

## LOVE AND MONEY

QUESTION: WHERE IN THE BIBLE DOES IT SAY THAT MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL? ANSWER: NOWHERE.

THE BIBLE DOESN'T SAY THAT MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE BIBLE DOESN'T SAY THAT THERE'S ANYTHING WRONG WITH MONEY. WHAT IT DOES SAY IS THAT THE *LOVE* OF MONEY IS A ROOT OF ALL KINDS OF EVIL.

MONEY ISN'T THE PROBLEM: IT'S THE LOVE OF MONEY THAT IS. WHY? BECAUSE, JESUS TELLS US IN TODAY'S GOSPEL LESSON, "*YOU CANNOT LOVE BOTH GOD AND MONEY.*" WE CAN LOVE AND SERVE GOD OR WE CAN LOVE AND SERVE MONEY BUT WE CAN'T DO BOTH. SO LET'S TALK ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOVING GOD AND LOVING MONEY.

WE'LL START WITH LOVE. THE BIBLE USES THE WORD "LOVE" TO MEAN SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WE USE IT TO MEAN. WHEN WE SAY WE LOVE SOMEONE OR SOMETHING, WE'RE REFERRING TO OUR FEELINGS TOWARD THEM. LOVE FOR US IS AN EMOTION. I LOVE MY WIFE, MY CHILDREN AND MY GRANDCHILDREN WITH ALL MY HEART. THAT'S HOW I FEEL ABOUT THEM. RIGHT NOW FRED KRESSIERER LOVES THE BROWNS. WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE HOW HE FEELS ABOUT THEM ON MONDAY.

BUT WHEN THE BIBLE URGES US TO LOVE GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOR, IT'S NOT TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS, IT'S TALKING ABOUT DEEDS. AS JOHN WROTE: "*BROTHERS, LET US NOT LOVE IN WORD AND TONGUE, BUT IN TRUTH AND ACTION.*" TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND SOUL AND MIND AND STRENGTH MEANS TO STRIVE TO GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND WORDS AND ACTIONS. TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF MEANS TO HELP YOUR NEIGHBOR WHEN HE NEEDS HELP.

BIBLICAL LOVE IS SERVING GOD AND YOUR NEIGHBOR—NOT MERELY FEELING AFFECTION FOR THEM IF GOD HAD MERELY FELT LOVE FOR US AND DONE NOTHING ABOUT IT, WE'D STILL BE DEAD IN OUR SINS. HE SHOWED HIS LOVE BY SENDING HIS SON TO DIE FOR OUR SINS. JAMES WRITES: "*SUPPOSE A BROTHER OR SISTER IS WITHOUT CLOTHES AND DAILY FOOD. IF ONE OF YOU SAYS TO HIM, 'GO, I WISH YOU WELL; KEEP WARM AND WELL FED,' BUT DOES NOTHING ABOUT HIS PHYSICAL NEEDS, WHAT GOOD IS IT?*" BIBLICAL LOVE IS PLACING YOURSELF IN VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE TO GOD AND YOUR NEIGHBOR. IT IS SACRIFICIAL LOVE—LOVE THAT COMES AT A COST. DIETRICH BONHOEFFER CALLED IT "THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP" AND HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT: BONHOEFFER WAS HUNG FOR PRACTICING CHRISTIAN LOVE IN NAZI GERMANY. PAUL SERVED THE LORD AT GREAT COST: HE BORE ON HIS BODY THE MARKS OF BEATINGS AND STONINGS AND FLOGGINGS HE HAD SUFFERED FOR PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL.

THE WILLINGNESS TO PRACTICE SACRIFICIAL LOVE IS PART OF BEING A CHRISTIAN. SACRIFICIAL LOVE MEANS PUTTING THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS AHEAD OF YOUR OWN WELL-BEING. PUTTING YOUR FAMILY'S NEEDS AHEAD OF YOUR OWN. PUTTING YOUR COUNTRY'S NEEDS AHEAD OF YOUR OWN. REMEMBER THE WORDS OF ONE OF THE MOST ADMIRED AND BELOVED PRESIDENTS OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY—JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY: "*ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR COUNTRY RATHER THAN WHAT YOUR COUNTRY CAN DO FOR YOU.*" MY, HOW FAR WE'VE COME!

ABRAHAM LINCOLN WAS REFERRING TO IT WHEN HE SAID THAT THE SOLDIERS WHO DIED AT GETTYSBURG HAD GIVEN, "...THE LAST FULL MEASURE OF THEIR DEVOTION." BIBLICAL LOVE IS GIVING UP PART OR ALL OF YOURSELF FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS. SO MUCH FOR LOVE.

HOW ABOUT MONEY? FIRST OF ALL, WHEN JESUS SAID THAT YOU CAN'T LOVE BOTH GOD AND MONEY, THE ANCIENT GREEK WORD THAT IS TRANSLATED "MONEY" IS "ΜΕΜΟΝΗΣ" AND IT REFERRED TO A MYTHICAL GOD BY THE NAME OF MAMMON WHO WORSHIPPED HIS OWN STOMACH. MAMMON SYMBOLIZED THE WORSHIP OF ONE'S CARNAL DESIRES, HIS CRAVINGS FOR WORLDLY PLEASURES. PLEASURES LIKE FOOD, ALCOHOL, SEX AND BEAUTY—PLEASURES THAT HAVE THE POWER TO ADDICT MEN AND WOMEN AND TURN THEM INTO GLUTTONS AND ALCOHOLICS AND FORNICATORS AND NARCISSISTS.

TO LOVE MAMMON IS TO ENSLAVE YOURSELF TO WHAT THE WORLD HAS TO OFFER. IN SHORT—TO IDOLS.

NOW WHEN WE HEAR THE WORD "IDOL" THE IMAGE THAT COMES TO MIND IS USUALLY THAT OF A TOTEM POLE OR A WOODEN STATUE OF SOME PAGAN GOD—SOMETHING THAT IGNORANT SAVAGES BOW DOWN TO AND WORSHIP. AND WE THINK, "HOW PRIMITIVE! HOW SILLY" WELL, MY FRIENDS, WE HAVE IDOLS TOO AND WE WORSHIP THEM EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES.

THE IDOLATRY OF FOOD, THE IDOLATRY OF ALCOHOL & DRUGS, THE IDOLATRY OF SEX, THE IDOLATRY OF BEAUTY. MAKE NO MISTAKE, THESE ARE IDOLS AND WE WORSHIP THEM BY REGARDING THEM AS OUR PRIMARY SOURCES OF PLEASURE AND FULFILLMENT. THE PROBLEM WITH IDOLS IS THAT YOU CAN NEVER WORSHIP THEM ENOUGH—THEY ALWAYS WANT MORE. AND IN RETURN FOR YOUR WORSHIP THEY EAT YOU ALIVE. THE GLUTTON DESTROYS HIS BODY. THE ALCOHOLIC OR DRUGGIE DESTROYS HIS BRAIN. THE FORNICATOR ENDS UP IMPOTENT. THE VAINGLORIOUS BEAUTY QUEEN ENDS US DESPISING HER APPEARANCE. [MARLENE DIETRICH STORY of giving an interview only from behind a screen in later years]

SO FOOD, ALCOHOL, DRUGS, SEX, BEAUTY—THESE ARE ALL IDOLS THAT SUCK THE LIFE OUT OF US. BUT THE WORST IDOL OF ALL IS MONEY. THAT'S WHY "ΜΑΜΟΝΗΣ" IS USUALLY TRANSLATED "MONEY" BECAUSE MONEY PROMISES TO GET YOU ALL THESE THINGS—AND EVERYTHING ELSE THE WORLD HAS TO OFFER. BUT THE MONEY IDOL IS A SWINDLER; IT PLAYS WHAT A CON-MAN WOULD CALL A BAIT-AND-SWITCH GAME WITH ITS IDOLATERS.

IT BEGINS BY OFFERING ITS VICTIMS A WAY TO ACQUIRE WORLDLY PLEASURES. IF YOU HAVE ENOUGH MONEY YOU CAN BUY WHATEVER YOU WANT AND THEN YOU'LL BE SATISFIED, YOU'LL BE HAPPY. BUT WHEN YOU DO PURCHASE ALL THOSE THINGS, YOU FIND THAT THEY SOON CEASE TO GIVE YOU ALL THE PLEASURE YOU EXPECTED.

THEN, AFTER YOU'VE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY BAITED, THE GREAT SWITCH OCCURS. YOU BECOME CONVINCED THAT WHAT YOU REALLY NEED IS MORE MONEY; MONEY ITSELF IS THE ONLY THING THAT GIVES YOU THE SATISFACTION YOU CRAVE. BUT THE MORE YOU GET, THE MORE YOU WANT.

I'VE MENTIONED THIS TO SOME OF YOU BEFORE, BUT IN MY FORMER CAREER IN PERSONEL MANAGEMENT, PART OF MY JOB WAS KEEPING TRACK OF EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION RECORDS. THIS INCLUDED EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION—THE EARNINGS OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS OF THE COMPANY. THESE WERE PEOPLE WHO HAD ALREADY ACQUIRED PRETTY MUCH ALL THAT COULD BE BOUGHT: AN EXPENSIVE HOUSE, A SECOND ONE IN FLORIDA, A LARGE BOAT, A TOP-END

AUTOMOBILE, MEMBERSHIP IN A COUNTRY CLUB. THERE WASN'T REALLY MUCH LEFT TO ACQUIRE—AND THE MONEY KEPT COMING IN.

THE ONE THING THEY ALL HAD IN COMMON WAS THAT THEY WANTED MORE—MORE MONEY. THEY NOT ONLY WANTED MORE, THEY DEMANDED IT AND THEY WERE FURIOUS WHEN IT WAS NOT FORTHCOMING. THEY'D SWALLOWED THE BAIT—HOOK, LINE AND SINKER. THEY HAD AN IDOL AND IT WAS DEVOURING THEM.

THEY HADN'T FORGOTTEN HOW TO LOVE—IT WAS WHAT THEY HAD LEARNED TO LOVE THAT WAS MAKING THEM MISERABLE. THEY LOVED MAMMON, WHO LOVED HIS STOMACH. THEIR APPETITE HAD BECOME THE JUGGERNAUT THAT DROVE THEM. IT HAD GONE BEYOND AN APPETITE FOR WORLDLY PLEASURES AND HAD BECOME AN APPETITE FOR MONEY ITSELF. THEY HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH AN IDOL AND THEIR IDOL WAS DEVOURING THEM. THEY ARE DESCRIBED IN THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES: *"WHOEVER LOVES MONEY NEVER HAS MONEY ENOUGH; WHOEVER LOVES WEALTH IS NEVER SATISFIED WITH HIS INCOME. THIS TOO IS MEANINGLESS."*

BOTH THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE LOVE OF MONEY ARE SACRIFICIAL FORMS OF LOVE. THE ONE WHO LOVES GOD OFFERS HIMSELF UP AS A LIVING SACRIFICE TO GOD AND HIS NEIGHBOR. THE ONE WHO LOVES MONEY OFFERS HIMSELF UP AS A LIVING SACRIFICE TO HIS OWN DESTRUCTION.

SO MUCH FOR MAMMON. IN THE BIBLE, THE PERFECT EXPRESSION OF LOVE IS FOUND IN THE CROSS. JESUS SAYS, *"IF ANYONE WOULD COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY AND FOLLOW ME."*

NOW THE CROSS WAS NOT ONLY AN INSTRUMENT OF TORTURE AND DEATH: IT WAS AN INSTRUMENT OF PUBLIC SHAME AND HUMILIATION. WHEN JESUS URGED HIS DISCIPLES TO DENY THEMSELVES AND TAKE UP A CROSS, HE WAS INVITING THEM TO SHARE HIS PAIN, HIS SUFFERING AND HIS HUMILIATION. PAUL WRITES IN PHILIPPIANS: *"YOUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE THE SAME AS THAT OF CHRIST JESUS: 'WHO, BEING IN VERY NATURE GOD, DID NOT CONSIDER EQUALITY WITH GOD SOMETHING TO BE CLUNG TO BUT MADE HIMSELF NOTHING, TAKING THE VERY NATURE OF A SERVANT.'"*

INSTEAD OF SEEKING TO MAKE MORE AND MORE OF HIMSELF IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD, THE CHRISTIAN IS INVITED TO MAKE LESS AND LESS OF HIMSELF IN HIS OWN EYES. JOHN THE BAPTIZER SAID, *"I MUST DECREASE; HE MUST INCREASE."* PAUL DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS THE CHIEF OF SINNERS. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN IS NOT THE PHARISEE WHO SAYS, *"I THANK YOU GOD THAT I AM NOT LIKE OTHER MEN."* THE TRUE CHRISTIAN IS THE TAX-COLLECTOR WHO WAS SO ASHAMED OF HIMSELF THAT HE COULDN'T EVEN LIFT UP HIS EYES TO HEAVEN BUT COULD ONLY BEAT HIS BREAST AND CRY OUT, *"GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME, A SINNER!"*

ONLY BY LEARNING TO LOVE OURSELVES LESS DO WE LEARN TO LOVE GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOR MORE. IT'S A STRANGE KIND OF JOURNEY OUR SAVIOR ASKS US TO TRAVEL. BUT IT'S ONE HE TRAVELED HIMSELF.

BOTH THE LOVER OF GOD AND THE LOVER OF MONEY ARE SEEKING A TREASURE. AND THE MORE EACH ONE INVESTS IN HIS TREASURE, THE MORE IT GROWS. THE LOVER OF MONEY ENDS UP WITH A PILE OF PAPER AND A NEGATIVE BALANCE. THE LOVER OF GOD ENDS UP WITH TREASURE IN HEAVEN AND ETERNAL JOY.

AND SO JESUS ADVISES US: *"DO NOT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH WHERE MOTH AND RUST DEVOUR AND THIEVES BREAK IN TO STEAL, BUT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURE IN HEAVEN, WHERE MOTH AND RUST DO NOT DEVOUR AND THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN TO STEAL. FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS—THERE WILL ALSO BE YOUR HEART."* AND THAT'S THE GOSPEL TRUTH. AMEN.

## **Amos 8:4-7**

<sup>4</sup>Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land,  
<sup>5</sup>saying,  
“When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended

that we may market wheat?”— skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, <sup>6</sup>buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat. <sup>7</sup>The LORD has sworn by himself, the Pride of Jacob: “I will never forget anything they have done.

## **Luke 16:1-15 The Parable of the Shrewd Manager**

**16** Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. <sup>2</sup>So he called him in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.’

<sup>3</sup>“The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg— <sup>4</sup>I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’

<sup>5</sup>“So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

<sup>6</sup>“‘Nine hundred gallons<sup>[a]</sup> of olive oil,’ he replied.

“The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.’

<sup>7</sup>“Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’

“‘A thousand bushels<sup>[b]</sup> of wheat,’ he replied.

“He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’

<sup>8</sup>“The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. <sup>9</sup>I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

<sup>10</sup>“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. <sup>11</sup>So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? <sup>12</sup>And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?

<sup>13</sup>“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.”

<sup>14</sup>The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. <sup>15</sup>He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.