



Spending Speaks

Brian Long: September 15th, 2019

Text: Luke 19:1-9; Selected Texts

Spending speaks volumes about values

Welcome to session #2 of our **Room For Others** series. We believe God is calling us to take some important steps as a church in order to MAKE ROOM FOR OTHERS. This means need to migrate our Chapel venue into this venue space, and we need to migrate our LIVE venue into a new worship space in our FLC gym.

As many of you know, we completed some baseline room improvements on our gym this past July. If you have not had a chance to see that, poke your head in there today. Being nearly 20 years old, the walls and ceiling insulation were showing tremendous wear and tear and so we repaired and upgraded those infrastructure pieces in order to be positioned for the next phase of prepping it to serve as a worship space.

I want to make sure you know, this plan for migrating our worship venues, each to larger spaces, is the most cost effective way to answer the call to make room for others! But, it is going to cost! In a few weeks I want to share some numbers with you, both cost numbers, but also encouraging numbers that reflect the amount already given, and already committed to this project by our Pastoral Staff and our Leadership Board. I'll have those numbers for you in two weeks. I think I can safely say we've already raised about 40% of the money we'll need.

God is at work, he seems to be affirming our plan by providing a healthy start to this effort. Now, remember, in two weeks, I'm going to be giving you an opportunity to commit to this effort as well. But, know this; if you have clarity on how you can be a part of this, you can start giving that support now. You don't have to wait two weeks for my invitation to jump in. Just mark you gift **Room For Others**.

Perhaps others of you are still praying all this through. That's fine too. And there are some of you who are praying that prayer I suggested to you last

week. "Lord I feel unwilling to support this, but I ask that you help me become willing."

Last week in session #1 I hoped to encourage you by reminding you that our ministries and investments into God's mission here in these foothills are part of a much bigger thing. We're part of the global movement called the **Alliance**. Last week we stepped through the Alliance Mission, strategy, and vision. (Show Alliance Diagram)



We reviewed how our efforts here in these foothills are really the local expression of this global effort. *We exist to **connect** people to Jesus and help them **grow** to love and **serve** him.*

In order to continue to fulfill our calling as a local church we have to make room for others to come and experience what each of us enjoys here week after week—supportive community, reflection in God's word, and expressions of worship.

And making room for others requires each of us to spend some of our money to help make it happen. Now, I'm well aware talking about money in church is a sensitive subject and it can feel awkward. In fact, you might be thinking there are more important or more spiritual things to talk about.

But here's the reality: In the Bible, there are hundreds of verses that talk directly or indirectly about money, and possessions, and how God's people are to use them. The sheer enormity of the Bible's teaching on this subject screams for our attention. It might shock you, but more is said about money in the Bible than about love, prayer, and other topics we might assume are more important to God.

Why did Jesus say more about how we are to view and handle money and possessions than about any other topic—including both heaven and hell, and prayer and faith? I think there are two reasons: 1) He

understands how tempting it is to manage our money selfishly or unwisely. And 2) Because, God wants us to recognize *the powerful relationship between* our true spiritual condition, and our attitude and actions concerning money and possessions. In short, *our money management practices are a measure of our spiritual health!* In other words, *how we spend our money speaks volumes about our values in life.*

Let me show you why this is true. I want to examine with you a few “cash conversations” Jesus has with different people in the New Testament. These exchanges reveal the way our spending speaks volumes about our values. Let me start with Jesus’ interaction with Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-9. Read text

Zacchaeus’ money management

Let me make a few observations about this interaction with Zacchaeus:

1. When the text says Zacchaeus wanted to “see who Jesus was,” the language and context of the story indicates it wasn’t simple curiosity that drove him. Climbing a tree was super undignified behavior for that culture. Most interpreters believe climbing that tree *indicates a spirit of trust and belief compelled Zacchaeus*. In other words, Zacchaeus was seeking more than a visual of Jesus, he was seeking the salvation that Jesus spoke of.
2. When Jesus says, “*I must stay at your home today,*” he’s indicating he’s compelled or very passionate about spending time with this eager heart.
3. And Jesus’ comment about Zacchaeus being a descendent of Abraham wasn’t about him being a Jew. He was actually pointing out that Zacchaeus responded to Jesus with faith and repentance just as Abraham had done.¹

¹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 469.

4. But, here's the *main observation* for our discussion today: Jesus judged the reality of Zacchaeus' salvation by his willingness, even his cheerful eagerness; to practice generosity, and part with his money for God's glory and ***for the good of others***. You see his money management was a key measure of his spiritual health. His spending spoke volumes about his values.

Now, I want to show another conversation where money and the importance of our godly management pops up somewhat surprisingly. In Luke 3, though no one asks him about money and possessions, John the Baptist brings it up as he's teaching and challenging the people.

In this passage John the Baptist firmly confronts the people about their lives and calls them to repentance...then he calls them to bear fruit that is an outward demonstration of their inward commitment. In other words... fruit that speaks volumes about their values. I want you notice a theme in how John the Baptist responds. Read Luke 3:7-14

John the Baptists' perspective on wealth

Do you see the theme in John's responses regarding outward fruit of their inward spiritual state?

It's so fascinating, all John's instructions regarding *fruit in keeping with repentance* relates to money and possessions. Notice:

- Share clothes and food with the poor (11)
- Don't take more than what is yours (13)
- Be content with your wages (14)
- Don't extort money or accuse falsely (this probably refers to the practice of claiming that someone's possessions were stolen goods so that soldiers could confiscate and keep them; 14).

You see, all John's instructions regarding *fruit in keeping with repentance* relates to money and possessions. All these things were of such high priority, so close to the heart of following God, that John could not talk

about true repentance and spiritual transformation without addressing them. That's significant.

I hope you can see how each of these "Cash conversations" we have just looked at reinforce the main principle I want you to understand today: Money management is a measure of your spiritual health—your spending speaks volumes about what you value.

- ✓ This is why God cares big time about your money and how you manage it.
- ✓ Stewardship of wealth and possessions, our attitudes and actions regarding money are a key indicator of our spiritual health.
- ✓ Suppose Jesus or John the Baptist were to visit us today and sit with each of you and assess your spiritual condition by your attitudes and actions regarding money and possessions. What would their assessment be? What would your spending say about your spiritual condition?

God knows money is a huge indicator of where our loyalties in life lie. If you are not a Christian and you have not chosen to follow the Jesus way of living and loving, then there is very little tension, if any for you, with regards to how you manage your money. You do what you want. No conflict.

But, if you are a Christian and you're trusting Jesus with your whole life and eternity, then this matters to you. This is why it is so important for us to regularly do a thoughtful "gut check" on how we're managing our personal finances as Christians. We've got to ask: What is my spending saying about me?

Many people incorrectly believe that what we do with our money is our own business. They suggest that God doesn't really care about what we do with our money. All God cares about is our salvation and our spiritual condition. But, look with me for a moment at Mark 12:41-44. Read text.

Jesus' perspective on money management

With all the cool places to sit around the temple, Jesus parks it right by the offering plates. Jesus intentionally watched what people gave. And it sounds like he not only noticed; he cared about what people were giving to God.

And Jesus calls his disciples' attention NOT to the *amount* of the gift, but the *sacrifice and trust represented* in the gift. You see the others gave resources they will never miss. They'll never feel it. But, this woman gave extravagantly. She'll feel that gift. In fact, Jesus says, "This poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others."

More? In what way, Jesus? You see, Jesus noticed what the folks were doing at offering time...Jesus noticed and cared what the people were giving...*not the amount of gift, but the amount of trust and the faith represented* in the gift. He noticed the attitude more than the physical action. The dollar amount was not his concern as much as what the gift "said" about the condition of the heart.

You see, how we manage our wealth of time, talent, AND treasure is a leading indicator of how deeply we're trusting God. This is why God cares about your stewardship of things...ALL things.

Now, as we begin to wrap this up today, I want to show you two last thoughts from Jesus. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 13:44-46

These two parables picture examples of a person who out of great joy and with urgency, give up something once loved, for something suddenly prized even more. They recognize their lives have been changed forever by what they have experienced. Their joy and gratitude move them to release what they have, in order to gain something much more valuable.

You see, in the life of a Christian there comes a kind of “Ah-ha” moment in which the person feels deeply the call of Jesus to release what you have for the sake of the gospel.

Our relationships with God, and what we have found in Jesus, and what we experience here in the community and family of Foothills Church is incredibly valuable. And each of us must get to a place where we are willing to release some of our prized personal wealth, in order to make room for others to taste and enjoy what we all enjoy.

Our relationship with God is to be the most important part of our lives. All other pursuits are to be considered trivial by comparison. What you and I have the potential to experience in our relationships with Jesus compares to nothing else. Our lives and our eternities are forever changed. Now, we are faced with this incredible opportunity to be a part of making room for others to enjoy what we enjoy.

Conclusion:

These scenes and parables we have looked at today teach us some very important stewardship truths:

- ✓ ***How we handle our money is an accurate index of our spiritual lives.***
- ✓ ***Your spending speaks volumes about your values.***
- ✓ ***Value for God’s message motivates support for his mission.***

These are some of the reasons it is important for us to give thought to our ways, and to talk about money and the very personal issues of how we manage it. What you do with your money might be private from the people sitting around you, but it is not private from God.

As in the story of the widow’s mite; if Jesus were here today in this service...where would he sit? Somewhere he could see what was put in the offering? What would your offering say?

Pray.

