

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 3-7-10 AM
 “A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF POSSESSIONS”
 LUKE 16:10-13
 #8 in Series, “A Biblical Worldview”

On the children’s notes for this series there is a pair of glasses on a Bible as the logo. What does a pair of glasses on the Bible have to do with a series on a Biblical Worldview? Your worldview is how you see things. Your worldview is the lens you look through, the perspective you have on the important issues and subjects of life. We are studying how to have a worldview based on the Scriptures – hence the glasses on the Bible. Thus far we have looked at an overview of a Biblical worldview, a Biblical worldview of origins, the condition of man, work, family, science, education, and today, a Biblical worldview of possessions.

There is a fundamental link between our spiritual health and our relationship to possessions. I am not referring to the amount of possessions a person has, but to the perspective they have on possessions they have and possessions they want. When we adopt the culture’s view of possessions, it cripples our spiritual life and severely stunts our spiritual growth. One of the things that we are going to learn today is that possessions are not evil, but possessions are dangerous. Martin Luther is reported to have said that a Christian goes through three conversions: The conversion of the heart, the conversion of the head, and the conversion of the pocketbook. They don’t always happen at the same time. The Scriptures are filled with principles, commands, and examples of how we are to view possessions and what a “converted pocketbook” looks like. Today we are going to pull together some of those principles and commands and put together a Biblical worldview of possessions. What we’re going to come up with will seem radical when compared to the culture around us. I plead with you to abandon all that is not consistent with the Scripture. What we have in the word of faith, health, wealth, and prosperity heresy is a group of deceitful false teachers and preachers who have perverted what the Scriptures say about possessions to justify their own worldview on possessions (which is the worldview of the culture without Christ) which is opposite in many areas from Scripture. In this message, I’m going to make 3 statements that sum up a Biblical Worldview of possessions. The statements are: Possessions are a trust from the owner; possessions are a test for faithfulness; and possessions are a tool for Kingdom advancement.

I. Possessions Are a Trust from the Owner

One of the basic truths of Scripture is that God is the owner of everything. Everything is His by right of creation. That explains one of the reasons that rebellious man is always looking for another source of origins. If God created the heavens and the earth, then beyond argument everything is His. If all that is, came about by a cosmic accident and moved to where it is by blind chance, then the possessions we can get are ours to do with as we please. That is why a Biblical worldview of origins was at the beginning of this series; so much logically flows out of the worldview that God is the creator of all that is. The verses on God’s ownership of everything are so numerous that it would take much of the rest of the message to just read them. Let me give you just a few. **Deuteronomy 10:14 (NKJV)** “Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, *also* the earth with all that *is* in it.” **1 Chronicles 29:11 (NKJV)** “Yours, O Lord, *is* the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all *that is* in heaven and in earth *is Yours*; Yours *is* the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all.” **Job 41:11 (NKJV)** “Who has preceded Me, that I should pay *him*? Everything under heaven is Mine.” **Psalms 24:1 (NKJV)** “The earth *is* the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.” **Psalms 89:11-12 (NKJV)** “¹¹ The heavens *are* Yours, the earth *also is* Yours; the world and all its fullness, You have founded them. ¹² The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name.” **Haggai 2:8 (NKJV)** “‘The silver *is* Mine, and the gold *is* Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts.” **Acts 17:24-25 (NKJV)** “²⁴ God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is

Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things." That's certainly not all, but we see that the heavens and earth and everything on and in the earth belongs to God. He tells Job that He doesn't have to buy anything because He already owns it! He owns the gold and the silver and gives to all life breath and all things. By right of ownership, He has the authority to tell us how we are to relate to possessions. If you drop by my house and I invite you in and you come into my living room and look around and a scowl comes across your face and you say, "I don't like the color of your carpet; you need something darker. I don't like the color of the paint because it doesn't go with the carpet. By the way, your furniture doesn't match well and it is not correctly arranged". My response will probably be something like this: "When you buy this house, buy the paint and furniture, and hire me to work for you, you can tell me what colors to use and where the furniture is to be placed, but since I hold the deed to this house and I didn't ask your opinion, don't let the door hit you on the way out." In somewhat the same way, God is the owner of the universe and everything in it. We don't have the right to disregard what He says about how we are to relate to His creation. He didn't put a "No Trespassing" sign on the mountains, but they are His; He doesn't ration the air we breathe, but it is His; He doesn't draw a royalty on the songs the birds sing, but they are His and He gave them the ability to sing. He is the creator of all that is; He is sovereign over all things that He created; and He is the sustainer of all things. Let's bring it closer to home. He owns time. Have you ever thought about the fact that there was no time dimension until God created it? God is eternal and exists above the time dimension and isn't limited by it. We sometimes say, "It's my time and I'll use it like I want to". No, it isn't your time; it is His time. How about your body? The whole "pro-choice" movement and logic behind the movement is based on the assumption that a woman's body is her own. If she wants to carry a baby full term and then deliver it or if she wants to abort the baby, it is her right because it is her body. Even if the assumption that her body is her own was true, that logic doesn't hold because that baby from the moment of conception is not her body; it has just taken up residence there. But besides that, it is not her body. **Psalms 139:13 (NIV)** "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." Your body is really His because He created you. If you are a Christian, you are doubly His because **1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV)** "¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." He created you and then redeemed you from the slave market of sin; you are His! The money in your pocket or purse is not yours. That money was printed on paper that came from trees that grew on God's earth. Your car is not yours. It came from metal dug out of His earth. Your house is not yours; it came from trees that grew on His ground and metal or bricks mined from His earth. Do you see the logic? He is the owner of all. A great truth is found in **Job 1:21 (NKJV)** "And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'" You were born naked – with nothing, and the only reason your body will be clothed at your funeral is because somebody dressed you. We really (from God's perspective) don't own anything and God owns it all. He doesn't do joint ownership. There was a high ranking angel named Lucifer that tried joint ownership and he learned that plan always fails. Sometimes someone objects and says, "I earned what I have, so it is mine". But we read in **Deuteronomy 8:18a (NKJV)** "And you shall remember the Lord your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth..." The health, the energy, the intelligence that you have all come from God, and He can take it away whenever He chooses. He is owner of all and He can do whatever He pleases with His property. That changes our perspective on everything. Until you see and accept this basic Biblical truth, you will be in constant conflict with God. You will see Him taking or demanding what is yours.

Let's move from God's ownership to our role in life. What does that make us if God is indeed the owner? The Biblical word is that we are stewards. A steward doesn't own anything. A steward was generally a slave. It was the word used for Joseph when he was a slave in Potifer's house. **Genesis 39:4 (NKJV)** "So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him **overseer** of his house, and all *that* he had he put under his authority." Overseer is the same meaning as steward. A steward is one

who manages or oversees the possessions of the owner. We hear this concept often in Scripture, but familiarity with it robs us of seeing how absolutely radical it is. This concept of stewardship is probably there in **Genesis 1:28 (NKJV)** “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; **have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” The Hebrew word “dominion” is translated “rule” in most translations and it contains the idea of managing or overseeing. Here is the radical (as compared with our culture) Biblical worldview of possessions: God is the owner of everything and we are His overseers or stewards. The steward’s goal is summarized in **1 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV)** “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” Our goal, our objective when it comes to possessions is to be found faithful on that day when we must give an account to the owner. Bible teacher Bill Stafford once made this statement that I believe is true: “A revival of stewardship would be all any church needs to be revolutionized.” Amen.

Our consumer culture says that if you earned it legally, it is yours to use for your own pleasure and comfort and it’s nobody’s business. A Biblical Worldview says, “It belongs to God and I must give an account to Him as to what I do with the possessions He has entrusted into my hand.” Possessions are a trust from the owner.

II. Possessions Are a Test for Faithfulness

Let’s look at the text we read at the beginning of the message [read V10-12]. God uses the possessions He has entrusted to us as a test to reveal if we are ready for true blessings. Let’s define some terms here. The word “faithful” refers to faithfulness of a steward in managing God’s possessions that He has entrusted him with. The term “unrighteous mammon” is translated “worldly wealth” in the NIV. It is money and what money can buy. What are the “true riches” in verse 11? Contrary to the health, wealth, and prosperity heretics, this isn’t just referring to more money and more possessions. It is talking about what is valuable to God. It is what lasts for all eternity. True riches include an ever deepening intimacy with God, learning God’s ways, seeing God use you to lead others to Christ and to disciple them and be His instrument in that transformation of a person who will exist forever. True riches are the 9 qualities of the fruit of the Spirit revealed in **Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)** “²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” Here is what this passage is saying. If you take the money and material possessions that God has entrusted for you to manage, and you use it for personal comfort, to make a statement about your success, to live in opulence, to stockpile so much that you will have excess until you die, then don’t be surprised if you have little or no intimacy with God. Don’t be surprised if there is little peace and joy in your life. Don’t be surprised if you can’t think of anyone you have led to Christ and disciplined. You flunked the test and your use of possessions shows that you love stuff more than God and you have embezzled from God because you treated that which was His as if it was your own.

I believe this test examines two things. First, it examines our focus. What does your mind generally focus on? What do you think about when your mind is in neutral? If the main focus of your mind is on money and possessions, then you are ruled out when it comes to true riches. I am not saying that you are not a Christian. I am saying that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, you will suffer great loss. Second, this test looks at our affections. **1 Timothy 6:10a (NKJV)** “For the **love of money** is a root of all *kinds* of evil...” It is not money that is the root of all kinds of evil; it is the love of money. Money here would include the things that money can buy – possessions. Just as in most classes in school, there are various tests along the way, but one final test. Even so in the Christian life, there is a final test. It is called The Judgment Seat of Christ. Every Christian will at a time in the future stand before the Lord and give account of their stewardship. That day is described in **1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (NKJV)** “¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned, he

will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” The works that endure are the works focusing on true riches and the works that burn include the works focusing on “unrighteous mammon”. God in His sovereignty many times increases our ability to acquire possessions so that by not focusing on possessions and loving possessions, we can demonstrate that possessions are not our God. Oftentimes our checkbook and our credit card statement are a better indication of our soul’s health than any service we might render. Randy Alcorn put it this way, “God makes it apparent that it is His business to watch us with intense interest to see what we do with the money He has entrusted to us. We are being tested and what we do with our money will influence the course of eternity” [Randy Alcorn quoted in Wesley Wilmer, “God and Your Stuff”, page 16]. Possessions are a trust from the owner. Possessions are a test for faithfulness.

III. Possessions Are a Tool for Kingdom Growth (V13)

We cannot love, serve, and be loyal to God and possessions at the same time. We must choose between the two. God gives you possessions to allow you to demonstrate that you love and serve God and not mammon. Exactly how does this demonstration work? It involves what you give your money and time to. A. W. Tozer communicates it well: “As base a thing as money often is, it yet can be transmuted into everlasting treasure. It can be converted into food for the hungry and clothing for the poor; it can keep a missionary actively winning lost men to the light of the gospel and thus transmute itself into heavenly values. Any temporal possession can be turned into everlasting wealth. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality” [Randy Alcorn, “The Treasure Principle” Page 55].

Allow me to share the burden of my heart. I sometimes get overwhelmed with all the needs I see right here in our church to carry out Kingdom advancement. There is the obvious which is the new building going up in the former parking lot. That is needed for the children’s ministry, the First Baptist Academy, and for expanding our ministry to Senior Adults. The initial phase of the shell of part of the building in about \$1,800,000. To finish it out and add more classrooms will be in the neighborhood of \$3,500,000 to \$4,000,000. Our church plant at Western Heights (Grace Community Church) is in need of a building. They are meeting in the Baptist Center, but there is need for a place of our own. We are planning to go into another Mobile Home Park this year to begin another church plant there. There are plans for an Hispanic church plant to reach the increasing population of Hispanics in our area. Then there is the residential Rehabilitation Ministry. Our task force is diligently planning this ministry and looking for a place. We are looking in the inner city for a place and in the country for several acres. The prices we are getting are eye-popping! Then there are the partnerships in Baltimore, India, East Asia, Mexico, West Africa, East Africa, and a potential one in Indonesia and a second one in East Asia. The cost is astronomical and we are in a horrible economy. To make the burden heavier, we are planning to continue to pay as we go and not borrow money. Where are these millions of dollars coming from? **From God’s people who pass the test!** The money comes as God’s people say “no” to opulence and personal comfort and give more and more. The money comes as God increases salaries and people in this body decide to increase their standard of giving instead of their standard of living. The money comes as people in the body of Christ decide that they have way too much laid up for retirement and decide that God is their security – not their retirement plan. They will settle for a modest amount so as not to presume upon God and give the rest for Kingdom advancement.

Faithful giving starts with the tithe (10%). This is not a legalistic payment to pay God off; it is a reminder and testimony that everything we have belongs to God. Tithing is a great place to start giving for Kingdom advancement, but it is a horrible place to stop. If the tithe was required under the Mosaic Law, surely we who are under grace would do more than those under the Mosaic Law. Grace is not a way to do less; grace is the enablement to desire to and do more! I run into people who say that they just can’t afford to tithe. If that is you, let me ask you a question. If your income were suddenly reduced by 10%, would you die? If the answer is “no” then the reason you don’t tithe is because you don’t want to or at least don’t want to make the sacrifices necessary to do it. God gives us possessions so that we can use them for Kingdom advancement.

CONCLUSION

I exhort you to jettison a non-Biblical worldview of possessions, to repent and to order your life and actions around a Biblical worldview. When you do, you will have the joy of being trusted by God with true riches. (3550)