



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

August 21, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

11th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Ecclesiastes 1:1, 2:18-26](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 34

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [James 5:1-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 12:13-21](#)

The Believer Follows Christ... Greed and God's Gifts

1. Money gives but also takes
2. Don't let greed take hold of you
3. God's gifts are given
4. God's gifts give true life

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

When you hear people talk about Christianity in the Bible, you hear a lot of different things that are taken out of context or people think are in the Bible that really aren't. They talk about the "golden rule" and they take things that are in there but change them a little bit. Or they say "The Bible says 'do not judge,'" but when you study that, it says a little bit more than "do not judge." It's actually saying we can judge, just don't be hypocritical.

I think one of the most misquoted or misunderstood is the idea of money. Often people say "Money is the root of all evil." We've heard that before. Money is the cause of all problems. Money is the root of all evil. But what is the actual quote in the Bible? It's ***the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*** [\(1 Timothy 6:10\)](#) It is to love things in the wrong way and put money in the wrong place. When we see all the gifts that God gives us, we see that He gives us so many different things but especially with money, we can struggle. We can have our love in the wrong way and love it too much and struggle with greed. So today we want to look at **Greed and God's Gifts.**

What does God have to tell us about money and greed and the gifts that He gives us? Is earthly wealth meaningless? That's kind of the theme but kind of with an asterisk. If you read the opening introduction to the theme of the service, the last sentence is

“earthly wealth is meaningless.” But the first sentence of that paragraph says “Earthly wealth is meaningless without God.” So we want to look at this and see that yes, earthly wealth and money can be an issue, but we see that it also can give us things. How we place it and how we look at all of God’s gifts are important.

The first part I want us to look at is in the middle of our text actually instead of first talking about the greed section. In Verse 7 it says: ***Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.***” Notice he speaks about this valuable crop that is coming. The things that God is giving are very valuable and important. Here in James there is the mention of this farmer, but in our Gospel Lesson, we have a different farmer. We have two different farmers and the different gifts that are given to them, but we see a contrast. We’re going to talk a lot about that, about the differences between what God gives us and what money, in a sense, takes away if we’re not focused in the right way.

First let’s look at this valuable thing that God gives us. Here it says that the farmer gets a valuable crop. It’s true; God’s gifts/money is valuable. God gives us money for a purpose. Money gives but it also takes. Let’s look first at the value of God’s gifts, the possessions and the things that He gives us, but specifically money.

I’m going to lay out seven different little things that money gives us and then we’re going to look at seven things that money kind of takes. We’ll go through them pretty quickly, but I think as you hear them you’ll see how that is maybe true in your life or maybe how you have struggled with those things; how money gives but also takes.**

Think about some of these things that money gives. Without money, can you really do some of these things?

1. Money gives experiences. You need money to go and travel, to play sports, to eat at certain restaurants. Money gives you great experiences and God wants us to have and experience this life, to see the world, to go visit family. Money gives us experience, and that is great.
2. Money does give comfort. The value of things that you purchase or think about the beds you buy. Maybe if you buy the cheapest bed, it’s not very comfortable. But if you buy a more expensive bed, it’s a little more comfortable. Money can give you some comfort.
3. There are ways that money gives people respect. When you have money, people look to you or come to you. There is a certain amount of respect because maybe you use your money wisely. You worked hard to earn that money.

4. Money gives security. When you don't feel like you have enough money and feel like you're running around, you don't feel as secure.
5. Money also gives more opportunities. More opportunities in so many ways of being able to do things, like those experiences. It opens you up to helping others and being able to do so many more things.
6. Money gives rest. If you've worked hard and you're able to retire and rest, money gives you rest.
7. Finally, money gives the opportunity for impact, for you to give, for you to help others. God has blessed many people with money so that they can help others; the church and others in need. If you look at the Bible of all the Old Testament patriarchs, so many of them were wealthy. God gives these gifts to give a lot of these things but also for us to help others.

Money gives but in what ways does it take?

1. Money takes because you'll need time to make it or to earn it. If you are a farmer out there working, if it's not just money, it's something to get you these earthly resources, so it takes time to get it.
2. Money takes stress. When you are working, usually the stress of work and the stress of figuring out how to get this money isn't always easy.
3. As you get more and more money, we tend to spend that money. If you are working a lot, when do you spend that money? Money often will take your weekends because you need to spend that money. You need to go and buy all the different things that you can use your money on and you need the time to spend it.
4. You might get exhausted from maintaining that money or the things that you buy with money.
5. You might even get busy managing the money and all the different funds or how to make sure you don't lose money and you make the most of your money.
6. In doing so, maybe you get moody. When you are worried that someone is going to hurt or scratch that new car that you bought that you spent all that money on, you get moody protecting the money and the things that you have.
7. Finally, that leaves the idea that you might lose it. So you are stressed about the fact that you could lose these things that you spent time on and that you worked hard to maintain. But there is that possibility of losing them.

So you see how money is not just meaningless because it gives us so many things. God gives us these blessings. He gives it to spend with our family and our friends and to have great experiences in this life but in that list of things of what it takes from us, you can see all the emotions, the stress and the moodiness and the fear that it leaves. What does that finally lead to? It really leads to greed.

God talks about money because He knows that greed is out there and He doesn't want greed to take hold of you. This is the warning that He gives at the beginning of James. He says: ***Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.*** You hear some of those things of what money takes in there; the stress of losing things and seeing the fact that the things that they have are going to go away. We are so greedy about these things that aren't going to follow us. They are going to fade.

But notice the things and the actions that people go to in order to keep their money. When we're so focused on money and keeping it and getting more, who is it all about? It's about me. It's about making myself greater and making myself look better. Did you notice how many people seemed to get hurt by greed? The people weren't paying fair wages. The people were coming and instead of taking their wealth and sharing it, they were even stingier so that they could get more wealth. Then later: ***You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.*** They go so far as to murder and contrive against even those who are innocent.

Greed makes it all about us and about our things and getting more. It's not even about the things that money gives because remember some of the things that money gives are opportunities and experiences that we can do with others, and the impact we can make by giving, and the respect received as a Christian who handles money well so that maybe people come to you. But when we are greedy, we lose all of that. I think it's hard sometimes to see the impact of greed in our world.

I had a pastor friend who was moving down south and before they had to move, they needed to put their stuff in a storage shelter. You see those popping up everywhere, even up here in Morrison with those new storage shelters. He was calling around to

storage shelters in Green Bay. He said they were all full. Here they are, they are moving, so they need to store all their things away, but everyone has so much stuff that all the storage shelters are full.

I recently purchased some little storage bins (for our storage) off of Facebook Marketplace. I bought them from a lady in Green Bay. Her mom was going into a nursing home, so she had all these little storage bins. She had them out in her yard. In the back was the garage and in the garage there was a boat and a snowmobile. Outside the garage was a big RV. The garage was just to store things. They didn't even have any cars in the garage. The cars were out front, but the garage was too small.

Greed is something that we have in our life. It's all around us. It's something that is hard for us to get away from because everything in our life is pushing us to have more and to make it all about you and what you have and what you can get and getting more.

So what is the answer? How do we avoid greed and understand what money gives us and use it in the right way?

When we look at the rest of James as he talks about this farmer, he says: ***Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!*** Notice where this farmer is looking and what he knows is coming. He knows that the Lord's coming is near. But where do his valuable things come from? He is waiting patiently for these rains because he knows everything he gets comes from God.

We have many farmers in our community. Farmers know what it's like. You can plan. You can do so much work, but if God doesn't give the way that we want Him to give, or if God decides to take with bad weather, then there is nothing you can do. We have to see that it's not all about us, but it's about God. God's gifts are given. That might be clear. That might be easy to understand, that a gift is given, but why do we struggle with that? It's because we want to make it all about ourselves and earning something. That's really what happened in the Gospel Lesson.

This man, who got this huge harvest, made it all about himself. If you read the Gospel Lesson, he talks all about "me," "I," "I," "I," "Look what I can do." There is nothing about God or the gifts that God had given or how God had blessed him or how he could help others because he was given these gifts. It was all about himself. When we don't understand that God's gifts are given, where does it come from? It comes from me and my works; my hard work that helped me get to this high level at my work or all the hard

work that I did to earn this money, and we don't recognize the blessings that God has given us, the talents and the ability for me to even make any money.

When we see that God's gifts are given, we need to understand that it's all from Him. Then, when we do, when we can see that God's gifts are given, it changes us too. Verses 10 and 11 say: ***Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.***

Many of you know what Job's life was like. He had so many blessings and then they were taken away. God blessed him in the end, but in that in between, Job would not curse God. He struggled with it towards the end. He struggled with why God did what He did, but he didn't curse God for this because he knew that God gives blessings. God gives us gifts. And most of all, He has given the gifts of mercy and compassion, of love and forgiveness and eternal life. When we see that, when we see God's gifts for what they really are, we see that God's gifts give true life. When we have God in focus and understand what the most important gifts are, it puts everything else in focus.

We fall short in so many ways. When we talk about greed in our lives, can we just stop being greedy? We could work on it. We can be compassionate. We can give to others. We can try to put money in the right place. But money and greed is kind of always a struggle.

But the answer is seeing that God has done it all for us. It's not about me and my work. It's all about the gifts that God gives; His love and mercy and forgiveness and His perfection. God was perfect in our place. When we fall short, we know that we are forgiven. When we see that He loves us and He was willing to give His Son, His only Son, to be that perfect sacrifice for us, what else will He give us? He'll give us everything that we need, and we understand that when He has given us salvation and faith and forgiveness and peace that if we have a lot of these things or if we have a few of those things, we can still have peace. We can have patience if I'm in a hard time knowing that God will give me the gifts that I need; not always the gifts that I want or think I deserve, but he'll give me the gifts that I need.

That's what true life is; to be patient and to see all of the gifts that God has given us, to not be greedy and always wanting more and not being satisfied or finding me in my possessions. When I seek to find myself in my possessions, then there is never an end. There is always more. Or if I'm seeking to find myself in my work, there is always more. It's never enough. But when we find ourselves in God and His gifts that are given, not earned, nothing that we can do to earn His love, we have true peace, true life, and we can see how we can use all of His gifts to His glory.

When we understand the proper place of money and His gifts, we can use them to serve Him, to love others in all the different ways that money gives, but understanding that these are all gifts from God, all blessings that help us to serve Him and love others and maybe to share that Gospel with others so that they too may escape the rat-race of more and more and greed and trying to be more. When we see Jesus and His love, that He has done everything and that we are enough in God because He did it all, it's all a gift, it brings true peace, true life that will give us hope and peace and patience in all times knowing that no matter what we have in this life, we've been given eternity. We've been given a heaven and hope and a peace and a joy that will be lasting forever. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7.\)](#) Amen.

***The seven things that wealth gives and takes are taken from the book "What's Big Starts Small" by Mike Novotny.*