

September 29, 2019

Wealth and Christianity

OT: Psalm 24:1-5

NT: Luke 16:19-31

Wealth is not a sin, it's what you do with your wealth that matters. The drive to succeed, to create something good and wanted, is beneficial. Ethical capitalism is based on the principal of mutual benefit- we trade one thing for what we value from another. Greed is when we will do anything to hoard money regardless of how it affects others. When we see a need that we can help with and turn our backs, that's when we misuse the blessings that God has provided for us. Blessing others so they can be a blessing to still others is what Christian ethics are all about. How can we be the kind of compassionate Christians God wants us to be?

I. Christians and the Environment

First, meeting outdoors [today](#) reminds us of the calls for stewardship of the planet. God has clearly placed humans in a position of responsibility

over creation. Genesis 2:15 says “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

We recognize that all created things belong to God and that we are accountable to Him as stewards of the creation. God commissions us to rule over the creation in a way that sustains, protects, and enhances his works so that all creation may fulfill the purposes God intended for it.

We must manage the environment not simply for our own benefit but for God’s glory.

Some may argue that humans are more important than the rest of the creation, so we should focus our efforts on meeting the needs of people rather than addressing environmental issues. However, many of our environmental problems negatively impact people. If we fail to care for the environment in which we live, God’s people will suffer as a result.

Caring for the non-human parts of the creation and preserving the intricate interactions among them is an important part of seeking justice for God’s people.

Others may argue that protecting the environment is unimportant in comparison to other God-given tasks such as sharing the gospel. But God is concerned with the physical world as well as the spiritual world, and restoration of the creation is part of the good news of Christ. We are not to neglect the task of sharing the good news of Christ's redeeming work in our lives, but neither should we neglect the work of "tending the garden." Caring for God's creation is part of our service to God and an integral part of our role as servant leaders in God's kingdom.

There are numerous things we can do in our everyday lives that help protect God's creation, such as conserving energy and reducing waste. These in no way interfere with our witness to unbelievers. Rather, they enhance our witness as others see us put our faith into action. Our concern for the environment may open up opportunities to share with unbelievers that our service to the creation overflows from our love for God, the creator.

We worship God the Creator more fully as we see His glory in his creation and as we participate in His work of sustaining and restoring proper relationships within the creation.

II. Compassion and Wealth

Secondly, wealth, according to the Bible, is like fire, good but dangerous. Everyone sees the good, so the Bible warns us about the danger. Danger one: the desire to get rich (I Timothy 6:10). Danger two: worry about money (Matthew 6:25-34). Danger three: trusting in wealth rather than God (Luke 12:16-21). Danger four: loving money as your god, when no one can actually serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Danger five: using your money to oppress other people (James 2:6, Isaiah 3:15, Amos 2:6-7). The wise fear the temptations that wealth brings.

One can indeed be rich and be a Christian, but one cannot worship God and Mammon (money). Seek first the kingdom of God and his

righteousness, and do not worry what else gets added to you in this life, whether much or little. The reward that Christians seek is eternal life, the infinite and certain reward for all who believe in Jesus and obey Him.

III. Taking Action

The sin of the rich man in the parable told by Jesus was not that he was rich, but rather that he didn't notice the plight of Lazarus and help. He lacked compassion.

Compassionate Christians are ones who, in light of the issues of the day, take action. They don't make excuses, they do something. They understand that they may not solve every problem in their community or in the world, but they also understand that they shouldn't use that as an excuse to do nothing. When they see someone who is hungry, they feed them. When they see someone who is thirsty, they give them something drink. When they are confronted with problems, they become part of the

solution rather than part of the passersby who do nothing, but move their mouths.

As simple as it is, this is the calling of those who follow Jesus. In order to follow Jesus, you must be about the things he was about, you must do the things he did.

Jesus had compassion on the crowds and did something about it. He fed them. He healed them. And ultimately, he died for them. In the same way that Jesus gave of himself, we are to do the very same thing. We are to be living sacrifices who are about God's business. We are to be individuals who are joined together by the Spirit of God who unites us and brings us into a community called the Church. And the Church is to be a community that is about bringing God's kingdom to earth as it is in Heaven. To bring the good news into a world that is full of bad news.

If you call yourself a Christian, you are called to be compassionate because you are: chosen, dedicated to God's way, and beloved. You have been given a new heart. You have been comforted in your times of trouble. Now, go live into your identity. Take action. Follow Jesus.

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