

The Treasure Principle

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[0 : 0 0] money and money of course is just everywhere in the news all the time so I looked online for some new stories to help with my opening and found this extraordinary story I don't know whether you saw this this week this tycoon in Guangzhou in China who went shopping with eight humanoid robots to carry his shopping for him so they followed him around all day and these eight robots I didn't even know you got robots this complex but they were just there to carry the different things that he he didn't want to have to have the bags so obviously he's there finding things they just go on the tray and they followed him around the shopping mall of course we have a very strong relationship with money in lots of ways money is our God and we in life all around us are surrounded by people who trust money to give us what only God can give us it's true everywhere in the western world and it's certainly true in the history of our city of Glasgow where in the 19th century Glasgow was living off the should have been enjoying the benefits of being the workshop of the world and some people were really enjoying that but of course there was extreme poverty in our city and there's a poem here by James Nicholson just a quote about Glasgow in the 19th century without comets to a city where the men untimely die where hearts in grief are swelling and cheeks are seldom dry a city where merchant princes to mammon basely kneel while those that drag the idol's car are crushed beneath the wheel very striking words and we still see extreme poverty in Glasgow but we see it less than we would have seen in the 19th century of course and one of the reasons for that is that now with the global village the decisions we make about our money in Scotland today affect people further away in the world so I was walking up buyers road yesterday and in the Oxfam shop window there was this poster the world's 62 richest people own the same wealth as the 3.6 billion poorest people in the world updating it from last year when it was it was over 80 people now down to 62 and so how do we react well often we react with money fear we're worried about becoming victims of that kind of inequality or poverty so we grab on to our money and so what really concerns us is money that's what we're looking for so the Panama Papers caught our attention in the news and we all wanted to know how much do our politicians pay in tax but really what a lot of us wanted to know was how much money do our politicians have so there was all this scrutiny and just think about the 23rd of June 23rd of June is a very big day in the diary for Scotland because of course Colin Buchanan is coming to perform here at St Silas on the 23rd of June but of almost as much importance as that is that it's Brexit day the referendum on whether the UK stays in the European Union now one thing that surprised me about that debate is that so far so much of it has simply been about what would make us richer if we stay in how much do we gain if we go out how much might we lose or could we make more money I thought the debate would be about questions like sovereignty and democracy and what's the story that we have as a people are we primarily British are we primarily European if we stay in what's the story if we leave what's the story but it's about money almost all the time money is the big news story so it seems crazy that as Christians we're being asked to give our money away to be radically different with our money and yet that's clearly what we're called to do by God in his word in fact you could say that just as money crops up everywhere in the in the news in our world it crops up everywhere in the bible in Luke chapter 3 John the Baptist is asked by three different groups of people what it looks like to show the fruit of repentance as people came out to him and he's preparing them for Jesus three groups

of people what should we do John the Baptist he doesn't mention smoking or drinking or swearing he doesn't mention their sex lives or their prayer lives all three answers he gives are about spending your money in Luke 19 Zacchaeus puts his trust in Jesus Christ for the first time what's the first mark that he is trusting Jesus look Lord here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor we show God that he's in our heart by how we handle our money now why is that well I've got four points for us this morning about giving two of them are more generally from the bible and two are then from the bible reading that we've had from Matthew 6 so the first point is this God gives us the treasure of the gospel that is when it comes to our giving we have to remember that God is the great giver so when the apostle Paul wants to motivate the early Christians in Corinth to to give he doesn't focus on how much they've got and say come on you could you could spare a bit he doesn't focus on the need he doesn't say look what I could do with the money that you give me no instead he focuses on Christ 2 Corinthians 8 9 for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich it's that giving which motivates our giving picture Jesus Christ in the splendor and the majesty of heaven then born in a wooden feeding trough because there's no room for him he becomes a refugee in Egypt he has nowhere to lay his head and he comes to die a criminal's death that was his gift for us for your sakes he became poor and through that poverty if you're a Christian this morning you have become indescribably rich we were spiritually bankrupt our spiritual debt there was no way we could pay it off and now in Christ thanks to his death we're on the spiritual rich list we have every spiritual blessing in heaven in Christ so Paul says ponder that in your heart in effect ponder how rich you have become and ponder how much Christ had to give of his riches how poor he had to become to give you what you now have in him God gives us the treasure of his gospel and it changes our hearts you can see the heart change by looking at the story Jesus told about what it's like first to recognize what you get in a friendship a relationship with God Matthew 13 44 he said the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field when a man found it he hid it again and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field so this man is walking through the field one day and he stops on something hard he steps on something hard he investigates and he realizes that it's a treasure chest opens it up it's full of riches beyond his wildest dreams so he hides it again and this is the key in his joy he goes and sells everything else that he has to buy the field he doesn't begrudgingly sell everything he gladly sells knowing he'll never see that stuff again because he knows he's about to get something far more valuable that will cancel out every sacrifice he's had to make that parable is really vital for me to come back to again and again because I personally am really bad about money before I became a

Christian what I really wanted from life was to get rich so I drift back into that all the time it's too ingrained in me that I think that having more money will make me happy it will give me security other people will respect me for having it I'll win the game of life if only I can get more money so money is a real problem for me and Jesus invites me in that parable to trust him that I'll get real joy if I give things up for him the treasure of the kingdom of heaven isn't more cash the parable is just a story it's spiritual treasure that we get it's knowing God and the fulfillment and joy that that brings but Jesus is encouraging us that the spiritual treasure on offer from God in the gospel is far more valuable than anything material that you give away to get it and knowing that should make us joyful givers so that's our first point God gives us the treasure of the gospel secondly God makes us his fund managers when we hear an appeal for money from a church or a charity we tend to think my money is mine and this guy is now trying to get some of it from me it's mine someone wants to take it away alert but in reality everything that we have still belongs to God Psalm 24 verse 1 the earth is the Lord and everything in it the Lord and all who live in it Haggai 2 8 the silver is mine and the gold is mine declares the Lord and Deuteronomy 8 but remember the Lord your God for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth now fund managers work for rich people some of you might have one and they get given I don't have one they get given the power by that rich person to put the money that they have in the right places to yield a good return and in a similar way the money that you and I have still belongs to God he owns everything I'm his investment manager I don't know if you've ever thought about that before have you thought of thought of your money like that that if you've got money it's because you're God's fund manager he trusts us to set our own salaries to cover our own reasonable living expenses and then he expects us to take the excess that we have and put it to work for him and God is watching what we do with the excess he sees us spending it on ourselves if we do that he also sees us hoarding it for later life if we do that I don't know about you but that's but for me the bigger problem actually and the bigger temptation it's that I make cutbacks thinking something like now these aren't rules but I'm just giving examples I might think to myself you know

I won't buy a new laptop this year or I won't I won't replace my laptop and I won't get that TV package from Sky or Virgin Media because I'm a Christian now and I should spend my money differently for being a Christian but then instead of giving the money away I'm tempted to hang on to it for a rainy day or for a pension or in savings and that's not giving that's deferred spending you see that if we don't spend our money because we're a Christian but we hang on to it we're just it's deferred spending and not giving the big challenge is to actually give the money to God so how do we give the money to God where we spend money in line with God's priorities primarily I therefore think it means that we give to support our church because the biggest thing that God is doing in the world today the biggest thing in these last days is he is saving people and gathering them into his church he builds it on the foundation stone of the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ he's gathering people in the local church is the hope for the world but our giving will also reflect other priorities of God as well so we give our money to support people who've gone overseas to tell people about Jesus in obedience to the Great

Commission and at St Silas as I've already mentioned we commit 15% of the money that we get from congregational giving is spent on supporting mission elsewhere what else do we do with our money well to be good fund managers for God also includes giving to help the poor Matthew 19 21 Jesus says to the rich young ruler go sell your possessions and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven our money from God is an opportunity to do good for others Galatians chapter 6 verse 10 says this about doing good as we have opportunity let us do good to all people especially to those who belong to the family of believers Isaiah chapter 58 the Lord says this is not this the kind of fasting I've chosen to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke to set the oppressed free and break every yoke is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter when you see the naked to clothe them and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood God God's heart is for the material needs of people around us now the biggest need in the world today by far is the spiritual need of the lost who do not know Christ they're perishing without Christ so it is loving and right to prioritize giving your money in ways that means the message of Jesus is being shared and passed on but we are also called as God's people to give our money to help with the material needs of the poor that applies with God's family first and we're in the privileged but very challenging position today aren't we as Christians of knowing more clearly through organizations like open doors and Barnabas and the news just how grave the needs are of members of our family Christians in other parts of the world and we can make a difference by giving to Christian charities and our generosity as fund managers should stretch as

[13 : 54] God's fund managers should stretch beyond the family of God our brothers and sisters in Christ out into the world when we see the needs around us on Thursday I went to visit the Glasgow City Mission and it's amazing Glasgow City Mission is amazing it's phenomenal what's going on there as the vulnerable of our city are fed they are helped by Christians who desire all the time to share their faith but they're showing unconditional love to many there are ways that in Glasgow we can help so that's our second point God makes us his fund managers and our third and fourth points this morning come together they call the treasure principle by the writer Randy Olcorn and the treasure principle is this you can't take treasure with you but you can send it on ahead in Matthew 6 first of all you can't take treasure with you Jesus says do not store up for yourselves treasures in heaven treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal now did you notice in Jesus teaching as Jenny read it for us Jesus doesn't say that it's wrong to do with your money what's best for yourself he appeals to us to act in our own best interests when it comes to our money and then he gives us the best insider trading tip we could ever have it's that what we spend our money on for ourselves today won't last a few years ago I was in Zimbabwe on holiday visiting and the currency was collapsing in Zimbabwe every week the currency got significantly worse devaluing any money that you had in Zimbabwean dollars it was becoming worthless by the day but to try and protect it the government had made it a law that you weren't allowed to use US dollars in the shops you had to use the Zimbabwean currency now imagine you're living in a country like that and you're earning a good salary how do you handle your money the only sensible thing to do is to put as much of your money as you can every day into US dollars where you know it will be safe and just keep in hand what you need day by day in Zimbabwean currency because it's devaluing all the time well Jesus gives us that insider trading tip on our money in the world today he says don't store it up because you can't take it with you it will leave you your riches today the money and what you spend it on it gets stolen or it wears out or it breaks or it starts to look outdated when a newer model comes along of what you've bought or it gets eroded by inflation or a financial crisis your money will leave you and if it doesn't leave you you will leave it on the day Jesus returns which could be today or when you die and God calls you home your currency on earth immediately becomes absolutely useless to you so don't hold on to any more than is really necessary it should be the first big tip on Martin's money you know the money saving expert website should have this big tip saying you know this website might help you save more money but you've got to keep in mind that soon it's going to be completely worthless to you because it will wear out or you will die or Jesus will return Jesus says don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth that's the first side of the treasure principle but our last point this morning you can't take treasure with you but you can send it on ahead it's extraordinary Jesus says but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal for where your treasure is there your heart will be also see what he's saying if we give our money it converts the currency if you give it for

God's purposes our treasure chest in heaven gets filled up and grows because we've given money today it's hard to get your head around isn't it every Christian will be happy in heaven there won't even be a moment of unhappiness for any of us in heaven and yet God promises there will be eternal rewards for us according to how we've lived for him in this life we can build up an inheritance of greater joy it's as though our capacity for enjoying heaven and enjoying God in heaven will grow because of how we've lived now in Matthew 25 and Luke 19 Jesus says that he will grant some of his followers to be in charge of many things in the new creation because they've shown themselves trustworthy of that by how they've used their gifts for God in this life in Luke 14 after Jesus says we should give to the poor and needy he says although they cannot repay you you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous we can invest now with our money so that we get more treasure in heaven it's very clear in the bible we get an example of that in Luke 16 Jesus says that we should use our worldly wealth to gain friends for ourselves and then he says so that when it is gone you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings we've got to picture being able to stay with people and enjoy fellowship with people in heaven who are only there because the money we gave in this life enabled them to hear the gospel and accept it there's a song called thank you for giving to the Lord that imagines these conversations in heaven people running to us imagine that running to us thanking us because they benefited from money that we gave away some words from it on the screen here then another man stood before you and said remember the time a missionary came to your church and his pictures made you cry you didn't have much money but you gave it anyway Jesus took the gift you gave and that's why I'm here today there's the reward seeing the people in heaven whom we've helped by supporting ministries on earth that will be breathtaking won't it this is the joy that we can send on ahead of us by giving away our money now

Jesus helps us understand how it works in verse 21 when he said for where your treasure is there your heart will be also now there's a negative and a positive to that verse if we store up treasures on earth they keep our heart rooted in this life we don't yearn for heaven we don't enjoy our relationship with God as much as we should but if we give our money to gospel purposes to supporting christian work it transforms the allegiance of our hearts you know sometimes people say to me as a minister you know I wish I cared more about the christian faith I wish I believed the gospel more well I already believe it but I wish I felt it more I wish I cared more about overseas mission I know I should but I don't I wish I cared more about the gospel that my heart was more in it I wonder do you ever feel like that do you ever feel that you're more apathetic than you should be do you wish you had more passion for the gospel because if that's at all what you wish give your money away give whatever you can from your money to the church to gospel work and your heart will follow for where your treasure is there your heart will be also if we give now towards promoting and growing the gospel we benefit in this life will benefit because our hearts will be more focused on God and his gospel but also we'll have secured for ourselves a treasure chest full of joy waiting for us in the bank vaults of heaven where no one can take it from us thinking like this helps us answer that question we often ask ourselves which is how much do I need to give and I'm going to answer that in two ways first of all just to say the Bible doesn't command a certain amount that you need to give sometimes people take the tithe as a guideline that was the Old Testament command people under the old covenant to give back to God a tenth of what they had of what they earn people sometimes say well if our new covenant from God the promises that we have in Christ are so much greater the grace is greater why not start with a tithe like the Old Testament believers and work up from there it's like the starting blocks for us in a lifelong race of giving or like the first steps of a toddler not ideal ultimately but a great place to begin and I know a guy in London who became a Christian and he he couldn't even the idea of giving away 10% of what he earned as a new Christian seemed too much so he thought well I'll give 5% but I'll give away an extra percent every year and that you know started with 5 then 6 then 7 but that was 25 years ago it might be a place that you want to start but it's not commanded it's not commanded we are free so that's something we might say to the question how much do I need to give but the other thing we can say is we're asking the wrong question when we ask how much do I need to give for Jesus says giving is what's best for us you know if you came across an investment return that was going to give you an investment that was going to give you an absolutely massive return and it was absolutely certain you'd be thinking this is amazing how much can I set apart to give to this the more I give the more I'll get well that's the question we should be asking not how much do I need to give but how much can I give in this great investment opportunity just think about it what should we spend our treasures on spend our money on treasures on earth or treasures in heaven when you think about it in the way Jesus describes it's obvious and I just have this is where my technical equipment comes in and just to help us with a visual illustration I just asked Gordon if he'd come up just to help me with this and if I just give that to Gordon and he walks down the central aisle with it you keep your eyes on that and maybe it just help us think about eternity if we think about eternity is that line there that timeline of that wire our lives now are like this plug I mean it

doesn't even work does it because eternity is forever so some of you I know thinking Martin this is doesn't work but um just even imagine eternity was not forever but as long as that wire in comparison with the 70 80 years that you might live today now when we invest our money in this life our treasure on things for this life we're investing for dividends now in this little bit of this plug now sometimes investors in investment guides say don't invest for what you might get back in a year's time or three years time why not invest for something that would bring you benefits in 30 years time well Jesus is saying don't invest for what you'll get in 30 years time invest for what you'll get in 3 million years time in 30 million years time in 300 million years time in the new creation it's mad isn't it that we spend so much of our money on things we'll only enjoy in this life and that won't last just put that down there so Jesus offers us eternal joy from the ways we give our money for him now joy now because giving our money fixes our heart on him and he is the one who fulfills our desires joy in eternity when we see the fruits of our giving in the new creation in people people from saint silas people in glasgow people from the ends of the earth who've come to christ and who've grown in christ and in turn done good for other people for the glory of god all thanks to the money that we give in glasgow today god is the great giver he gives us the treasure of his gospel he makes us his fund managers we can't take our treasure with us but we can send it on ahead let's pray together heavenly father we thank you so much for the privilege that you have entrusted your great work in the world today the work of saving people from their sins to us we are amazed that you work through ordinary people like us and the gifts you've given us and so heavenly father we pray that you will work in our hearts continually that we would grasp more deeply what the gospel should mean to us that we would grasp how much you love us in the lord jesus so that overwhelmingly our delight is to serve you with all the gifts you've given us including our money and father as we do that at saint silas as we are marked by a different approach to money we pray that you will indeed be at work through the money we give so that your gospel will bear fruit and we will have the joy of seeing you at work in glasgow and across the nations for your good and glory in jesus name we pray amen