

Sunday 28 September 2025, Trinity 15 Parish Eucharist

Amos 6.1a, 4–7, 1 Timothy 6.6–19, Luke 16.19–31

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Imagine for a moment that you're a parish priest. You sit down on a Monday morning to look over the readings for the following Sunday. And, to your horror, you see that the readings are all about money. That's the position I found myself in this past week. No priest, or at least no priest I know, relishes the idea of talking to a congregation about money. It's such a difficult subject, not least because the life-circumstances of any congregation are so mixed.

How am I meant to say something useful, and maybe even a little challenging, without alienating or offending one of you? Well, I actually talked this problem through with one of you yesterday and together we realised the great problem in talking about money is fear. I'm afraid of upsetting you and, on some level, thinking about money in a theological way risks bring to the fore the fears we all have about it: Do I have enough? How should I use it? What about my mortgage, the college fund, the flute lessons? What happens if I bring God into dialogue with my bank account?

Bearing in mind that Christianity is not a religion of fear, but of trust, I'd like to address that last question head on: What happens if I bring God into dialogue with my bank account?

We take as read that the words of Jesus in scripture are in accord with the mind of God. On the subject of wealth, Jesus has nothing at all good to say. Let me remind you of some his observations: *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be loved to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money".* (Matthew 6.24)

"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God". (Mark 10.24-25)

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." (Luke 12.13-15)

Perhaps the best known of Jesus' statements about money is: *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Matthew 6.21)

This last one comes nearest the crux of the matter of money as it's understood by Jesus' apostles in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy, our second reading for this morning, St Paul addresses the problem of money, the damage caused by loving it too much, and the danger poses by our clinging on to possessions. He contrasts godly contentment with the dissatisfaction and distress caused by having too much and wanting even more.

There is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

We brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out; why are you so worried about 'things', possessions and money? Why do you care so much about maintaining your lifestyle while you neglect your spiritual life? Loving money is a trap and it will only cause you pain, because you will never be satisfied with more. Our very fear of not having enough can push us into chasing after money as a way to provide security. But the security it brings is an illusion; your money can always be taken away.

True security can only be found by investing in the life of the spirit which will long outlast the body. When you die, you will return to dust. Your money will be dust next to you. If, however, you have trusted in God and his goodness, you will have true safety, a true home that will last.

It's easy to be afraid and it's hard to trust, especially when trusting what we cannot see. But that is the core of faith: believing and hoping in what we cannot see, striving for the reward we will only receive in full after we have passed from this life into the next. Not being afraid consists in letting go of what we can see- that will fail us- and clinging on to what we cannot see- that will truly save us.

So what happens if we bring God into dialogue with our bank account? First of all, we start to see our fear in the right perspective. We're afraid of many earthly things, but our Christian faith is not a faith that begins and ends with this world. Jesus said, *'Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'* Power doesn't belong to the rulers of this world but to God, and no amount of earthly wealth can buy his approval or his protection. As our Lord again said. *'What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?'* The Psalm-writer answers: *'Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, that he should live on forever and never see the grave.'*

We brought nothing into this world and we can carry nothing out. The only thing that ultimately matters is our faith and trust in God; money cannot buy his approval, nor can it keep us safe after we die. We do not need to be afraid of losing our wealth, but we should fear losing our souls in pursuit of earthly gain: *'in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.'*

If we can begin to have a right sense of God's relation to our money, we can begin to apply more easily the apostolic teaching to our own lives. What does St Paul say? *As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.*

Once you've realised how little value your money actually has to buy the things that matter, it's easier to let it go in the service of others. Instead of buying the good life for yourself, give your money to serve those who have less, those who have little, and those who have nothing. Be rich in good works, generous and ready to share. *'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ',* says St Paul in another place, *'that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.'*

Fearless generosity is the mark of Christian faith grounded in the self-giving of Jesus. So do not be afraid of what you stand to lose and instead offer what you have been given by God- for all things come from him- in his service. Do so knowing that it is not just for the good of others that you give, but for your own good. The ability to be generous is a sign of trust, a sign of fearlessness before God the giver of all good gifts. Take hold of what truly is life and store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Amen.