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Nothing Impossible With God
Matthew 6:19-21, 19:16-29

19 *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal;*
20 *but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.*
21 *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Then someone came to him and said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"

17 *And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."*

18 *He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness;*

19 *Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

20 *The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?"*

21 *Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."*

22 *When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.*

23 *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.*

24 *Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."*

25 *When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, "Then who can be saved?"*

26 *But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."*

Most of us don't consider ourselves rich, right?

And yet, Americans are literally the ***wealthiest people*** on the planet, even those who are struggling.

Did you know: America controls nearly 20 percent of the world's wealth...with less than 5 percent of the world's population?

One billion people in the world do not have access to clean water, while the average American uses four hundred to six hundred liters of water a day.

Every seven seconds, somewhere in the world a child under age five dies of hunger, while Americans throw away 14 percent of the food we purchase.

Nearly one billion people in the world live on less than one American dollar a day.

More than half of the world lives on less than two dollars a day, while the average American teenager spends nearly \$150 a week.

Forty percent of people in the world lack basic sanitation, while forty-nine million diapers are thrown away in America every day.

1.6 billion people in the world have no electricity.

Nearly one hundred million children are denied basic education.

By far, most of the people in the world do not own a car. One third of American families own three cars.

One in seven children worldwide (158 million) has to go to work every day just to survive. ... Americans spend more annually on trash bags than nearly half of the world does on all goods.

From Rob Bell and Don Golden, *Jesus Wants to Save Christians*, 2012,

We truly are the ***wealthiest*** nation on earth,
but we are also ***in debt***.

The average American in 2017 owes over \$16,000 on credit cards.

Some people tend to live above our means, to keep up with the Jones'.

But most people are just trying to get by.

The cost of living has outpaced income growth over the past 13 years.

Median household income has grown 28% since 2003,
but the cost of living has gone up 30% in that time period.

And expenses have outpaced income significantly.

Medical costs increased by 57%

and food and beverage prices by 36% in that same span.

People rely upon credit for gas and groceries, and medical bills.

Just making more money doesn't solve debt problems.

In fact, debt loads increase as income does;

therefore, annual interest payments are larger.

Higher-income people can get higher credit limits more easily,

giving them more room to rack up big balances.

It can become a vicious cycle.

<https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/average-credit-card-debt-household/>

So we've got **riches**, and we've got **money problems**.

And Jesus says that it's easier for a **camel** to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven!!!

We are the rich!

So, what can we do?

What I wonder, is not how much we have or don't have, but **what has us**.

Not what we hold, but **how tightly we hold it....**

Where is our heart in all this talk of riches and money troubles?

Is our heart full of pride for what we have,

Or are we **grateful** for the gifts of God?

Are we feeling self-sufficient in our riches,

Or **God-sufficient**, as we place our trust in God's provision?

What do we do with our riches, and our money troubles?

How do we trust God for what we need,

And learn to tell the **difference** between a need and a want?

You know, **Jesus had a lot to say** about our attitudes towards money.

Jesus knew that even if we don't "love" money,

we get pulled in by its **power**.

We have that temptation to see our **wants as needs**

And to keep 'needing' more.

He also knew the stress of simply having to make it **stretch**.

Remember Jesus was an itinerant preacher,

He and his disciples relied upon the generosity of others to live.

Jesus actually talked about money **more than any other** topic

besides the kingdom of God—

almost 1 out of 10 verses in the gospels have something to do with money!

So, if we take **Jesus' teaching seriously** in other areas,

Don't we have to do the same thing with his words about money?

I mean, deep down we all know that money can be a **chain** around our hearts, right?
 Whether we have plenty, or whether we feel like we're drowning.
Money can weigh us down!

So, what if Jesus tells us how to **avoid that trap**?
 What if Jesus has the answer for this problem we all face?
 What if it all boils down to one word: **GIVE**?

What if giving is our **path to freedom**
 the way **out of temptation...**
 the way to find **contentment**....and gratitude?

What if giving is **God's answer** to our money troubles?
 It makes sense, our God is the greatest giver,
 And we are called to follow God.

Giving is **as old as creation**, when God showered humanity with gifts.
 And God's people responded in kind.
 Abraham gave a tenth of what he had to honor God.
 Moses and the Israelites were asked by God to bring the first fruits of their harvest to God in the tabernacle.
 In biblical times a tenth of whatever one had was expected to be set aside, first thing, and from the very best, to support God's work and those in need.

Jesus spoke constantly about the **need of believers to give**.
 He said things like '*do not store up treasures on earth, but treasures in heaven*' (Matt 6)
 '*where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*'...
 '*from those whom much has been given, much will be required*' (Luke 12:48)
 '*Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, your life does not consist of the abundance of possessions*' (Luke 12:15).

And then there are his **difficult stories**: of the rich man and Lazarus, a beggar that lived outside the palace of a rich man—who gave only the crumbs off his table to poor Lazarus.
 And then he was surprised to learn he ended up in hell, begging Lazarus to come down from heaven and help him!

Or the **rich young ruler** who wanted to inherit eternal life.
 Jesus told him you lack one thing—
 go and sell all you have, and follow me.
 But his wealth meant too much to him, and he walked away.

What if Jesus' answer to the problems of money is very simple: **GIVE**.

And what if his words are not just for the **rich**,
 not just if we have some to **spare**.
 Not once we have our finances in **order**....

Jesus said that a **poor widow's** two small coins given to the temple, meant more than all the rich people's offerings put together, because she gave all she had, a **sacrifice**, an offering.

What if that's the key?
 We give, and we give what is **costly**,
 Not what's left over.
 Because we're not fundraising,
 We're giving as **worship—it's an offering** to God.

Now some think Jesus' words are **too harsh**.
 Is he saying we all have to give everything away?
 I don't think so.
 And Jesus does not say money is evil.
 Nowhere in the Bible does it say money is evil. It's the love of it.
 Jesus condemns our **love** of money, our **trust** in money,
 our **reliance** upon money instead of on God.
 And he says that there's a pathway to freedom—**GIVING**.

This is what he means when he says
 we need **treasures in heaven!**

When we think about our own giving,
 the truth is **our need to give is far greater**
 than the church's need to receive. (let me say that again)
 Sure we should all be responsible
 in helping the church do God's work.

But God didn't teach stewardship to balance budgets,
 It's to **help us grow** in faith.
 Even if the church had millions we would still need to give.
 Our God is a giver, so we are called to give as well.

What does our giving do?
 It shows our **gratitude** .
 It shows our **dependence** on God.

Winston Churchill once wisely said,
*We make a living by what we get. We make a life by **what we give.***
 Jesus talks about this again and again.

So **what kind of life** do we want for ourselves?
 And what kind of life does **God want** for us?
 A Giving life.

How will we avoid **storing up treasures** on earth?
 How will we avoid the temptation **to love** our money?
 By GIVING.

When Jesus tells them that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a
 needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven,
 those are some serious and hard words.
 But what does he say right after that?
"For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

That's where we get the strength and power to give—from God.
God is the one who opens our hearts and wallets,
 God is the one who shows us the power and joy of giving.

Just think about what you have given to God—
 and the effects of those gifts.
 Many of you gave recently to **update** our church—and look at the result—
 we have a beautiful facility that welcomes people almost every day of the
 week!
 You give and support the **staff** of this church, so that we can help lead in
 ministry and mission!

You give and help feed **youth** each day after school,
 You give and help pay **rent** for families in need in Owasso.
 Your giving supports teachers and students at **Mills**,
 And people who receive **meals on wheels**.
 Your giving supports all the **ministries** of this church—the classes, the
 programs, the outreach, even things like Fall Festival today!

Today you have a **leaf** in your bulletin,
 And as you hold that leaf I want you to think about this fall season,
 And God helping us to '**turn over a new leaf**'!

On the front of your bulletin is a tree that says **time, talent, and treasure**.
 Over the next few weeks we are going to think about our time, talent, and
 treasure.

Today, we're talking about our **treasures**.
 Our money.
 The dollars that we give, and the difference it makes.

I want you to write on that leaf **WHY you give of your money to God**.
 What does it **mean** to you, to give to God?
 What does it **bring** you?
 How does it **change** your life?

WHY do you give?

There are a million reasons why, the question is **why do YOU give** to God?

I'm going to give you a few minutes to think about that, and write something
 on the leaf. Then if anyone wants to share, we'll listen!.....

When the offering plate comes by, as you drop in your money,
drop in your leaf, and we'll put them on the board in the foyer,
 to encourage one another in our giving.

Your reason for giving might just be the very thing
 that **inspires** someone else to give, and give generously!

Friends, hear the ***Good News of the Gospel*** for us today:
Our God is a giver,
Who calls us to give.
The path to freedom, to joy, to peace...is through giving.
And to that all God's people said, Amen.