

Christ Community Covenant Church
Zoe Basilikos: Wise Investors and Foolish Stewards
Pastor Dave Scherrer - February 14, 2016

Happy Valentine's Day – I love you! I have something important to say to you!
Seek first the Kingdom of God!

Illustration of Rope Timeline – Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness

Last week we introduced the idea of **Zoe Basilikos** –

Zoe Basilikos!
In “living according to the Kingdom” we are stewards of the Master’s wealth

Living life according to the Kingdom of God; is a life lived according to a new set of values and different set of priorities, a fresh perspective on how relationships work and a counter-cultural approach to money and possessions. All this is included in “life according to the Kingdom of God.” And with this lifestyle come eternal peace and hope and joy and freedom from shame and guilt and the penalty of death. And access to all the wealth and power of the Eternal King who calls you Friend. Life according to the Kingdom! This is very good news!

One aspect of living according to the Kingdom is that we have different responsibilities than living according to the laws and sensitivities of this passing world. Owning things is an earthly concept. Living as though we have control of things or that we somehow have the right to accumulate things that are ours to keep. In **Zoe Basilikos**, we don't own things. Rather we are stewards of another's wealth. It seems sometimes like it is ours, because our Master has given us a great deal of leeway in investing His property and gifts. And in America, we are particularly blessed with an abundance of things around us. But make no mistake, it is not ours. Not in an eternal spiritual sense. Not if we are first citizens of the Kingdom of God and only second we know ourselves to be sojourners and strangers in a passing world - *Ambassadors* really on foreign soil - doing our King's bidding. Look at Paul's words;

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

Randy Alcorn has written two excellent works on the Kingdom of God and our new understanding of how we are to approach wealth and power and influence and material goods. One is called the “Treasure Principle” and he speaks of wise investors and foolish stewards.

Wise Investors know the Treasure Principle

Randy would say that wise steward/investors know these principles. Let's look at two of them together. The first is to simplify your life and to live contentedly.

1. Simplify your life and live contentedly

This idea is clearly counter cultural and I would even say un-American. This is the ‘land of opportunity’ where everyone, if they work hard enough, can earn power and wealth and can accumulate things and thereby be happy. That's the idea isn't it? Tantalizing but the Bible tells us that this lifestyle is ultimately bankrupt. Jesus would be the first to tell you that to live with this as your hope is a lie formed in the very depths of hell. This (hold the Bible) speaks of a different attitude towards things of this passing world. And that would be a lifestyle of simplicity and contentment:

Philippians 4:11-12

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

Hebrews 13:5

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

1 Timothy 6:6-8

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

Lives of simplicity and attitudes of contentment is the Kingdom way. If you have embraced a different lifestyle, and you want to follow hard after Jesus instead of the things of this world, you need to repent and ask forgiveness and turn from that lifestyle. It is the most difficult message for 21st century Americans to hear. And it is possible that some of you are taking offense at my words even as I speak. However I am confident that I speak for Jesus on these matters. I use His very own words.

[Again, what percentage of your daily walk do you seek first the Kingdom of God? – Pursuing a life of simplicity and the discipline of contentment will increase your percentage of Kingdom mindset exponentially!]

2. Give generously–It cures what ails you and lays aside treasures in Heaven

Deuteronomy 14:22, 29

²² "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year . . . so that the Lord, your God, may bless you in all that you undertake.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8

"If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

Deuteronomy 16:10-17

You shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Everyone shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.

Luke 6:38

Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

Acts 20:35

...Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

2 Corinthians 9:7

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Philippians 4:11-12

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

"Giving is a joyful surrender to a greater person and a greater agenda. It dethrones me and exalts Him"
~ Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*

Make sacrificial giving your *lifestyle* and *model* simplicity and contentedness

Sacrificial giving is different than a tithe – a tithe is 10% - a hard enough discipline if you have never practiced it. But a sacrificial gift means that there must be a change in lifestyle in order to accomplish the gift. The lifestyle of LeTourneau and John Wesley exemplify this idea. As a multi-millionaire, LeTourneau gave 90% of his profit to God's work and kept only 10% for himself. LeTourneau said that the money came in faster than he could give it away. LeTourneau was convinced that he could not out-give God. "I

shovel it out," he would say, "and God shovels it back, but God has a bigger shovel." (John Wesley handout)

Let's finish our conversation this morning by looking at the negative example of the same idea - that would be the idea of the foolish steward as opposed to the wise investor. Again we have Jesus' own words to make our point:

Luke 12:35-46

"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?"⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful.

We see from this conversation and the parable that follows that there is such a thing as a 'foolish steward.' Their character traits are evident in this passage:

Foolish Stewards . . .

Are cavalier and undisciplined

'Eat' what they should plant or give away

Put their Master's money at risk with debt

Fail to prioritize their resources and to save for the rainy day

As we said last week there is a difference between generous vs disciplined giving. Generous is an emotional response to a presented need. Disciplined giving allows for a thoughtful life of rational, act of the mind giving. It means you must be planned and the opposite of cavalier, as we find here in this story.

If we are undisciplined in our lives regarding the money we have been entrusted with we will find ourselves spending it licentiously on our physical pleasures mindless that one day someone will come and demand recompense.

Debt steals from our future and shackles us to the past. It keeps us from joining the fight on the Spiritual front lines because we must pay for a life that I have already lived.

"Every time you borrow money, you're robbing your future self."

~ Nathan W. Morris

Debt, n. An ingenious substitute for the chain and whip of the slavedriver.

~ Ambrose Bierce, 1911

Ok I don't want this to deteriorate into a workshop on financial management but here is my love offering to you for Valentine's Day:

1. Start Right Now! – And I mean it!
2. Live Simply - Learn contentedness and share it with others
3. Do the math – Create a budget and live by it – Track your spending and live below it

4. Treat your savings as an expense line – someday you will not be able to work for a living
10% savings in the bank for that rainy day and 10% retirement from your check every paycheck
5. Do everything possible to get out of CC debt – Debt steals from your future self
6. Give generously and even sacrificially – Giving sets us free from hoarding
7. Have a “We are in this together attitude” - Get help and give help

Matthew 6:19-22

"Don't lay up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves don't break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Homework for next week – Have a good idea of your annual stewardship responsibilities

Prayer

Community Life Discussion Questions

Dave made mention on Sunday that we are to live today with eternity in mind. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being very aware and 1 with almost no awareness) what do you think is your **daily** awareness of the Eternal Kingdom in your life? What do you think contributes to your Kingdom awareness? What distracts you?

Read these parables on stewardship and finances out loud. What are the common themes? What are the take home lessons for us in the 21st century?

- Matthew 24:45-51; The Faithful and Wise Servant
- Matthew 25:14-30; The Talents
- Luke 20:9-18; The Tenants
- Mark 13:34-37; The Watchful Servants
- Luke 17:7-10; The Master and His Servant

What do you think is the definition of a generous person? Are you generous?

What is the definition of a sacrificial person? Do you consider your lifestyle sacrificial?

How do you feel you are doing on the stewardship scale? Do you mostly see things from an “ownership” perspective or from a “stewardship” perspective?

In church, Dave gave four definitions of a foolish steward: Foolish stewards are . . .

1. Are cavalier (*not watchful for their Master's return*) and undisciplined (*do not give and invest with the Master's best interests in mind*)
2. Eat what they should plant or give away,
3. Put their Master's money at risk with debt,
4. Fail to prioritize their Master's resources and to save for the rainy day.

Do any of these trip you up on a regular basis? How so?

How can we as a small group encourage one another to good deeds along these lines? What if each small group took on a ‘good deed project’ in our community that required a sacrifice of time or money? What would that look like for this group?