

Stewardship Series: More than Enough: Financial Wisdom, Courage, Peace

Sermon #1: “Living the Blessed Life”

Scripture: Psalm 112

Source: Rev. Adam Hamilton at the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, MO

<http://www.cor.org/worship/sermon-archives/show/series/More-than-Enough-Financial-Wisdom-Courage-Peace/>

Book: *Enough* by Adam Hamilton

PP#1-2: Psalm 112

- 1 Praise the Lord! [Hebrew *Hallelu Yah*]
Blessed are those who fear the Lord,
 who find great delight in His commands.
- 2 Their children will be mighty in the land;
 the generation of the upright will be blessed.
- 3 Wealth and riches are in their houses,
 and their righteousness endures forever.
- 4 Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,
 for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous.
- 5 Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely,
 who conduct their affairs with justice.
- 6 Surely the righteous will never be shaken;
 they will be remembered forever.
- 7 They will have no fear of bad news;
 their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.
- 8 Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear;
 in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.
- 9 They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor,
 their righteousness endures forever;
 their horn [meaning “dignity”] will be lifted high in honor.
- 10 The wicked will see and be vexed,
 they will gnash their teeth and waste away;
 the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.

Reader: **Psalm 112**

Praise the Lord!

**Blessed are those who fear the Lord,
 who find great delight in His commands.**

**Their children will be mighty in the land;
 the generation of the upright will be blessed.**

**Wealth and riches are in their houses,
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**Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,
 for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous.**

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Video Clip: Introductory Video

PP#3: More than Enough: Financial Wisdom, Courage, Peace

“Living the Blessed Life”

“Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in His commands.” Psalm 112:1

Today we start a new sermon series: “More Than Enough: Financial Wisdom, Courage, Peace.” Usually in the fall I try to preach about money. It’s a topic I think I need to keep coming back to. After all, Jesus did. In the Gospel of Luke, one out of every seven verses is about money.

It seems the first Christians really struggled to keep money in the right priority. It seems we have a lot in common with the first Christians!

We’ve been having a Financial Peace class upstairs before worship. Teresa Gruber has been leading us in a stewardship focus, and that includes a centered view of our finances. And, we are approaching the holiday season, which is a time we need to pay extra care to keep our finances and possessions in a healthy perspective! After all, it has become the main holiday for consumerism!

Last Sunday I flew back from visiting my mother in Florida. I scanned the newsstands, trying to catch up on the approaching elections. If you take away the speciality magazines, the headlines were all about the election, about the economy, about how people feel about their lives in terms of employment and spending ability...it seems to be like the Bible....lots about money!

Since the elections, the DOW has hit record highs. And, over the past number of years, the unemployment has been shrinking. The housing market is up. But yet, most people, according to the magazines, feel financially insecure, fear unemployment—this is very true for a number of people here today!—worry about future financial security, and live in a perspective of scarcity.

A while back Steve Martin played the *Father of the Bride*. They all wanted a nice wedding, a special occasion. But, as the father, he kept seeing the costs rise and rise! Watching your spending get out of control creates so much stress. Money is the leading cause for divorce for those married less than seven years? Financial stress can make you do weird things. \$250 per person for the wedding reception! That’s outlandish even today! Remember this clip from the movie?

Video Clip: Father of the Bride Invitations

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9zS4woYuoc>

1:51 minutes

We laugh at this, but we all know the feeling. How to get spending under control?

PP#4: Image showing there is a connection between Faith and Finances.

We need a sermon series helping us focus again on living the blessed life. Scripture teaches us an important wisdom for how to deal with our finances, how to have a healthy view of our money and possessions, and how to have the courage to make the changes we need to have financial peace.

There is a special connection between our faith and our finances. We can't control the DOW, really, or as individuals change congress to get our national spending under control, but what each of us does have control over is our own lives, our own finances, and how we react to what is going on around us. And this is precisely where the Bible can offer so much wisdom! This series is about biblical principles for our relationship with our stuff that will give us financial serenity and peace.

PP#5: The “Wisdom Literature” of the Bible

“The Books of Poetry” Hebrew: “The Five Scrolls”

Job	Psalms	Proverbs
Ecclesiastes	Song of Songs/Solomon	

So, we go to the wisdom literature in the Bible. They're located in the very middle of the Bible, literally! Open your Bible to the very middle and you're in the wisdom literature.

Wisdom literature teaches us about how life works. These aren't promises: This will be the way God will make it for you. No. This wisdom is the accumulated learning by people of God who saw how life seems to work. When people do *this*, *that* seems to happen. It is not a promise. It doesn't always happen this way. But over a lifetime, for the majority, this is the result. It is a cumulative learning for how to live the way that seems to best fit in with the way God designed for life to go the best.

PP#6: An example of an acrostic poem based on the English alphabet:

Above me in the clouds I see,
 Birds flying over me.
 Cats scurry down below,
 Dogs chasing to and fro.
 Every where I look around,
 Frantic sights and sounds abound.
 G. . .

We're looking at Psalm 112. It's a wisdom psalm, full of teaching for how to live best. Psalm 112 happens to be an acrostic poem, meaning that each of the lines begins with the next letter of the alphabet. It's in Hebrew, however, so we can't see it in English. But it's cool!

PP#7: Psalm 112:1 and 10

[1] Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in His commands.

[10] [But,] The wicked will see and be vexed, they will gnash their teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.

Psalm 112 follows the common wisdom style of comparing and contrasting two paths. We see this often throughout the Wisdom Books. It's the path of the wise verses the path of the fool.

Verse 10: The fool's life comes to nothing. They are vexed, they grind their teeth, and their lives waste away. Don't be a fool, right?

Verse 1: Be a wise person, a blessed person. We want to be that person, right? We want a life of blessing when it comes to our finances and possessions. How do we do that? Let's keep reading!

PP#8: The Blessed Life

- 1) "Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in His commands." Psalm 112:1

"Blessed are those who fear the Lord and who take great delight in God's commands." Blessed people fear the Lord. Now, when the Bible talks about the fear of the Lord, it doesn't mean being terrified of God. It's that fear that is rightful respect and awe of God, who created all and is glorious. God is so glorious that if you saw Him face to face, you would be instantly vaporized. That's what God told Moses...well, He didn't technically say "vaporized." But you get the point. It's a fear that means "fall on your knees," utter respect, deep reverence.

It means putting God first in your life. And since our God made everything and set it all in it's patterns, a wise person conforms his or her life to the patterns that God set in motion. Being blessed means seeing how God designed how the universe is supposed to work, and living with it, not butting against it.

PP#9: *Images of us parasailing*

When we were in Florida, we celebrated Nathan's Golden Birthday by going parasailing. I had never done this before, so let me tell you, we were all ears when the instructors gave us the instructions. When they told me how to sit and how to hold on during takeoff, I wasn't like, "Oh, that's OK. I got this. I'll do it my way." After all, they were taking us out into deeper waters...where the sharks were! I didn't want to end up in the water! I did what they told me to do, because they knew all about parasailing. They owned the boat, the tackle, the gear. They knew what they were doing, and I wanted the most out of the experience.

PP#10: The Blessed Life [Reese, there will be 3 of these.]

- 1) "Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in His commands." Psalm 112:1

That's how a blessed person treats God. When He gives us instructions, we listen up and follow them! It's delighting in His commandments, it's doing His will intentionally and purposefully, wanting to get the most out of our experience, our experience of life.

PP#11: The Blessed Life

- 1) "Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in His commands." Psalm 112:1
- 2) "Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." -Luke 12:15
 "You cannot serve both God and money." -Matthew 6:24b
 "Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This, too, is meaningless." -Ecclesiastes 5:10

Wisdom literature in the New Testament are the teachings of Jesus, and perhaps James. And Jesus talked a lot about money and possessions. One to live by? Luke 12:15 "Then Jesus said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." Another? Matthew 6:24 24 "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."

Our culture tells us that happiness...blessedness...consists in getting more possessions. Our culture feeds off of our fear of scarcity. You don't have enough! You need more! Get more! Get more!

Jesus breaks in and teaches the good life. Remember, He knows what He's talking about! Pay attention! Jesus says, "You have more than enough! Be content. Stop worrying!" Jesus, the God who created the universe, says, if you want to experience financial blessing, the antidote to perceived scarcity is contented sufficiency.

After all, Jesus was just quoting the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. Ecclesiastes 5:10 "Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This, too, is meaningless." Boy, write that on your bathroom mirror for each morning!

Isn't it true? When you follow God, you find you have more than enough! This is what Teresa has been telling us. Life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions.

I took to Florida about two year's worth of *National Geographic* magazines. I subscribe, but I don't often get the time to enjoy them. So I save them up for vacation. Well, in each issues there are advertisements by Stauer, a company that makes top quality jewelry and replicas. And they've been advertising a number of really cool watches. I can't help it. I get sucked in. I read them all, word for word.

PP#12: *Images of expensive watches for men.*

Now, I have two watches. I have my everyday watch, a \$10 jobbie from Walmart. And then I have my fancy watch. I bought it when I led a tour through Switzerland. What better souvenir than one that is actually useful? So, I looked around for one that I could actually afford. I had to look pretty hard. I finally found one for \$100...and that was 12 years ago! But I got a very nice Swiss-made watch. It still runs great. I usually wear it on Sundays.

But I was reading the Stauer advertisements. Now, *Time*'s been featuring smart watches. But these are the real ones, with jeweled movements. Stauer makes watches that do amazing things: tell time in every time zone, keep the day, month, and year—including leap year, have a compasses, a cronometer, show the moon phases, one even had an altimeter...heck, I could have used that when I went parasailing to know how high I was!

After a while, my Swiss-made watch started to look very un-special. It seemed inferior to the Stauer-made watches. I began to get tempted to upgrade. They have this watch that is guaranteed to keep perfect time for 400 years. It comes with a written guarantee. I'm not kidding! It talked about passing your watch down to your kids. Hmmm. Heirloom watch.

See how it goes? I'm supposed to be reading about different cultures, and I end up wanting a new watch! Really, how many watches do I need to tell the time? I knew this was going to be my sermon series when I got back, so, I'm not getting a new watch. Life doesn't consist of the abundance of possessions.

The world promises happiness and joy and blessing with more possessions. But the world promises what it can't deliver. Just look at those who "have it all." Their list of suicides and overdosing continues to grow.

PP#13: "One person pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth." -Proverbs 13:7

"Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever." -Psalm 112:

And then there's the image thing: trying to look important and having lots. Proverbs 13:7 "One person pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth." Psalm 112 says that those who pursue God are rich and wealthy. They have all they need and more.

I remember my very first time to Red Rock Bible Camp. I had the two kids, one in a stroller and one on my lap. And this one pastor walked up to me and burst out, "You are a rich, rich man!"

I've never forgotten it. I am rich. I have all I need and far, far more. I've got two amazing kids...and I've taken them parasailing!

PP#14: The Blessed Life

- 1) "Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in His commands." Psalm 112:1
- 2) "Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." -Luke 12:15
- 3) The Law of Generosity
"Good will come to those who are generous." -Psalm 112:5

The third premise for the life of blessing I'll call the Law of Generosity. Generous people are happier, not so worried and fearful about their stuff, and usually rich in friendships.

John Wesley taught three biblical rules about money. Remember them? 1) Earn all you can. 2) Save all you can. And 3) Give all you can. You see, you can earn and save lots, and still not be blessed. You can still be fearful, too focused on your money! The third rule is key: give all you can. It's the law of generosity.

PP#15: Psalm 112

- 5 Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely,
who conduct their affairs with justice.
- 7 They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.
- 9 They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor, their righteousness endures forever.

Psalm 112: "Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice." "They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord." "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor, their righteousness endures forever."

PP#16: "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine." -Proverbs 3:9-10
"One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." - Proverbs 11:24-25

Teresa's been talking about this. She's shared about giving beyond the minimum. The Bible talks about tithing. Give first to God. This is not a command, or a promise, but a wisdom witness. This is what living a blessed life looks like. Proverbs 3:9-10 "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

I've been praying for God to make me generous for a number of years now. You see, I'm cheap. Ask my wife. There are times when I squeak when I walk. But I want the blessed life. I have to work on the generous part. So, we've made a point not just to tithe, but to give offerings above

tithe. But I want to be generous in all areas of my life. I want to be a blessing. So I ask my wife before I make any donations, and her job is to be sure I'm giving generously.

And really, we give because God first gave to us. All of life is a gift from God. Look on your life and see that all your blessings are actually gifts. Giving is a way of expressing thanks for all you receive. And God's principle is that when you sacrifice to give, you still have more than enough.

PP#17: *Image for the Harvard incoming class of 1938.*

One last thing to remember about wealth. The longest study on living people has been the W.T. Grant Study of Adult Development at Harvard University. It started in 1938 closely following the group of men who entered Harvard that year. Many were wildly successful: four were in congress, one became president (JFK), some became titans of industry, some ended up in prison. Nearly all are now dead, but there are a couple left, so the study is not yet finished. About 10 years ago, the current leader of the study was asked, "What is the most important thing you learned?" His answer? "Following the study showed me that the only thing that really matters is life are your relationships. You can have all the money in the world, but if no one likes you, you are the poorest man in the world."

It's about your relationships.

You are built for generosity.

Your life consists not in the abundance of possessions.

Fear the Lord, and take great delight in His commands.

That's how to be "a rich, rich man!"

Amen.