

*JD Rockefeller, was one of the richest men in history. And when he was asked by a reporter, “How much money it takes to make a man happy?” he very astutely gave the reply, “Just a little bit more.” ... It was a very good summary of the human condition: The quest for “A little bit more”. You see, most of us probably don’t think of ourselves as “lovers of money”, but there aren’t too many of us, who don’t wish we could have a little bit more...*

And so, today’s topic is relevant for every generation. It’s about the “Love of money” and “contentment”. But it’s about more than that. It’s about worship – worship which is acceptable to God.

Today is part B of a 2-part message, so, for it to make sense, I’m just going to give a quick recap on where we’re up to.

We’re in Chapter 13 of Hebrews, which is its final chapter. Throughout the letter, it’s been teaching us about:

- who Jesus is;
- His greatness;
- what God has done through Him; and about
- how when Jesus returns, those who believe in Him and have repented of their sin – those who honour God in their life, will receive an eternal Kingdom – a Kingdom that cannot be shaken.

**Yesss!!!** Now, is anyone looking forward to that – to the return of Jesus, and the eternal, unshakable kingdom that we will inherit??? Of course we are. And because this isn’t

something we deserve/earned by our own magnificence – because it is a gift of God,,,,, we are so thankful (Are we not???)...

So, how do we appropriately express our gratefulness to God? Worship; Reverence; Awe...

And what this actually looks like, may get overlooked, because we preachers tend to divide the bible up into these little bite-sized pieces, so we can have a stand-alone message each week. But when Hebrews was written, there was no division between Chapters 12 & 13. It was/is one letter... So, let's not assume a division occurs between chapters 12 & 13.

12:28 begins a series of “Let us” statements, that hold this all together. In the Greek (it doesn't say “let us”), some are verbs that present proper Christian action. Some are verbs that are “imperative” (you must do this). Some are nouns and adjectives that describe proper Christian behaviour.... But the way our translation uses the words “let” and “let us”, helps us to get the picture of the way it all pulls together...

Chapter 12:<sup>28</sup> **Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,** <sup>29</sup> **for our God is a consuming fire.**

What is acceptable worship? worship, with reverence and awe (right)? Well yes, but what is that???

And I'm going to let you in on a little secret here. He's not talking about something as shallow as the proportion of Hymns to Choruses....

You see, he's writing this letter to "Hebrews"/people who know their Old Testament well... And when a person who knows their Old Testament well thinks of "worship that is acceptable to God" or **not** acceptable to God, they would probably think of the Prophet Amos (I know I did).

At one time, God was angry with His people and their greed/violence/corruption,,, And He told The Prophet Amos, exactly what He thought of their worship, because their hearts were far from Him.

Amos 5:21–24 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> "I hate, I despise your feasts,  
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

<sup>22</sup> Even though you offer me your burnt offerings  
and grain offerings,

I will not accept them;

and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,  
I will not look upon them.

<sup>23</sup> Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

<sup>24</sup> But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

You see, one thing God hates, is hypocrisy. If we are **not** a people of justice and righteousness, our worship, is an outright offence to God...

James said it like this:

James 1:27 (ESV)

<sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Romans 12:1 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

So, what we are reading today, is a picture of worship. It's a picture of sacrificial living, which is spiritual worship. And when it comes to following Jesus, yes, there is a very real aspect of "sacrificial living". But there's contentment in that.

So, the let us statements, that flow from chapter 12 into chapter 13:

- let us be grateful
- let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe

And then it shows us what this worship looks like:

- Let brotherly love continue.

- Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers
- Remember those who are in prison,  
as though in prison with them, and  
those who are mistreated
- Let marriage be held in honour
- let the marriage bed be undefiled

And we covered all that last week, and we're not going to go over it again today. It's all part of what makes our worship acceptable... and if you want to catch up on it, you can go to our website [www.bushdisciples.church](http://www.bushdisciples.church) [sermons], video/audio/ written.

And I said last week,

*For worship to be true/acceptable, the words of the song I sing and of the prayer I pray, must a reflection of the melody of my heart...*

And today, we continue with another example of spiritual worship. Worship which is acceptable to God, is for us to be content with what we have, and to be free from the love of money...

When the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, he gave some of the most profound advice, that Christians of every generation have found both greatly **freeing**, and deeply challenging. He said:

## 1 Timothy 6:6-10 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain, <sup>7</sup> for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

<sup>9</sup> But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

That's challenging, because the natural human condition, is **discontentment** – to always want a little bit more. But it's immensely freeing, because we don't have to live up to the world's expectations of success, or of achieving more and more... Contentment with what we have, is not only enough, it is what pleases God.

And today, we read in Hebrews:

<sup>5</sup> 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."

Picture this:

*The preacher drives his sports car from his luxurious home (situated in one of the better suburbs), to a megachurch.*

*There, he stands up before his adoring congregation who clap at just the right times,,, and his message for the day, is similar to most weeks...*

- *God wants to bless you.*
- *He's going to bless you with that money you need...*
- *He wants to bless you with that house;*
- *He wants to bless you with holiday you deserve;*
- *He wants to provide for you so your life can be that little bit easier...*
- *The blessings come now!!!*

*And the congregation smile at that. Some will clap/pump their fist and go yeah...*

*They are very happy to hear that message. Why? Because they love money...*

What an obscenity to God, the prosperity gospel is...

<sup>5</sup> 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."

Now, the thing is, those dastardly prosperity preachers, they're an easy target, hey... But let's take a look at ourselves. Deep down, are **we** lovers of money?

Think for a moment: "Does my love of money, sometimes override my love for Jesus?" Does it cause me to do things, I know are sinful???

You see, Paul told Timothy, “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil”. How?

Well, Proverbs 28: (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> A faithful man will abound with blessings,  
but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.  
In other words, “hastening to be rich, usually involves sin”.

<sup>25</sup> A greedy man stirs up strife,  
but the one who trusts in the LORD will be enriched.  
....

<sup>21</sup> To show partiality is not good,  
but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong.

for a piece of bread a man will do wrong.

In other words, for a little benefit – for “a little bit more”, a man will do wrong.

You see, we tend to think, “It’s the **super**-wealthy – **they**’re the ones who have a love of money”...

BTW, by world standards, if you are lucky enough to live in Australia, you are rich. You and I have one of the highest standards of living, of anywhere in the world, and you know what??? We Australians, we’re still not content...



*I've recently been hearing in the media and the politicians bemoaning the fact, that because of the high price of housing, our living standards are not currently increasing... As if there's something deficient about our living standards as they are...*

What about us? Are **we** lovers of money??? And is my love of God greater than my love of money?

The love of money is the constant quest for more. And when we have a constant quest for more, it has a habit of causing us to do the “little things” of deceit.

## 1.

The first thing the love of money does, is we deceive ourselves. We fail to recognise the blessings we already have... Contentment: Well, that goes out the window.

Godliness with contentment, is great gain.

But the love of money, tells me:

- that I don't have enough;
- that compared to everybody else, I'm missing out;
- that I'm not giving my kids the best start they could have, and therefore, I'm deficient as a parent;
- that I'm not going to have enough to see me through in my retirement...

– to enjoy travel and do the things I want to do in my retirement...

The love of money, is the deception that disguises itself as:

- ambition;
- achievement;
- success and greatness in one's career/business acumen...

It is the constant urge that one has, to expand/increase/leave a bigger legacy....

The old saying goes “*Money won't make you happy*”, and of course, the come-back for that is “*People who say that, obviously don't know how to shop...*”

You know what: there's nothing nice about abject poverty... But whether I am rich, or whether I am poor, happiness is found in contentment – Godly contentment...

And if the Lord **has** blessed any of us with wealth/assets/resources,,, it is not for us to invest for ourselves, or to spend on ourselves... Who does it belong to? Everything we have belongs to God.

Let me put it in perspective for you: In James 5, **James 5:1** (ESV) Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.

Why? Because they've stored up wealth in the last days. What should they have done with their wealth, instead of

storing it up? They should have used it for the eternal purposes of God.

- Feeding the hungry;
- housing the homeless;
- supporting the preaching of the word...

We deceive ourselves...

And the self-deception, that we don't have enough, leads us to all sorts of selfish and fleshly decisions. It's the deception that takes our minds off of our **true** blessing – our **greatest** blessing – our **eternal** blessing... And we focus on the physical, temporary things.

Even leaving a legacy for my descendants, is an act of storing up inter-generational treasures on earth – not in heaven. ....

<sup>5</sup> 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."

We will always have enough. Let's not let a love of money, deceive us.

2.

The love of money, causes some to cheat God, and to steal what rightfully belongs to God. In Malachi 3, The Lord says

to the people, “You’ve been robbing me.” **Bring the full tithe into the storehouse...**

You see, the love of money, causes us to believe that we have much better use for our money than God does. And some will (in their minds) dedicate everything they have to God, but in reality, it’s just being used to grow their own nest-egg...

I thank God for the people who give sacrificially.

Everything we have, already belongs to God... And I can guarantee you, that if you begin to give sacrificially (a minimum of a tithe) ( $1/10^{\text{th}}$  of gross income), And I can guarantee you, that if we all give sacrificially, and do it regularly, and don’t rob God, we can expect 2 things...

Firstly, we as a church will have all of the financial resources we need, to fulfill the ministry and mission that God calls us to, and it will be far beyond what we currently do.

And the second thing I can guarantee you, is that you will always have enough. The Lord **has said**, “**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**” He will always provide what we need.

### **3.**

The third thing the love of money does, is to cheat God of time.

No longer, is God deserving of our time.

- Can’t make it to church this week. I’m working;

- Fellowship: No time for that at the moment;
- Getting involved in ministry or outreach,,, even taking time to serve those who need our help, or to do a few practical tasks for God,,,

Work takes precedence. We've got commitments, after all.

#### 4.

And the 4<sup>th</sup> thing the love of money does, is it draws us to sin, in ways that we didn't think we would.

James 4:17 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

It's the love of money, that causes otherwise honest people, to lie...

I don't know too many Christian truck-drivers, (or ag-pilots), who are not liars...

How do they lie? They "fudge" their log book...

Let me be clear: The word "fudge" isn't in the bible right? But the word "Liar" is... The word "false testimony" is. The word "dishonest" is... And our Lord is very critical of such things... In fact, all liars will find their place in the lake of fire. I don't want to be a liar. Do you???

*Oh, come on Michael. You're being pedantic. It's only a little thing. A little white lie, that doesn't hurt anyone... Do you know another word for "a little white lie"? A dirty great big lie...*

Because we know, it is the wrong thing to do (to fudge the logbook), therefore it is sin.

You see, we worship a God of truth – a god who hates false testimony.

Proverbs 12:22 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD,  
but those who act faithfully are his delight.

And you know what, in our eyes, it might just be a little thing, but it's the little things that reveal the depth and genuineness of our faith. I may **call** Jesus "Lord", but **is** He my Lord? Is Jesus Lord of my logbook?

And get this: It's OK to not do what everybody else does. It's OK to spread a 2-day job over 3 days, because in Christ, He is our contentment... He's more interested in our integrity, than in our earnings or achievements.

That's only one example. But the love of money – the constant quest for more (not being content with what we have),

it causes otherwise faithful people:

- to lie to their boss;
- to make false promises to clients;

- to steal consumables and take them home for their own use...

It's the love of money that causes one to claim a tax deduction for something that isn't really for business use... And you know what? The ATO probably won't know the difference, but Jesus does...

Do I love Jesus more than I love my tax deduction? If Jesus is my Lord, He will also be Lord of my cashbooks and of my tax return...

*When I was younger, I would take loads of feral pigs into The Box... And the first time I did it, the manager of the box said, "Michael, what name are you going to put on these tags?" "Well, you know my name." "Yeah, but nobody uses their real name, because you're getting paid cash, and you don't want the tax man to come chasing you..." And to my shame, that's what I did...*

I've learned a lot about integrity since then. I've learned a lot about the Lordship of Jesus since then... To save a few dollars in tax, isn't worth dishonouring my Lord, by lying...

And you know what? Even to save millions of dollars, it isn't worth dishonouring our Lord...

You see, it's the love of money that causes us to:

- be dishonest;
- not share;

- not give;
- cheat God of our tithes and offerings;
- turn a blind eye to our brothers and sisters in need;
- keeps us from serving/worshipping/fellowshipping...

Why?

Because I'm too busy. The job's on, and I've gotta work...

You probably realise by now, I'm not one of them prosperity preachers... You see, the words of a prosperity preacher, will bind his listeners with chains of worldly expectations... They become tied to a teaching that tells them that they need to have more, and they need to be more...

Their picture of faith, is to project a persona of success...

But, here's some good news: God's word will set you free... You do not have to strive to be that persona of success... He offers contentment... Contentment, with what we already have...

V<sup>6</sup> ... we can confidently say,

"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?"



We don't have to live up to other people's expectations of success... And we won't go short, either. The Lord will provide everything that we need.

And my prayer, is that a love of money would not:

- stop us from giving;
- hold us back from serving;
- keep us away from fellowshiping with our brothers and sisters in Christ;

And I pray, that we would find contentment,, Contentment in our eternal calling... That we would store treasure in heaven, as we live each day, for Jesus...

Let's pray,

Heavenly Father,

We confess that too often,

in practice, we have loved money,

more than we have loved righteousness.

Father, forgive us.

We acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,

He is Lord of all.

He is Lord of the heavens;

He is Lord of the earth.

And Lord,

we surrender ourselves to You,  
that You would have dominion and rule,  
over us.

That You would be Lord of our:

- time;
- money;
- hopes, dreams and ambitions;

Lord, fix our hearts on things of **eternal** value,  
and give us contentment for what we have.

And as we take stock,  
we realise the immense blessings  
that You have poured out upon us.

That You love us so much,  
You gave Your only Son...

And that in His Name,  
we have light and life.

In our gratefulness,  
help us to live lives of sacrificial worship,  
of surrender to You...  
Of all that we have,  
and all that we are.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.