

KINGDOM CITIZENS

A Weekly Guide to Walking in Radical Devotion

Week 7

The Economy of the Kingdom

There has been much debate over the economy in our recent election. As Kingdom Citizens, we are not exempt from participation in the economic realities of where we live, work, shop and create. But how do we live out the values of Christ's Kingdom while living in the midst of another, earthly kingdom?

Jesus spoke about money a lot! He spoke more about money than about faith and prayer combined. Eleven of His forty parables are about money. The question is, *why?* Why would the King of a heavenly kingdom talk so much about money?

The way we use and approach money reveals so much about our hearts. Jesus not only understood this, but directed much of His teaching to challenge the destructive ways in which our hearts tend to get wrapped around money.

Jesus knows we have an unlimited capacity to compartmentalize areas of our hearts in ways that protect our unspoken idols. Idols are those things or people we treasure more than we treasure Jesus Christ. In his teachings, Jesus directly confronted this idolatry time and time again:

*"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."
- Matthew 6:24*

Jesus asks us a crucial question here regarding His Kingdom economy. Do you serve money, or do you use your money to serve God?

Serve is an interesting word. To say that we "serve" money denotes that we are subjects and money is our master. Most of us don't think of ourselves as *serv*ing money. However, when we find ourselves working 40-50 hours a week, trying to pay bills and stay above water, it can be hard not to feel like money is what rules us.

When we feel the overlord Money commanding us to make more, spend more and get more, we begin to believe the lie that more money is our ticket to more freedom. Who hasn't dreamed of financial freedom? Jesus knows this; his warnings and commands to us come from a place of deep understanding and empathy.

This is why Jesus tells us that the freedom our hearts truly long for will never be found in money. We find it in the freedom He brings—the freedom to serve Him and to trust His gracious provision to meet our daily needs.

He tells us...

*"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? **26** Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? **27** Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"*

***28** "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. **29** Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. **30** If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and*

tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. - Matthew 6:25-34

We are Kingdom Citizens, cared for and provided for by our Heavenly Father. Our job is not to serve money, but to serve God by seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness while trusting that our Father knows our needs and will provide for them. Nothing creates more anxiety in our lives than money. Yet Kingdom Citizens are free from worry and anxiety because just as the Father feeds the birds, He will feed and clothe us and our children.

My daughter, Kaylee, loves birds, squirrels and every other animal on earth. Like, really loves them. She spends her money buying huge bags of birdseed and squirrel food. She buys bird feeders and bird baths. Our front porch is constantly filled with birds who seem to be the happiest and most worry-free creatures on earth.

God is providing for them through Kaylee. She's been touched with love, and God uses her money to provide for the birds of the air and the squirrels on the ground. There is a childlike picture of the Kingdom here. When we use our resources to care for others, God uses our generosity to fulfill His promises. This is Kingdom economics in action. We are invited to store up treasures in the great bank of Christ. Through those gifts we find freedom and others find provision. Christ is glorified as we all are set free.

This is the radical value-shift for Kingdom Citizens: We love God and use money, not the other way around. We are truly free citizens who can practice radical generosity because we believe our God is the King of abundance.

It makes sense then that Jesus would tell us:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." - Matthew 6:20-21

As Kingdom Citizens, we live in an economy of abundance and treasure Christ our King above all else. Our hearts are free to act generously with our money and belongings because our ultimate treasure is in heaven, and that treasure is kept safe from the world's corruption. Be free from worry. Be free from the pursuit of more. Be free from the not-enough. Be generous, for where our treasure is our heart will also be.

As we enter the last weeks of 2020, I am grateful for the way in which our Imago Dei family has practiced generosity and stored up much treasure in Jesus' Kingdom. My prayer is that you will continue to give generously as we approach the end of the year. It takes all of us to make the mission of Imago Dei continue. Would you pray and seek God in terms of your heart when it comes to money? Consider giving a gift that is first an act of worship and then an act of generosity. God will take care of us all, and so we trust in Him to meet our daily needs.

Read

Read again through Matthew 6:19-34.

Questions

- In 2020, a big question has been “Is there enough?” Is there enough toilet paper? Will there be enough pasta? Will there be enough jobs? Will there be enough _____?
- What word would you use to fill in the blank for you this past year?
- In what ways have you seen provision as you remember past anxieties from this year?
- What are your worries today?
- In the upside-down wisdom of the Kingdom of God, we are invited to “honor the Lord with our wealth and with all the first fruits of our produce” (Proverbs 3). When the first item on our budget is to give back to God, He generously frees us from worry and fear as we trust Him. It takes practice! It takes courage! Share with another person what fears hold you back from giving generously.

As if our security could ever rest anywhere outside of you, O God.

So guard our hearts against that lie....
For we have you, and in having you, we have all things, and month-to-month you are teaching us- in this paying of bills- the slow vocation of trust.

Prayer

From A Liturgy for the Paying of Bills

Leader: O God Who Does Provide All Things Necessary for Our Lives

People: Be present with us now, in the paying of these bills.

For there is little in this life that will so starkly reveal our insecurities and our struggle to trust your tender care as will the state of our hearts when we consider the state of our finances.

When we are anxious about money, O Lord, we can slip so easily into the downward spiral of believing that simply having more of it would guarantee our security.