



James

How to Live the Christian Life!

Living with Money

James 5:1-6

Message #10 of 12 – S672

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Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Living with Money

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Opening Comments

- Turn to **James 5**
- Today, we resume our series through the letter from James **How to Live the Christian Life**
- You probably heard on the news this week that a Tennessee couple won the big Powerball lottery
- If they take a lump sum payout they will get over 300 million dollars
- Can you imagine what it would be like if one day you were just an ordinary family, and the next day you were wildly rich
- Over 635 million tickets were sold
- And you can imagine that a lot of people dreamed about what they would do with that kind of money
- The question I would ask you, ‘Would that much money be a blessing, or would it end up being a curse?’
- Today’s text is addressed to the rich
- I’m guessing that probably rules most of us out, but there are important lessons for us to glean from James’ strong words
- Lessons that all of us need to learn, regardless how much money God blesses us with; little or much
- If you are able and willing to do so, please stand as we read today’s text as a sign of reverence for God’s Word
- Read **James 5:1-6**
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Living with Money**
- James is addressing Jewish people
- And up to this point, his message has been to believers
- But now he takes a very harsh stance as he addresses one group, possibly within the church
- All six of these verses have the tone of judgment in them
- He is not speaking to believers

- Most likely these are wealthy unbelieving Jews
- And James here gives them a word of condemnation, not too dissimilar to the prophets of the Old Testament
- But also contained within this text is a warning to the church
- That is – don't envy the rich – that envy has led many a Christian astray
- The problem is not the money **1 Timothy 6:9-10**

Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

- It is also meant to encourage those who have been exploited by the rich – God has a plan to give the wicked rich what they deserve = judgment
- In our text today we are going to see two realities about wealth and four effects of wealth on people
- First Reality about wealth – **Spiritual Handicap**

• **James 5:1**

- James opens with his guns blazing
- Calling them to weep and howl – both are expressions of a someone that is facing impending judgment
- Those terms are used almost exclusively for the unrighteous
- Most people would believe that wealth gives someone an advantage spiritually over someone without wealth
- Jesus described it, not as an advantage, but as a handicap **Matthew 19:24**

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

- That is repeated also in Mark and Luke
- Wealth has a way of drawing a person away from God, not usually toward Him
- Second Reality about wealth – **Spiritually Corrosive**
- **James 5:2-3a**
- Wealth has a way of corroding our faith
- The more wealth a person has, the less they tend to depend upon God

- They tend to depend upon the security of their wealth to take care of them
- And wealth has a way of demanding our attention
- If left unchecked, it can end up being a master to us
- Jesus warned about that also **Matthew 6:24**

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

- ‘Mammon’ is Aramaic for riches
- James then goes on to four possible effects
- I say possible, because there are some who have the kind of faith to handle wealth
- God gives some the kind of faith that can handle wealth
- Sadly, most people do not – which is probably why we don’t have wealth
- James is describing four things that these rich people were guilty of
- First thing – **Hoarding**

- **James 5:3b**

- ‘heaped up treasure’ = picture of mounds of treasures
- Means this was the source of their security
- Notice the phrase ‘the last days’
- The last days is the time preceding Christ’s return
- Jesus is coming back – maybe very soon – hoarding wealth now is wicked **Matthew 6:19-21**

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- If you find your security in riches, and start hoarding them, you will quickly find yourself hoarding more, with the false idea that you will be more secure
- Which can lead to the second possible effect – **Oppression**

- **James 5:4**

- These wicked rich people were defrauding their employees – not paying them for work they did

- These rich Jews were warned about this in their Scriptures **Leviticus 19:13**

You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob *him*. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.

- Most of these workers lived hand to mouth – if they weren't paid everyday – they didn't eat
- God hears them when they cry out, and He doesn't forget their cries
- 'Lord of Sabaoth' = Lord of Hosts or Lord Almighty
- Used in two primary ways – of God's ability to save His people and of His power to deal with His enemies – both apply here
- They were cheating people of what was theirs
- Third possible effect of wealth – **Self-indulgence**
- **James 5:5**
- These wealthy people were living soft lives of luxury
- They were partying like it was 1999
- Now don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with a good celebration – God regularly encourages His people to celebrate
- But every time He does, the focus is on Him
- These wicked rich people were focused on satisfying their own selfish desires and urges
- It is the life of conspicuous consumption that God condemns
- 'fattened hearts as in the day of slaughter' = final judgment
- Forth possible effect – **Wickedness**
- **James 5:6**
- These wicked rich people acted as if the law didn't apply to them
- Felt that they could get away with murder
- And that is not news to us
- Even in our day, it seems that the wealthy can buy or bully their way out of trouble
- As I was thinking about this text, I thought it felt very negative
- And as I thought about I see here four possible effects of wealth that God condemns
- And so I looked to see if there were positive attitudes regarding wealth or money that God blesses
- And not a surprise there are

- Want to leave you with four attitudes or behaviors about money that God blesses
- And I will express them as the opposites of the negatives
- First – the opposite of hoarding is **Generosity**
- God blesses His people who are generous **Proverbs 3:27-28**
Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,” when you have it with you.
- Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9 ‘God loves a cheerful giver’
- That is not just in your giving to the church, but wherever the need arises
- Second attitude – the opposite of oppression is **Justice**
- One of the traits of God is justice **Psalm 72:12-14**
For He will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; and precious shall be their blood in His sight.
- One of the ways we can bless God is use our money in ways that show we stand for what He stands for
- Taking care of the poor, helpless, and needy
- Third attitude – the opposite of being self-indulgent – **Others-focused**
- And that means we put someone else and their needs over our own
- I don’t believe God calls us to a life of poverty
- Nor do I believe He usually calls us to sacrifice so much that it harms our family
- More often than not, it is in simple acts of kindness and love
- True godly love is always others-focused
- Fourth and last attitude – the opposite of wickedness is **Righteousness**
- Righteousness is about doing the right thing as it relates to God and to others
- Justice and righteousness go together **Isaiah 56:1-2**
Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”
- These are the attitudes that God blesses

- Now, in saying that, I am not saying that if you master these attitudes God is going to make you wealthy
- Because if that is your attitude, you will fail to attain to those attitudes
- Wealth is not a sign of holiness or God's blessing
- Wealth may or may not be a part of God's plan for your life
- But these attitudes are important to us
- Would like to end by sharing an event from my life
- Back when we were at CC Menifee – there was an event
- I was sitting on a bench with a friend talking – had a plate with a slice of pizza
- Up walked one of the kids from the youth group
- He had a tough home life – was rebellious, disrespectful, and often disruptive
- He came up to me and said, 'Give me your pizza'
- Without thinking about it, I gave it to him
- He turned without a thank you and left – I returned to my conversation
- I would love to say that young man's life was forever changed by that experience
- It wasn't – he continued to follow a path of destruction
- The whole thing would have been a non-event to me and was forgotten almost immediately
- Except that a couple of weeks later, the man I had been talking to reminded me of it and said that it bothered him greatly
- He said to me, 'I wouldn't have done it – wouldn't have given him the pizza'
- He wasn't bothered that I did it, he was bothered that he wouldn't have, because he saw something in that simple act that convicted him and rocked his faith
- He saw me being generous – it was just a slice of pizza – but I gave what I had
- He saw me giving it to the needy – not that he needed the pizza
- But that young man needed to see the love and grace of God
- And just maybe, in that moment, he got a glimpse of it

- My friend saw me being others-focused – I had the pizza because I wanted to eat it – but in that moment, that young man needed it more than I did
- And my friend saw me doing what his heart told him was the right thing, and he was convicted because he wouldn't have done it
- I wasn't thinking about these four attitudes – it was the Holy Spirit working through me, at least in the life of my friend
- If we allow these four attitudes regarding money to take root in our heart, they will show up all throughout our lives
- And people will see them, and just maybe they will see Jesus in us
- Amen

- **Pray**

May the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever.

Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21