



Worship – Part 30
Acts of Worship – Part 18
Worshipping God with Our Treasure – Part 2
GCSP – 12/08/2007

We are unfortunately on the verge of another election cycle. And if the recent trend continues, 95% of the deluge of TV and radio commercials we are going to be inundated with will be attacks against the candidate's opponents. We won't hear much about what the candidates are planning to do if elected, but instead we will hear about how the other person cheated on an 6th grade history exam or made an inappropriate comment 37 years ago. The candidates will focus on the apparent lack of morals or integrity of their opponent, but the voters usually have different issues on their minds.

Over the course of time voters consistently rate economic issues much higher than any other. In a recent national survey only 5% of voters ranked the candidate's morals as their number one concern while 60% ranked economic issues as their number one concern. So in other words, the majority of American voters care not if the candidate is a man or woman of moral integrity as long as they are convinced he or she will positively affect their pocketbook if elected.

I don't think it will surprise you for me to say that we live in a very materialistic society. As a whole we are obsessed with accumulating more and more stuff. One of the fastest growing businesses in the United States over the last few decades is the self-storage industry. Do you know what the primary use of these storage units are? Not for the temporary storage of your property while in the midst of moving, but the majority of the spaces are rented long term to store stuff that no longer fits in the attic or basement or crawl space.

Most items that are put in a storage unit will never again see the light of day. A large percentage of Americans are paying a monthly fee to store their garbage. And they do this because they have spent more money than they earn on new garbage for their homes and their just isn't enough room for the old garbage anymore. So instead of doing what you should do with garbage they spend more money to accumulate garbage.

Stop me if I'm wrong. Even if you haven't joined the millions who rent storage spaces for this purpose, how many of you have stuff in your attic, basement, or crawl space that you haven't even looked at in five years or more? How about ten years? Dare I ask twenty?

100 years ago, the majority of the money earned in our nation went toward the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. It was called survival. As our nation has prospered beyond that of any nation in history, our understanding of basic needs has been forever perverted. We now need multiple TV sets, computers, dishwashers, electric garage door openers, closets full of clothes for every season (even though they rarely get worn for more than a season), and on and on.

Every now and then we experience a prolonged power outage due to a major storm that strands us in our homes for a few days. We are jerked back into reality for that brief time. If only for a moment we understand what is truly a need.

The comic strip "Cathy" depicted the reality of our culture very well several years ago. Two people were observing their possessions and pointed out safari clothes that will never be near a jungle, aerobic shoes that will never set foot in an aerobics class, a deep sea diving watch that will never get wet, and keys to a four-wheel drive vehicle that will never experience snow or mud or even a hill.

We are sick; we buy stuff for the sake of buying it. We buy stuff that has no use in our lives; no purpose.

I have books I've never read, CD's I've never listened to, and even a few articles of clothing I've never worn. I will eventually read the books and listen to the CD's and wear the clothes, but if I haven't used these things yet, did I really need to buy them when I did?

Dr. Aaron Beck did a ten-year study of patients with suicidal tendencies. He found that the risk of suicide increases with possessions. The more possessions you have the higher your risk of killing yourself. Poor people rarely kill themselves.

Other studies show that the higher your income the shorter your life span. If you double your income you more than double the incidents of adultery. 99% of crime is motivated by money or sex and those with the primary motive of money outnumber sex by four to one.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **1 Timothy 6**.

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Let's pray.

As I mentioned last week, this is the first sermon series I have done on the topic of money. As I hope you will notice in the weeks to come, this is not a series designed to get you to put more money in the basket. God has abundantly blessed Grace Church with sufficient finances to operate from before we even held our first service. We began receiving donations and offering checks two weeks before we held our first service. We received offering checks from one couple in Arizona for about a year and they have never been up here to attend our service. We still receive monthly checks from people who are rarely up here to attend our church. God has been amazing good to us in this regard.

So although I will get around to teaching us what the Bible says about our offerings to the church, worshipping God with our treasure goes far beyond how much of that treasure ends up in the offering basket.

In my introduction I gave you several examples of how money is extremely important to people; how we use our money is extremely important to God. In the New Testament there are about 500 verses on prayer and faith; there are over 2,000 on money and possessions. Our money and possessions and how we use them is important to God.

Worshipping God with your treasure is all about how we use our money – and the church offering is just a small piece of a much bigger puzzle.

v. 6-8

I will probably dig deeper into this aspect of contentment in the coming weeks but I want to just plant the seed in your mind now. If you want a one-word answer to the problem of materialism, it is contentment. If you learn to be content with what you already have you will never have a problem with materialism and you will never have a problem with money. Make sure you understand what I said. I did not say you would be rich I said you would never have a problem with money. Money problems are the result of overspending, over borrowing, and over consuming; in other words, not being content with what you have. Contentment with what you have will stop all of that in its tracks.

And again, I will most likely develop this thought more thoroughly when we wrap up this series.

v. 9 – But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

Okay, let's be honest. If I had asked for a show of hands from those of you who wanted to get rich, before we read this verse, I think it would be safe to say that most hands would have gone up. It's natural for us to dream about having great wealth; or at least enough money to be debt free and never have to work again. I say it is natural, but it is only natural in the flesh, not in the Spirit. Our fleshly desires want material wealth. If we align our hearts and minds with God's Word, and if we would only obey what the Lord teaches us about money and possessions, we would find godly contentment and we would discover that it is not natural for our spiritual nature to desire material riches.

Let me stop here for a moment to make a point: God is not calling us to take a vow of poverty. God wants us to be prosperous, but prosperity is much more than a hefty bank balance. Prosperity is living in and walking in the blessings of God. You can be materially poor and still be prosperous in the blessings of God. It is all a matter of what you treasure. If your needs are small you will walk in prosperity more easily than if your needs are large. Prosperity is more a spiritual attitude than a material possession.

Hold your place in **1 Timothy** and turn with me in your Bibles to **Matthew 6**.

Matthew 6:19-21

If prosperity was only material treasure on earth it would be a contradiction for God to promise us prosperity and then have Jesus telling us to not store it up here on earth. The prosperity of God will accompany us to heaven. The treasures of earth will stay on the earth and eventually disappear. Prosperity and treasure are two entirely different things.

So back in **1 Timothy**, Paul says that **those who want to get rich fall into temptation**. Notice that Paul does not say they might fall into temptation or there is a likelihood they will fall into temptation. Paul doesn't leave any room for escape in the opening of this verse. If you desire to be rich you will fall into temptation, period; end of story.

He then adds you will fall into **a snare**. What does a snare indicate? It indicates a trap. The desire for riches is a trap. And again there is no room for escape in this verse. If you want to get rich you will fall into a trap.

Paul isn't finished. If you want to get rich you will also have **many foolish and harmful desires**. Your attitudes and your mind and heart will get out of whack. Your appetite for the things of this world will increase, and as you satisfy that appetite on the things of the world your appetite for the things of the Spirit; the things of God will be diminished and eventually completely crowded out.

And the end of all of this is disaster. Paul concludes by telling the end result of wanting to get rich is it will **plunge men into ruin and destruction**. And beloved let me stress one more time, this is not a possibility or something that might happen, this is an iron clad promise of God's Word. Temptations, traps, foolish and harmful desires, ruin and destruction await you if your goal in life is to get rich. And that you can take to the bank – pun intended.

Why?

v. 10 – For the love of money is a root for all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

In this verse Paul speaks of a possible result of this desire for riches; you could wander away from the faith you have in God, meaning Christians who fall into this trap can find themselves turning away from their devotion to God. This outcome is not a guarantee but it is a dangerous possibility, and is there anything more sad than seeing one of God's children wander away from Him?

A leader in the Rumanian church has this to say: "*In my experience, 95% of the believers who face the test of persecution pass it, while 95% of the believers who face the test of prosperity fail it.*"

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Proverbs 30**.

Proverbs 30:8b-9

While most of the Proverbs were written by Solomon, this one was written by a man named Agur. Agur wisely asks God to supply his needs to live comfortably. He doesn't want to be poor, but neither does he want to be rich. He understands his sinful nature much more than most. He knows that if he were poor he would most likely resort to stealing, and that would profane God's name. But he also knows that if he were rich he would most likely forget God; he would no longer rely on God but instead would put his trust in his riches.

We would be wise to follow in the path of Agur.

So what are the signs of materialism? What should I be on the lookout for in my own life that would indicate I am on the slippery slope of falling into the temptation and trap of materialism?

Let's spend our last few minutes together with a list of these indicators; or better said, attitudes. The following attitudes will reveal that you have a problem with materialism.

1. Anxiety. You are not content to just manage your money, you worry about it; you are anxious about it. You are living right on the edge or over the edge of spending more than you have.
2. Covetousness. You are not content with what is yours, but you envy what other people have. You desire things you don't need. You lust for something because it is new and you may even desire things just because of how other people will view you when they see it.
3. Selfishness. You hold onto everything you have very tightly. You struggle losing your grip. Generosity goes against your grain. Any giving you do is grudgingly.
4. Worry. This is closely related to anxiety, but this more of a preoccupation with money. You worry about your investments and interest rates and rates of return. Instead of thinking about your service and contribution to the job you have or the other ways you earn your money, you are only concerned with how fast and how much you can get.
5. Greediness. More so than selfishness, this attitude is never satisfied. You always want more than you currently have.
6. Flattery. You tell people what they want to hear for the purpose of gaining what you want.
7. Idolatry. You will reach the point of sacrificing people and relationships for things.

All of these are attitudes and all of them are strong indicators that you struggle with the sin of materialism. Do you recognize these attitudes in the world today? Or I guess a better question is do you recognize these attitudes in your life today; especially at this materialistic time of the year?

Go back again to **1 Timothy 6**.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

God is not condemning riches. Some of the greatest men and women recorded in Scripture were wealthy; Abraham, Job, and Lydia are just a few. God is instead condemning the sin of materialism and our unhealthy attitudes toward and use of money and possessions.

You can be rich and not fall to the sin of materialism, and you can be destitute but materialistic. You can be poor and love money, and you can be rich and not love money. And obviously the opposite can also be true. So the balance of your bank account has absolutely nothing to do with the sin of materialism – it is your attitude.

But God has placed each of us in country that enjoys a great level of riches, and He has blessed us in this way so that we may enjoy it; and there is nothing wrong with that. But it is easy to cross the line into materialism.

I have much more to say on this, but that will have to wait until next time.

For tonight, let me list again the attitudes that indicate that you are struggling with the sin of materialism:

1. Anxiety
2. Covetousness
3. Selfishness
4. Worry
5. Greediness
6. Flattery
7. Idolatry

If any of these are present in your life, confess them before God tonight and ask Him to help you escape the trap you find yourself in.

Let's pray.