

# Money Sickness and Wellness

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[ 0 : 00 ] So it's the parable of the rich fool. And he told them this parable.

The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, what shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.

Then he said, this is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones. And there I will store up my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, you have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy. Eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, you fool. This very night your life will be demanded from you.

Then you will get what you have prepared for yourself. This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves, but is not rich towards God.

[ 1 : 26 ] Then Jesus said to his disciples, Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear.

For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens. They do not sow or reap. They have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them.

And how much more valuable you are than birds. Who of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon, in all his splendor, was dressed like one of these.

If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, what is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith?

[ 2 : 39 ] And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.

But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, and treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Amen. Thanks, Stephen, for reading. One of our many happy Irishmen today.

Let's pray and ask for God's help as we turn to his word. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight.

[ 3 : 44 ] Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. If you keep your Bibles open at Luke 12, that would be a great help to me. And as always, you can find an outline inside the notice sheet so you can see where we're going with this section of Luke's Gospel.

We started a mini-section, mini-series really, in Luke's Gospel last week, looking at it this week. And it's this section in Luke's Gospel where Jesus is teaching what it really looks like to be a follower of him.

And when you look at it, one of the key marks of being an authentic follower of Jesus Christ is that you have a radically distinctive view of money. In verse 13, Jesus is interrupted in his teaching by this man who asks Jesus to tell his brother to share his inheritance with him.

So in verse 15, Jesus teaches the whole crowd. And he starts with this very sobering warning. Watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.

And we thought about this last week, didn't we? About how I'm not aware of Jesus ever saying, watch out that you don't commit adultery. Watch out that you don't kill anybody.

[ 4 : 55 ] Because if you're having an affair, you'd know you were doing it. You'd know that you'd killed somebody. But greed, Jesus says, watch out about all kinds of greed.

It's like a stealth bomber of a sin. Stealth bombers getting under the radar. You can't detect them. Watch out. Why? Because one of the effects of money sickness is that it blinds you to money sickness.

That's our first point this morning, the danger of money blindness. One of the effects of money sickness is it blinds you to money sickness. You don't notice you have it.

You spot it in other people. You miss it in yourself. And we live in a society where we are deeply infected by this kind of money sickness. It's remarkable how contemporary Jesus' teaching here is today.

I was just looking through the newspapers last week. Last week there was a survey reported on about the UK about people who earn more than £100,000 a year in the UK. One third of them don't consider themselves well off.

[ 6 : 00 ] In fact, 40% of UK households earning over £100,000 a year say they are struggling to make ends meet. And only 18% of them feel wealthy.

When you think about where we live globally today and historically, the time we live in, that is absolutely extraordinary, isn't it?

You just have to go... Yesterday, we were at the Museum of Industrial Life at Summerlee. And you go in these cottages, and each cottage takes you further back in time. This is what a cottage would have looked like in 1960.

It doesn't look much different from our living room. This is what it would have looked like in 1940.

And then you go back, and you go back. You don't have to go back very far. The next cottage you get to 100 years ago, for people living in industrial Glasgow 100 years ago, the whole family is in one room with a stove to cook, a bathtub, and two beds for a whole family to live in.

And people earning over £100,000 a year feel they're struggling to get by. What's going on? It's extraordinary. Now, of course, here at St Silas, we've got a diverse church family.

[ 7 : 14 ] We celebrate that. I'm not at all saying that everybody here is well off. There are people in our church family who are genuinely struggling. And we want to help them. And I don't want anybody in that position to feel burdened or guilty that they're not giving what they can't afford to give.

So please don't mishear me into thinking that I'm saying everybody is rich. But for many of us, if you look at the living space we enjoy, the food that we eat, the lifestyle, the health care we have access to, the dentistry that we have access to, compared to most people around the world and most people in history in Glasgow, we are extremely rich.

We're decadent. Just imagine, if you think you're struggling to get by, imagine trying to explain it to a family from Uganda who come and visit you. And yet lots of us, we don't feel rich, do we?

Lots of us don't feel we've got enough money to buy everything we need. Why is that? It's because we've got money sickness. There was an article in the paper last week, again, about this issue.

Hilda Burke, she's a psychotherapist, and she was saying the problem is that income doesn't make you feel rich. You think it will, because if you imagine, imagine if I doubled my income, to see you're on 20 grand, and you think, if I had 40 grand, I'd be rich.

[ 8 : 32 ] But if you make that step, you won't feel rich. And if you're on 40 grand, it's the same. You think, if I had 80, I'd feel rich. Always, if I had double, but you get there, and you don't. Now, why is that?

It's because, when you get more income, all you do is you just bind yourself into commitments that mean that you don't have any money left. So you make decisions, you mortgage yourself up so that you can, as much as you can afford, monthly payments that are as big as you can afford.

Some people, if you've got children, might start paying school fees. You choose a pricier car with a higher lease payment. Even just your monthly commitments to TV and broadband and Netflix and Amazon Prime and your gym membership, and then you decide you need a better gym than the one, because you need one with a swimming pool.

And you build routines into your life. You need a couple of coffee shop trips every week. Otherwise, you know, you wouldn't have the space really to unwind. Or you get yourself a dog, and then you hire a dog walker to look after the dog.

And so it goes on, and the more money you have, you just add this stuff on that's really expensive. And the result is, you don't feel wealthy enough. So, it's good to remember that, isn't it?

[ 9 : 44 ] Because it means, if you're somebody who's thinking, I'd really like to get serious about giving my money to Jesus, giving it to gospel work, giving it to help the poor, I'm going to do that

when I'm wealthy, you will never do it.

Because you will never feel wealthy enough to do it. You've just got to start doing it. What's the solution? Jesus says, watch out. In other words, don't trust yourself about money.

Ask yourself tough questions. Seek a couple of friends who you're actually willing to talk to about the money that you've got and the money that you're saving and spending and earning so that they can ask you tough questions.

They can say, do you really need that? Do I really need that? Could you be getting more money away? That's our first point, the dangers of money blindness.

The second point, the signs of money sickness. Jesus gives us a few signs that we can watch out for in our lives. They're in the teaching here in Luke 12. The first one is pride, a growing sense of self-reliance.

[ 10 : 45 ] The world respects you because you make money and you get infected by it. So the rich fool, if you look at what he said in verse 17, look at the self-reliance. Verse 18, well, verse 17, what shall I do?

I have no place to store my crops. This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones and there I will store my surplus grain and I'll say to myself.

Money sickness, self-reliance, the world loves you and you start loving yourself thinking I can do anything. I've made loads of money. The next sign is daydreaming.

We all daydream, but what do you daydream about? Do you daydream about money? Do you find yourself daydreaming about your investments or how much money you've got or how much money you wish you had? Money centrality.

That's what this rich fool is doing, isn't it? He's talking to his, in fact, the languages, he says, I'll say to my soul. His soul talk is all about money. A third sign is worry.

[ 11 : 46 ] Do you worry about money? About how much you wish you had or you don't have? About the future without money? Look at verse 22. Jesus said to his disciples, therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear.

For life is more than food, and the body is more than clothes. Why does his teaching about money follow straight on from, his teaching about worry follow straight on from his teaching about money? It's because the two are so intrinsically connected. What stops us being godly with our money is that we're too worried about what our lives would look like, what might happen if we gave our money away.

The next sign is hurry. Being rushed off your feet to make money. In verse 30, Jesus says, for the pagan world runs after all such things, and your father knows that you need them.

Lots of us are crazy busy, aren't we? At St. Silas, how are you? I'm busy. I'm knackered. I'm tired. Everyone's busy. Is one of the reasons we're busy because we have made lifestyle choices that have trapped us into needing a certain income level, and that's what's making us busy, hurrying, running after, making more money.

[ 13 : 04 ] Another sign Jesus gives us of money sickness is storing up. Instead of taking your money and giving it away, you store it, that rich fool. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.

And then in verse 33, what does Jesus say? Verse 33, sell your possessions and give to the poor. That's pretty astonishing, isn't it?

It's good to remember that Jesus is speaking at a time when people didn't have their money in bank accounts. Unless you were the king with accounting house, you know, you were the emperor, your wealth, your net worth was stored in possessions.

You didn't hide money under the mattress or take it to the bank. So what Jesus is saying here is when you're thinking about the poor, and by implication from the New Testament, when you're thinking about supporting gospel work for the spiritually poor, don't just give from kind of a proportion of your income.

Be willing to affect your net worth, your wealth. Dip into your savings, your investments to help the poor. But money sickness instead makes you store up the money.

[ 14 : 15 ] One of the most significant Christians, from a human perspective in terms of impact, one of the most significant in the UK in the 20th century was John Lang.

John Lang, the businessman who had a construction company. He was a massive funder of UCCF, the Christian Unions, London Theological Seminary, Tyndale House, which is a theological college.

He presided over a multi-million pound construction empire his whole career, and at his death, his estate was valued at 371 pounds. He'd given it all away.

What a great way to spend your money. He didn't store it up. So those are the signs to look out for that we might have money sickness. Self-reliance.

Are you daydreaming about money? Are you worrying about money? Are you hurrying, busy to make it? Are you storing it up? But after we've spotted it, we need to understand what's going on in our hearts.

[15:12] That's our third point. The roots of money sickness. We can see it. We might be able to see it, but what's going on? Jesus urges us not to worry. I don't know about you, but when people tell me not to worry and I'm worried, it's not very helpful.

I remember, I was on the way to, in my law degree, I was on the way to my contract law exam looking to get run over. I thought, if I could get run over right now, it'd be less painful than going into this exam.

And people tell you, don't worry. Not helpful. But what Jesus does is he gives us two reasons why we shouldn't worry. Verse 24, consider the ravens.

And then verse 27, consider the wildflowers. Why? Well, they're two examples of heart problems that he's addressing that make it difficult for us to deal with money in a godly way.

Are you a raven or a wildflower? If you're a raven, you're attracted to money because it makes you feel safe. Like the rich fool, he's getting his security from the money.

[16:19] So when you think about money, you're thinking, here is how I can get control in an uncontrollable world. Here is how I could be safe in a hostile world. Make loads of money.

If you can't give your money freely, it's worth asking, is it because I think my money makes me secure? So we fear. We fear about the future.

We fear for our kids. We fear about Brexit. And what if suddenly everyone's poorer and I'm poorer? We fear about what if I gave my money and loads of people moved to Glasgow and houses become unaffordable and I can never get on the housing ladder?

Or we can't afford to go on holidays with our friends anymore because they've got more money. We worry about it. And the money makes us feel secure. So we hoard it up, rainy day money. You maybe spot ravens just now because it's the time of year when you get these letters saying, use up your ISA entitlement.

You've got 20 grand you can save. And a raven just thinks, great, let me get my ISA entitlement used up before the end of the month without ever thinking, have I saved enough? Actually, do I need to save all of that this year?

[17:28] So that might be a sign that you're a raven. But it's about wanting to be in control because we're insecure. The other heart problem is the wildflower problem. Verse 27, look at what Jesus says about the wildflowers.

He says, consider how the wildflowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

So you might not be a raven, but you might be a wildflower. These are people who spend their money not for their security, but for their attractiveness, for their appearance.

They use money to make themselves attractive to other people, not just physically. That's why Jesus uses the example, though, of the wildflowers, saying, well, look, they're attractive.

God makes them attractive. It's God who can do that. But the trap here is one that we see all over our consumerist culture, materialistic culture. Spending money on yourself because it makes you feel worthy.

[18:30] It makes you feel attractive, feel desirable, whether it's dressing in a certain way, wearing certain labels, or it's being able to say that you've been to the latest restaurants that are being reviewed and are the best places to eat just now, or it's that you've traveled to the right cities so that you can hold your own in the conversation about travel.

You've got the right hobbies that mean people think, oh, I'd love to be like you because you've got these great hobbies. So it's about identity, actually. If you're a wildflower, you think you need money because what you spend money on is intrinsic to who you think you really are, how you define yourself.

You want to be that person with the West End lifestyle or the Bears Den lifestyle or the Jordan Hill lifestyle. There's a lifestyle that you want people to see you've got because it would make you feel

popular.

So you've got ravens and you've got wildflowers. And when you talk about money sickness, whichever you are, you think we're talking about the other kind. Okay? So if you're a wildflower, you look at ravens and you think, you misers, saving up all your money, conservative misers, never spending it, miserable, ignoring the needs of the world.

But the ravens look at the wildflowers and they think, look at all that new money. How ostentatious. These people have no class. Okay? So we look down on one another.

[ 19 : 53 ] But both sets of people have got money sickness. And if you've got either of those attitudes somewhere in your heart, it will hold you back from dealing with your money the way God wants you to.

So the question we need to ask ourselves is, which am I most in danger of being? A wildflower or a raven? And then we need to address it. That's our fourth point. The pursuit of money wellness.

This is where we have to grasp this fundamental principle of the Christian life, which is that you never move on from the gospel. The gospel saves you, but God uses the gospel to make us more like Christ as well.

He grows you in the gospel. So in my own Bible reading this week, I just follow a daily plan, Robert Murray McShane's plan, and it was in 2 Corinthians. And when the Apostle Paul wants to urge the Corinthian church to give, he says to them, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.

He applies the gospel to their hearts to get them to give. When the gospel gets bigger, it's the same with any issue. When Paul wants to get husbands to love their wives, he says, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

[ 21 : 07 ] And the writer that I was reading in my devotions, Don Carson, said this. I thought it was really helpful. He said, we must avoid the view that while the gospel provides a sort of escape ticket from judgment and hell, all the real life transforming power comes from something else.

An esoteric doctrine, a mystical experience, a therapeutic technique, a discipleship course. That is too narrow a view of the gospel.

So we have to apply the gospel to our hearts to free us up that we could give in a godly way. So the first thing you do is you spot the lies. Spot the lies that you're believing that lead to money sickness and point them out to yourself and to the other guys who you know in a prayer triplet or accountability group.

Spot the lies. Just think, if you're a raven, we want money, us ravens, and we hold on to it because we think it will make us secure and it won't.

Think about the rich fool. He thought he'd made his retirement secure and he died. Having money is convenient but what makes life insecure?

[ 22 : 18 ] Tragedies, broken relationships, sickness, death, being a victim of sin, a victim of crime. That's what makes you insecure and money will not solve those problems.

It's a lie. Money does not protect you. And what about the wild flower? If you base your identity on what you consume, if you're trying to be attractive to others by the way you spend your money, then you actually have no idea whether anyone really likes you for you.

In fact, you have no real confidence in who you are or that you're valuable. And if you're successful with it, then you'll become a really proud person who nobody likes.

Your money will turn you into an arrogant person. So we need to tell ourselves that the promises of the God of money are false. The God of money doesn't keep its promises. But we have to do more than that to be willing to give away our money.

And the Scottish preacher Thomas Chalmers talked about the way that we can really change in our hearts is we need the expulsive power of a new affection. You need a new affection that pushes out your false loves from your heart.

[ 23 : 26 ] The expulsive power of a new affection. In other words, a deeper love for Christ and what he's done for us to liberate us to let go of money. So how do we nurture that new affection?

Well, Jesus here brings the gospel to bear on our money and he sums it up in verse 32. Verse 32.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

We had nothing. We were spiritually bankrupt. And Jesus says, your father has been pleased, delighted, to freely, willingly, happily make us citizens of his kingdom where we will reign with Jesus

Christ.

Our citizenship of the kingdom starts now with life knowing him, life as it was meant to be in all its fullness. But much more significantly, it gives us this living hope because it will go on forever into the new creation where there's no more sickness and no more sadness and no more badness and life will be perfect forever.

And how did we get it? Well, did you notice Jesus calls us little flock and all through the history of God's people they were let down by their leaders, the shepherds.

[ 24 : 42 ] And Jesus comes as our good shepherd, promised to be our shepherd. There's a big problem in the UK today that we can't recruit shepherds. We're running out of shepherds. Why? Because it's such an awful job.

It's so hard. And Jesus, our shepherd, was the great king of the world in the comfort of heaven and he came into our world knowing that for him to be our shepherd, he would lay down his life for the sheep.

So he applies that to our money hoarding in verse 24. He says, Consider the ravens. They do not sow or reap. They have no storeroom or barn. Yet God feeds them and how much more valuable you are than birds.

In other words, you can't make yourself secure. Only God can. And he has. The rich fool, he spends all this time getting ready for retirement and he plunges into eternity unprepared.

Jesus has secured our eternity for us if we trust him. We are secure in our future with him. And you can trust a God like that with your presence as well. And he applies it to our money spending in verse 27.

[ 25 : 48 ] Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you?

You of little faith. He's testing our faith. And in verse 30, for the pagan world runs after all such things and your father knows that you need them.

But seek his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well. So only God can make you secure and he has. Only God can make you attractive and he has. He's redeemed you at the cost of his own son.

That's how valuable you are. That's his verdict on you. One day he will rejoice over you with singing. So what we eat and we drink and what we wear, it doesn't matter.

And we can trust a God like that to look after us if we step out in faith and are generous with our money towards the poor, towards gospel work. For what does matter is the advance of his kingdom.

[ 26 : 54 ] Verse 33, provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. So we had Robert and Catherine giving their testimonies here last week.

It was so encouraging. Wasn't it? There was this deep joy in our church family at hearing about Catherine and Rob's journeys of faith. Somebody said afterwards, and I'm sure lots of us were thinking it, we need more like this.

It's so encouraging because the advance of the gospel brings joy. There's joy for those who accept Jesus for the first time. Of course, their eternity is transformed.

There's joy for us as we see people come to faith. Viewed from an eternal perspective, isn't that where we'll have been glad to spend our money? Won't John Lang be happy now in heaven that he spent his money in the way he did and left his family with no inheritance but spent it all for gospel work?

Of course he's happy. And yet, the sobering reality is the gospel need. You know, Rob told us last week that he had a dream about God and he spoke to his Christian mate Darren and ended up coming to St. Silas and he came to faith.

[ 28 : 03 ] There are plenty of people in Glasgow who don't know anybody who could explain the gospel to them in language they can understand. If they had a dream like that, they wouldn't know where to go for the truth.

That's the reality on schemes across Glasgow, in areas across Glasgow. And, you know, we're giving appeal for our own needs here and trying to double that, sorry, double our efforts here and rightly so.

But there's so much more we could do. I don't want to die wondering about what we could have done in Glasgow if only we got serious about our giving and planted churches and raised up a generation of gospel workers so that people can hear about Christ.

It's a great opportunity. And if we don't feel like we love the gospel enough to do it, Jesus just gives us that challenge at the end, doesn't he, in verse 34. He says, For where your treasure is, there your heart will be.

So I think of it a bit like, you know, if you're on a roller coaster, you get on, if you like roller coasters, I mean, if you hate them, this doesn't work. But if you like roller coasters, you get on a roller coaster and there's a bit of fear as you're going up, up, up, up, up, and then your heart's in your mouth and you go and you have this thrilling time and maybe giving our money might feel a bit like that, that our heart's with our money and so we don't feel comfortable giving it.

[ 29 : 18 ] But if we give it, our heart will follow it and we end up with a better heart towards the things Jesus loves, his kingdom, gospel work, instead of loving money too much.

So we should try it. I promise that you can have deep, thrilling joy by giving your money towards God's purposes and watching his gospel bear fruit instead of being trapped by loving money too much.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we thank you for your wisdom speaking into our culture. Open our eyes, we pray, to the ways that we fall into the traps of money sickness and money blindness.

Thank you that who you are and what you have done can blow these false loves out of our hearts, explode them for us. And so we pray that your spirit will be at work in us, helping us to spot the lies of the false gods all around us and renewing in us a greater affection for you that we would be liberated to give our money in a way that honors you.

We pray in your name. Amen. We're going to respond together by singing now, but also we've got prayer ministry. Prayer just to the right at the front and at the back there there are teams who'd love to pray with you and pray for you.

[ 30 : 43 ] If you've got something you'd like prayer for or prayer for a friend, do go and see them. If you're a man and you were at the men's breakfast this morning, anything off the back of that about disillusionment, why not go and pray that through with a friend?

But we're going to stand. Let's stand and the band will lead us as we sing together.