

# **JESUS, MONEY AND RICHES**

*Taken from the book of Fr. P. Ribes, s.j. "To be Like Jesus"*

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## **Intent of this notes**

- ✓ *To learn what was Jesus' attitude towards money, wealth and worldly possessions.*
- ✓ *To guard ourselves against the wrong system of values prevalent in our world based on wealth and riches.*
- ✓ *To be aware of the utter futility of trying to secure happiness through material wealth and riches.*
- ✓ *To realize how much the stranglehold of consumerism has already gripped our lives.*
- ✓ *To create awareness that happiness and fulfilment springs from being content with what we have, rather than from craving to have ever more.*

## **Jesus' Teachings About Money**

### **PART ONE: Money's Nature, Function and Use**

#### **Is Money and Wealth Good or Bad?** (Lk 16/1-9)

Jesus said to his disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and he was told that the manager was wasting his master's money. He called him and said: What is this I hear of you? Give me a complete account of your handling my money because you cannot be my manager any longer."

"My master is going to dismiss me from my job," the man said to himself. "What shall I do? I am not strong enough to dig ditches, and I am ashamed to beg. Now I know what I shall do so that when my job is gone, I shall have friends who will welcome me in their homes."

So, he called in all the people who were in debt with his master. He said to the first one: "How much you owe my master?" "One hundred barrels of olive oil", he answered. "Here is your account," the manager told him, "Sit down and write fifty." He said to another one, "And you how much you owe?" "A thousand bushels of wheat," he answered. "Here is your account," the manager told him, "Write eight hundred."

The master of this dishonest manager praised him for doing such a shrewd thing. And Jesus went on to say:

**"I tell you make friends with your money now - that tainted thing – so that when you die you will be welcome into your eternal home."**

#### **Questions for Reflection**

1. According to the teachings of Jesus, in the parable of the Dishonest Manager is money and wealth good or bad? Why?

2. Why does Jesus call it “that tainted thing”?
3. Why did the Master praise the dishonest manager?
4. Did Jesus approve the dishonesty of the manager?
5. What’s the point Jesus wants to make in this parable?
6. What is money and what is it meant for according to Jesus?
7. How should we, followers of Jesus, use money and wealth?

## **Food for Thought**

### **Nature of money and riches**

- Money and riches are part of God’s creation.
- Anything God has made is good in itself.
- Money is wanted and necessary in our present temporal condition and life.
- However, money has to be used, not misused.
- Money is just a **means** to serve God and our brothers and sisters.
- Money is **not an end in itself**.
- Riches, as all other created things, are means to secure salvation and eternal life.

### **Who is the primary Owner of Money and Riches?**

- God is the absolute owner of money as much as of everything else.
- We are not the owners of our moneys, wealth and riches, but only *trustees*.
- Like the Manager of the parable, we have to use money and wealth according to the mind of the Master - God our Creator.
- We, like the manager of the parable, will be asked to give an account of how we have administered our Master’s money. We ought to use it only, never abuse it!
- Wealth and money are given to us by God only to be used and administered for the benefit of all his children, not to be squandered and misappropriated only for ourselves.
- Riches, wealth and money, as all created things, are meant for the benefit of the entire human family, not just for a few ‘privileged persons’.
- We cannot do anything we please with “our” money. Truly speaking it’s not ours.
- Money has a social function, namely to build a better and fairer world for all the human family.
- Wealth and riches used exclusively for one’s personal enjoyment and aggrandizement would tantamount to robbery. If so, it would be a serious breach of justice.
- We have a duty to see that our properties and possessions yield the maximum for the common good.

## **PART TWO      Jesus Tells us not to Get Attached to Money**

### **Parable of the Rich Fool. (Lk 12/13-21)**

#### **Do not set your heart on it. Do not greed for it. Money has only a passing value**

A man in the crowd said to Jesus: “Teacher, tell my brother to divide with me the property our father left us.”

Jesus answered him: “Man, who gave me the right to judge, or to divide your property between you two?”

And he went on to say to them: “Watch out and guard yourselves from all kinds of greed, because a man’s true worth is not made up of the things he owns, no matter how rich he may be.”

Then Jesus told them this parable: “A rich man had land which bore him crops. He began to think to himself: ‘I don’t have a place to keep all my crops. What can I do? This is what I’ll do’ he told himself. ‘I will tear my barns down and build bigger ones, where I will store the grain and all my other goods. Then, I will say to myself: What a lucky man you are! You have all the good things you need for many years. Take life easy now: eat, drink and enjoy yourself.’

But God said to him: ‘You fool! This very night you will die! Then, who will get all these things you have kept for yourself?’

And Jesus concluded: This is how it is with those who pile up riches for themselves but are not rich in God’s sight.”

### **Question for Reflection**

**Wealth, moneys, riches, possessions – though good in themselves – are fraught with dangers. Enumerate some of them?**

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

### **Points for reflection after you replied to the questionnaire.**

#### **Dangers of Getting Attached to Money**

- Possessions tend to divide us rather than unite. Property matters split many a family.
- We are possessed by our possessions rather than we possessing them.
- Riches inflate us – they make us feel great – in fact, they make us mean and puny.
- Riches and wealth are deceptive,
  - ✓ They do not last for ever. Sooner than thought, they come to an end. .
  - ✓ They do not deliver what they promise, namely, happiness, instant bliss, joy and peace.
- Money and wealth stunt our humanity. They stifle our capacity for love, compassion, sympathy and pity for others.
- Tenderness cannot grow in hardened hearts.
- Moneys, possessions, wealth and riches tend to become idols to which we sacrifice the best we have: our peace of mind, the happiness of our homes, our friends, our health, even Our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Wealth glues us to this earth. Heaven is lost sight of.
- Money is addictive, even more than alcohol and drugs. The more we have the more we crave for.

## **PART THREE**                      **Examples of Jesus' Detachment from Riches and Wealth**

### **Family and Social Status**    (Lk 1/26-38 and Mt 2/18-25)

When he came into our world, he opted to belong to a simple, ordinary and frugal family.

He chose a simple, humble village girl to be his mother.

Mary and Joseph were not destitute, but surely they were not wealthy people.

### **Birth**    (Lk 2/1-7)

**He was born in a stable because they could not afford better accommodation.**

She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger – there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

### **Presentation in the Temple**    (Lk 2/22-24)

Like simple folk people of meagre means they offered only two doves or two young pigeons.

### **Permanent Residence**    Mt 4/19-23

They took permanent residence in a simple village, Nazareth.

### **Job and Occupation**    Mk 6/1-3

He took to his father's profession of a simple, ordinary village carpenter.

### **Choice of Partners and Companions**    Mt 4/18-22 and Mk 3/13-19

He chose as partners simple ordinary fishermen.

### **His main teaching**    Mt 5/1-11

The Beatitudes. Blessed are those detached from riches – the poor in Spirit, the meek, the peace makers, those who suffer for the sake of justice.

### **What should we ask God for?**    Mt 6/11

Just give us "our daily bread", this is enough. Not asking for wealth or riches.

### **Where should we place our trust and our hearts**    Mt 6/24-34

In God alone, not in wealth or possessions, just in God's providence and love.

### **What to search in life**    Lk 6/20-27

Search for true riches where they lie.

### **Jesus, the Pharisees and Money**    Lk 16/14-15

The Pharisees made fun of Jesus because he was not in love with money.

### **The Rich Young Man**    Mk 10/17-27

Though he was a good person, he missed being a disciple of Jesus because he loved money.

**Warning those who get attached to money and wealth** Mk 10/ 21-27

How hard will it be for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God!

**Condemning those who use their moneys only for themselves** Lk 16/19-31

Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

**Jesus had not a place to be buried** Jn 19/38-42

He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

## **APPENDIX ONE N.T. Texts about Riches and Money**

“We brought nothing into the world. Greed for money is the root of all evil.”(1 Tim 6/6-10)

“Command the rich not to be proud.” (1 Tim 6/17-19)

Poverty and riches (Jas 1/9-11)

Warning to the rich (Jas 5/1-3)

“You say I am rich, yet you are poor...”(Rev 3/17-19)