something that happened to him a number of years ago, and how God looked after him financially when he was in a difficult situation.

[Martin Lewis:]

Good morning everyone. I'm Martin and for those who don't know me, I'm normally hiding at the back on the projector controls, doing the videos and words etc. And it's not my comfortable job of being in front of the camera. But Roger's asked me to share some of my journey of trusting God with money and finances. Going back 20 years I was working in a bakery in Solihull. It was a good job but didn't pay that well and I had very few savings. But I did feel that I was in control. I was the breadwinner. I was head of the house and it was up to me to provide. Then came summer holidays and we went away for a two-week holiday. Matthew was just about to start High School. So we had lots of outlaying of uniform and sports kits, etc. Came back from a lovely holiday to get a phone call from my boss saying, no job left. Shut the firm down. And by the way, you weren't paid for the last two weeks, which was a bit of a shock. After a few days of feeling terrified and "what the heck do I do?" Surprise, surprise, I started praying. We had a big, big credit card bill because of the holiday, because we're setting Matthew up for school etc. And we had absolutely no idea where where the money was going to come from to pay it. I shared with some people, I prayed a lot. I never shared with anybody the amount that was owed.

And then a week before the bill was due, somebody came up to me in church and just handed me an envelope from a third party, and the envelope had the exact amount I needed, plus 20 or 30 pounds more. It was a heck of a revelation to us. From this and other less traumatic occasions, we slowly learned to trust God for and with our money. We learned to give to him first, listen to him saying what he wants us to do. And he's not let us down since. There have been many occasions we've struggled, there have been occasions when things have been tight, but by giving to God first, I feel I've handed over to him my control, and I've not had to take that burden on. There have been times since, we've been very well blessed and we've been able to share our blessings with others. The amounts are not important. It's the principle that counts. I don't always get it right - sometimes I do panic. Sometimes I have to remember these incidents to pull me back on course. So yeah, my message would be that we are not in control of our money, God is. God blesses us. And if we give it to him, if we hand it over to him, the amounts are not important. There have been times when we've needed God to give us stuff. There have been times where we've been blessed to give it to others. But all the time it's God's money, not ours. Thank you.

[Roger:]

Thank you, Martin. So by way of conclusion, I wanted to say a little bit to parents, first of all. When it comes to teaching children about money, Albert Schweitzer said there are only three ways to teach your child. The first is by example, the second by example, and the third, you guessed it, by example. If we are free from the love of money, our children will know it. We might have to teach them about how to use money, without it allowing it to control us, to learn the value of things, to learn to save up for things, to have to do without on occasions, so they are grateful for what they have, rather than taking it for granted. To get into the habit of giving away their money as well.

My old Baptist minister used to say to me, "God is no man's debtor." It's often said that we talk about what we value the most. And I just wondered, how much of your and my time do we spend talking or worrying about money? I know for some people, that's part of their job, but I'm talking about outside of the job. We had a conversation recently, Heather and I, which I'm guessing is a conversation that will be happening quite frequently now with the current crisis, about what happens if one of us loses our job. And I guess the logical thing to do in that circumstance, is to look at your outgoings, look at the amount of income that you've got, work out whether you can make any changes. And that's all very rational and very sensible thing to do. And there's nothing wrong with that. However, a person of faith will also know that God will always provide. Ultimately, our attitude to money reflects our attitude to God. Do we really trust him to provide for us? Or are we self-reliant? Hopefully Martin's testimony shows us that we have a God who knows our needs, and will always provide for us.

I'd just like to finish now with a word of prayer. So let's pray.

Father, these are funny times for us, times when perhaps we feel somewhat confused, don't really know what's going on. Things are happening outside our control. But Lord, I want to thank you, that, Lord, that everything is not outside your control. Ultimately, Lord, you know what is going on. Lord, I want to thank you that your grace has been upon us, both as individuals and as a church and we thank you for that. I pray that you'd give us the right attitude towards money. Help us to be generous to give to those in need. Help us to trust you for our finances. Help us to use our finances, to help others. Help us to be content with what we have, and to show godliness in all our financial dealings. We pray this now in Jesus name,

Amen.

So bless you, keep safe. Hopefully we'll be able to meet up in person soon. Goodbye for now.

### ***Prayerful Response***

[Andrew:]

Thank you, Roger, thank you so much for those words. Thank you for Heather, reading scripture and for Martin's personal story: all really, really helpful.

Let's have a moment of response. Let's have a time to reflect and specifically with regards to the question of money. I just I just took my wallet out of my pocket just now. And I just want to give you a moment: if your wallet or your purse is to hand, just get it now, and maybe put it in your hand. Just spend a moment holding your wallet. And let's do this in the presence of God. Let's just give to God again the whole of ourselves, including our finances. Let me just briefly pray.

Lord, all that we have,  
all we are, all that we possess,  
everything in our savings,  
everything in our future earnings, everything in our pensions:  
Lord, we just hold this before you now.

Help us to hold this before you now.

And, Lord, for those of us who struggle in this area with anxiety or fear or the inclination to be greedy and holding on tight: loosen our grip.

Help us to trust,  
help us to trust, Lord, that you are our provider.

Amen.

Just continuing in prayer, can you remember what I asked you to draw earlier? Take your piece of paper and just lay it somewhere where you can put your hand over the silhouette of the hand that you've drawn. And again, just in a minute of quiet, look at your hand beside those words that are there. "Me and God," "Direction". "Those I Love", "Money" again, and "Health" and just in the quiet, just for a minute or so, quietly ask God's Holy Spirit, "What is the important issue in my life at the moment that I need to be open about, that I need to think about?"

Let's just be still and do that.

[Pause]

That is something for you to reflect on throughout the rest of today, and possibly this week.

## **Hymn**

But right at this moment it would be good to have some music, to have an old hymn we can join in with, as a way of refocussing, of recommitting ourselves. So now we're going to sing, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the king of creation!  
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!  
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;  
Join me in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,  
Shelters thee under His wings, yea so gently sustaineth.  
Hast thou not seen, how thy desires e'er have been  
Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;  
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee.  
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,



If with His love He befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him!  
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him.  
Let the Amen sound from His people again,  
Gladly forever adore Him.

## ***Intercessions***

[Andrew:]

We're now going to move into a time of intercessions, praying for others. So we'll have some pictures on the screen to guide us in our prayers. Let's think again of these many subjects that have been brought to our attention week after week, after week, so that we can really concentrate on what it is that God wants us to lift to him.

So let's pray for our government. We pray, Lord Jesus, at this time, specifically on this day, for our Prime Minister, for the Cabinet and his immediate advisers, including scientific advisers, for the next phase in response to the coronavirus. We are anticipating some changes of some kind or some new advice in the guidance. We pray once again for your wisdom, for your care, for your help, to those in authority, so that they would make the right decisions at the right times at the right speed for the United Kingdom. We pray, Lord Jesus, that you would bless them, we pray that they would be physically well themselves, we pray that they would sleep well, we pray, Lord, that they would know that you are there for them as well as working through them.  
Lord in your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

We pray now for parents. Lord, we pray at this time, after six weeks of lockdown, for parents who are having children pretty much tied at home, children who might be fractious or itching to get out or see their friends but simply can't. Lord, we pray for your loving, providing hand for parents, that they would have grace and patience with their children. We pray, Lord Jesus, for them and their children to have harmony at home, to have success with whatever school work needs to be done, to have good meal times together, to enjoy each other's company, to walk well or exercise well together. And I pray specifically for the parents, that they would somehow find space for themselves and for you.  
Lord, in your mercy.  
Hear our prayer.

We now pray for workers. Lord, we have prayed long and hard for our health workers, but we just want to create this morning, Lord Jesus, for the other people involved in different kinds of professions like those working Sainsbury's or shops that are open, providing food, for our binmen, for the people who make the infrastructure work behind the scenes, for our builders, for construction workers: Lord, we pray for your love and your grace to rest on them at this unusual time. Everything has felt different, Lord, for them too. I don't know what kind of relationship they've had with their customers or with people working or relating to them from the public sector. We pray, Lord, for your kindness and grace on all those currently still in work. We pray for those who are locked at home, staring at computer screens, all day long. Give people your grace and your mercy, sustain people, Lord, with your Holy Spirit, keep them going through this unusual time.  
Lord in your mercy,  
hear our prayer.

And finally, at this time we pray for those who are still currently sick. First of all, we do continue to pray for those who are suffering from COVID-19, for those in hospital, for those self-isolating with symptoms. Jesus, we ask that you would stretch out your hand, and rescue and heal those who are suffering at this time. We thank you for more information and knowledge that is growing around this virus, but we pray for your intervention.

We will just have a moment of quiet for those people who are known to us who are sick, at this time.

And we also lift up to you, Lord, other people who are suffering, people perhaps who are waiting for treatment that has now been delayed or people who are feeling afraid of going to a doctor or the hospital for fear of catching the virus, but they do need treatment. Holy, healing God, would you lay your healing hand on all who need your touch today?  
Lord, in your mercy,  
hear our prayer.

So we gather all these prayers together, Lord. We put all of these needs into your hands because you are a good God, who can look after every single need.  
Amen.

## ***Conclusion and blessing***

Well we're nearing the end of our time together now. I'm just wondering how people got on with their decorations. If you want to send us any photos of the kind of stuff you did in decorating, that's great. I want to encourage those of you who drafted this out, use this perhaps as a way of engaging with God in your prayer times in the coming week. What is it that God is beginning to speak to you about as a particular priority?

Remember how we began with Psalm 131 on "I do not consider myself haughty or proud, I do not consider myself, focusing on things too wonderful for me. I am content. I am like a weaned child. Like a weaned child, I am content. Israel, put your hope in the Lord." I just want to pray a prayer of blessing. Now, we will be finishing without wonderful UK blessing video<sup>1</sup> that's been doing the rounds. After I finished this blessing and it's something for you to continue to enjoy, and to enter into.

And I just want you to receive the love and blessing of God through this prayer now, and through the video, as we end. So let's pray.

Lord, we look to you as the God of love. We look to you as the God who cares. We look to you as the God who provides and oversees every single detail. And with that in mind, would you bless every person who's watching today, or a recording later. Bless them all, be present with them, hear their prayers. Guide their footsteps, give them all that they need. In Jesus' Holy Name, Amen.

God bless you and goodbye.

[Transcribed by <https://otter.ai> with help from Hamish Blair]

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Words of "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" by Joachim Neander (1680) translated by Catherine Winkworth (1863), sung to music from the Stralsund Gesangbuch (1665)

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1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtl13mNj5U>