

Acts 2 | The Fruit of the Kingdom
Redemption Hill Church | Simon Murphy
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We've seen that the gospel came and turned their lives upside down and reordered their priorities towards God, People, and their possessions.

This week we are talking about money and possessions! Many of you are thinking 'why does it always happen that when you bring a friend! Well I think that the reason it's such a sensitive subject is for two pretty obvious reasons:

Firstly we all have images and recollections of the pastor trying to squeeze out our last cents by promising us a better life if we do. So let me say that I won't do that to you, but I also won't react to that and shy away from the issues. I will tell you just the way it is.

Secondly, money is one of the greatest gods of all time, it has many of us in firm head locks, and it has our heart so tightly bound up, that any attempt to dislodge it cuts us where it hurts us most.

So I will make a deal with you today.. I will not abuse, misuse the scriptures, or try to manipulate you in any way, and I ask you to open your hearts that should God want to perform heart surgery on you this morning and remove some foreign objects, that you allow Him to!

So let's look at this issue of money: Hardly a more contentious subject!

It rules people, it changes people, it ruins people and in controls people.
In South Africa, people kill for R5. People kill for handphones, and cars.
We all have heard the stories of wall street execs, greedy greedy greedy.
It ruins families, because people work 18 hours a day for it. Think they've providing.
It also ruins families: They fight over it, spouses who don't share their resources.
Many live for it. Many say that it is the driving force of their lives.

However we see that in the early church there was a dramatic shift in their view of and relation to money.

What happened in this passage?

Acts 2.42-47, 4.32-37:

Acts 2.42-47: They had things in common, selling possessions for the poor, distributed to those who had need.

Acts 4.32-27: No one claimed their possessions as their own, no needy person among them, sold land and houses!

Acts 11.27: They shared their possessions due to a prophetic word about famine coming.

Acts 19.19: Gospel made them burn things of financial gain that were wicked to God.

Acts 20.14: I do not count my life of any value.

2 Cor 8: People partnered in the gospel even when they have very little.

Not only this but throughout History it has been Christians that did all these sorts of things (*hospitals, Moravians, aid organizations*).

Why did this happen?

Well what happened immediately prior to this? They were born again and God's Spirit made them alive. What about this would have resulted in this freedom with their resources? When they were cut to the heart what did they see? And what has reinforced as they devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching and the breaking of bread?

- **They saw that God gave his only Son and Jesus gave His life.**

John 3.16: “for God so loved the world that He gave..”

This whole salvation, this new life they had was as a result of generosity and giving. It was a gift (Rom 4 and Eph 2.8 ‘by grace you have been saved... not of your own doing, it is a gift of God).

This was a free gift that cost something! Sometimes we think salvation is just free. But when you get something that costs, it’s moves your affections!

And the gospel tells us that our salvation is free for us, but it wasn’t cheap.

When we see that God gave what was dearest FOR US, it frees us from a love for things.

This was the motivation for Paul’s writing about giving. He spoke about we sow and reap, but his main passage on giving he uses Christ, not rewards as a motivator. **Have you seen this? 2 Cor 8**

Now what were these riches that we have received? “Freely you have received..” Matt 10.8

- **Their reconciliation to God meant He became their ultimate treasure, highest value.**

It rightly brought them into a love / trust relationship with Christ, saw His awesomeness!

“Take the World but give me Jesus”.

Normally people worship finances, they think it’s what will save them from the misery of their own lives... if only I had this.. then I would...

Idolatry is when a good thing becomes an ultimate thing. You can’t live without it. And the idolatry of possessions and resources were dismantled at the cross. Because our meaning, significance, comfort, peace, security, future etc comes from the cross.

Some of you struggle with this and it’s an idol to you, that you sacrifice your time and effort for. You sacrifice your family and your life and health and peace for your job because ultimately you don’t trust God’s word that He is your Father and will provide for you. Now we must be faithful, but we don’t stop trusting God.

You may be here and think you are a Christian but actually you have been trying to use God for your own idolatry. Using him to get rich which is your real god.

Do you love him with all your heart? Do we long for Jesus and love him? When we do, we notice that the things of the world grow strangely dim. If Jesus weren’t in heaven..

Matthew 6.21: Your heart is where your treasure lies.

Because we are satisfied in God, **we should be content with what we have.** 1 Tim 6.6-10

- **God’s promise of provision became real to them.**

When they got saved they knew who they trusted. **Jesus’ words in Matt 6 were real to them.** You may be here today and not a Christian and ask ‘how can you trust God?’ Isn’t that just subjective? Well it’s experiential. “We know whom we have believed” 2 Tim 1.

What else does scripture teach us about finances:

The bible assumes that Christians will be generous with our lives. Matthew 6.2: ‘And when you give to the needy..’

We see that God wanted to use His people to be a blessing to the people of the world. Gen 12

This happens in the local church with tithes, offerings, alms and special projects:

Christians tithe, which traditionally means that we give 10 percent of our income before tax to the church for the salary of pastors and administrators in the church and to further God's kingdom on the earth. Paul says that those who teach and preach should earn their living from the gospel.

This practice of giving a tenth away really does help to keep you free from a love of money..

So people have said where does tithing come from? It comes from before the law where Abraham met Melchizadek and blessed him with a tenth of the spoils of war. Then after that it was put into the law by God as an expression of his heart that they should provide for the priests.

Also we see that the local church isn't just small and parochial but that it becomes the base from which missionaries, church planters etc are sent out.

le this church is partly possible because of faithful tithers in a local church. It's not that we went looking for sponsors. NCCB as a local church is what has enabled us to come, to start, and now this local church needs to pick up that responsibility for us.

And we will likewise be a great blessing from our own funds. And so just this church and what is happening here is a part of those people in Bryanston Johannesburg's inheritance, likewise we have a great inheritance in Asia and the rest of the world. And we will be involved in blessing people, sending out planters, supporting churches and people.

In the NT Jesus seems to affirm in Matthew as the only real reference to tithing, but interestingly enough most of the OT laws get upgraded in the NT, not downgraded. If adultery became lust, and murder became anger, then 10% should be greater too under the New Covenant.

Where things go wrong is that people use this as manipulation. We should give from a generous and free heart, without compulsion. (2 Cor 9.7)

Have you had this happen to you? Have you had your love for money and possessions displaced in such a way that you freely give to others?

In the NT they saw that people were more important than things and so they counted their possessions as though they never even had for them.