

“Gods of Success” - Luke 18:18-30
Pastor Burt Garwood – February 4, 2018

There is a story in Luke 18 that on the surface seems to be about money, but if you scratch at it you find that it's really about idolatry. It's about a man who is confronted with a choice. And he was worshipping these false gods of success.

- **READ:** Luke 18:18. The way he asks the question reveals a false god. He says, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” The Greek word for inherit can also be translated “acquire” or “earn”.
- We are often drawn to the gods of success because these gods allow us to sit on the throne of our own lives. It's about what WE accomplish and what WE achieve.
- **READ:** Luke 18:19-20. Jesus gives the man the answer he expected. He tells the man to keep the commandments. But other than Jesus, no one has successfully pulled that off.
- Jesus tries to help the man with his response by first pointing out that no one is good but God alone. But the man isn't connecting the dots.
- **READ:** Luke 18:21. Ironically, he was putting his hope in his religious success at keeping the commandments. His religious rule keeping had become his god.
- **READ:** Luke 18:22-23. Knowing this man's heart, Jesus aims for the god that is winning the war in this man's life. Jesus was asking a materialist to give up his way of life and give away all his stuff.
- Jesus was asking him to walk away from everything that he held dear. All of his trophies, all of his awards, and accolades. Jesus was asking him to give up whatever he was using in his life to satisfy himself. Whatever he was using to add value to himself. Whatever made him feel important and successful.

You might conclude that this is a story about money. This is not a story about money, however; this is a story about idolatry.

- This rich young man loved his money and material possessions too much. He couldn't give his stuff away.
- His heart wasn't in it to give. Because his heart wasn't really for God, it was devoted to his stuff. The gods of success had stolen his heart.
- Jesus puts himself in direct competition with what this man loves the most, and says, “You choose. It's either going to be A) Money, or B) me, but C) all of the above – isn't an option.” **READ also:** Matthew 6:24.
- Why is money so often portrayed as God's primary competition? Because we look to money to do the very things for us that God wants to do.

Here are four lies that the gods of money and success have told us:

1. Money will satisfy you.

- If we only had enough of it, we think happiness will come. **READ:** Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. None of King Solomon's success, none of his possessions, land or people he had acquired, none of the masses of silver or gold brought him the satisfaction he was looking for.
- That's because your heart was created to worship God and God alone. Your heart was built to find satisfaction in friendship with God.
- You will always find yourself wanting more of something, no matter how much money you have.

2. Money means that you matter.

- We think that money can make us significant. We often judge our worth by how much we are worth monetarily.
- We measure ourselves against others by the kind of car we drive, the neighborhood we live in, the furniture we've collected, the size of our television and having the latest mobile device at our fingertips.
- We measure our worth by the kind of boots we wear, or jeans or blouses, or shirts. We have to have a certain name brand of purse to matter. We have to be dressed only in a certain name brand of sportswear: If it isn't Nike, Adidas or Under Armor, it doesn't matter.
- Do you see how sinister this line of thinking is and how damaging it is to your heart, mind and soul? Instead of looking to God as our source of identity, we look to money...and what our success says about us.
- The truth is that every single one of us has a wall filled with trophies...if we are truly honest with ourselves. You have to ask yourself, “Who would I be if it was all stripped away?”
- We all know in our hearts that it's not supposed to be this way. But the gods of success keep whispering lies that if we can make just a little more money, that we will matter more...that we will eventually arrive. But the truth is that it's never enough.

3. Money will make you secure.

- The truth is that whatever you put your security in ends up being your god. It reveals where you've put your hope.

4. Money will save you.

- The real problem with idolatry is that we look to something other than Jesus for salvation.

Millard Fuller tells of becoming a millionaire by the age of 29. He bought his wife “everything” she could possibly want. But one day he came home to a note that announced that she had left him. Millard went after her – he found her on a Saturday night at a hotel in NYC. They talked into the wee hours of the morning as she poured out her heart and made him see that the “things” that our society says are supposed to be so satisfying had left her cold. Her heart was empty, and her spirit was burned out. She was dead inside and she wanted to live again.

Kneeling at their bedside in that hotel room, Millard and Linda decided to sell everything they had and dedicate themselves to serving the poor. They found the nearest church and went there to worship and thank God for their new beginning. They told the pastor about what had happened. Millard says, “he told us that it was not necessary to give up everything. He just didn't understand that we weren't giving up money and the things that money could buy. We were giving up, period.” Millard and Linda started an organization you're probably familiar with – Habitat for Humanity...which builds homes for those in need.

I wonder if the rich young ruler became a richer old ruler. Sadly, we will never know. Because this is the last we hear of the rich young ruler. **READ:** Luke 18:23. He was sad because he wanted to love both God and money.

But Jesus says, *you've got to choose*. **READ:** Matthew 6:24. That's not what he wanted to hear, but that's the invitation Jesus offers. What trophies in your life need to be taken down?