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Money and Jesus

by Jon Mundy, Ph.D.

*There is no need to be afraid, little flock,
for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.
Sell your possessions and give alms.
Get yourselves purses that do not wear out,
treasure that will not fail you,
in Heaven where no thief can reach it and no moth destroy it.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be.*
Luke 12:32-34

Where Your Treasure Is

One of the most practical and concrete ways of understanding the teachings of Jesus is in his relationship to money. One-sixth of all the words of Jesus in the New Testament are concerned with money.

Of the Thirty-Five Parables of Jesus in the New Testament, Thirteen are specifically about money, including:

The Wise Steward, the Dishonest Steward, the Goodly Pearls,
The Rich Man and Lazarus, the Sower and the Harvest,
The Laborers in the Vineyard, the Treasure Hid in the Field,
The Man Who Built Bigger Barns, and the Marriage of the King's Son
There are two parables about talents.
There are two parables about debt and debtors.

Jesus makes frequent references to money in the Gospels, no doubt because he saw how deeply money affected the consciousness, and the sense of self-worth of the people with whom he worked. In 1980, I published a little book entitled *Money and Jesus*. It sold out and I never republished the book. I wanted to rewrite it, but I never did. Perhaps now is the time. In the book, I took a look at each of Jesus' parables about money. This article is too short to go into the parables. We'll look instead just at a few things Jesus said about money.

Money, like the body, is an artifact, a vehicle, a means of exchange and a working tool. Jesus clearly understood that much anxiety arises around our relationship with money. We spend a great deal of time talking about money, especially during difficult times. It is almost impossible to go through a single day without handling money, and the world would come to a grinding halt if there were no means of exchanging goods and services. The author of the books of Timothy says: "*The love of money is the root of all evil.*" Money itself is neutral but the "*love of money*" can clearly become a stumbling block on the road home to God. Most folks would probably agree with Mark Twain who said, "*The lack of money is the root of all evil.*" The lack of money, and along with it selfishness, stinginess, miserliness, and the fear of scarcity, promotes bankruptcy, theft, and a multitude of ills. Theft, especially identity theft, is up in this country, and it can be blamed in part on the inability of some folks to be able to pay their bills.

Our spiritual life is concerned with everything we do including how we earn, spend, and save money. You can learn more about folks spiritually by asking them about their relationship to money than asking them about their relationship to Jesus. We can say many wonderful things about our relationship with Jesus. Ultimately, all questions must be dealt with spiritually, including money. Jesus in the *Course* talks about *little strips of paper* and *metal discs* that we work to get, doing senseless things, and then toss them away for other senseless things we do not want and even need. Words like "*debt*" and "*credit*" are psychological terms as well as financial terms and Jesus in the *Course* has a great deal to say about that in which we *invest*, about *scarcity* and *abundance*, *giving* and *receiving*, *profit* and *loss*, *costs* and *debts*. Notice the following passage on the Vision of Christ.

The Vision of Christ

*The ego is trying to teach you
how to **gain** the whole world and **lose** your own soul.
The Holy Spirit teaches you that you cannot **lose** your soul
and there is no **gain** in the world, for of itself it **profits** nothing.
To **invest** without **profit** is surely to **impoverish** yourself,
and the **overhead** is high.
Not only is there no **profit** in the **investment**,
but the **cost** to you is enormous.
For this **investment costs** you the world's reality
by denying yours and gives you nothing in return.
You cannot **sell** your soul, but you can **sell** your awareness of it.
You cannot perceive your soul, but you will not know it
while you perceive something else as more **valuable**.*
A Course in Miracles T-12. VI, 1:1-7

The Psychology of Money

While we may think we understand our relationship to money, who knows how they will respond if they were to suddenly come into a lot of money? What, spiritually speaking, happens to us if we lose our money? Why do we spend more than we earn? Why do we hoard money? Why do we get upset when we are asked for money? Why do we treat those with more or less money than ourselves with respect, envy, or contempt? The two major issues over which most marriages are said to collapse are sex and money. Both concern questions of attachment and commitment.

First Be Rich Toward God

The thing which is striking about Jesus is that he clearly maintained an awareness of his connection with God. He knew who he was. He did not worry about money or "things" of this world. Even his body he was ready to surrender. He understood clearly that God was his Father and his Kingdom was not of this world. We should, he said, "give to Caesar, the things which are Caesar's, (the things of the world) and unto God that which is God's." Jesus had prosperous friends like Lazarus and there were those who naturally wanted to help him by providing material things they could supply, like fish from his fishermen disciples; dinner and a roof over his head from many of his followers. We hear various complaints from the disciples in the gospels but never about being in a state of lack. Today, just as in the days of the historical Jesus,

the way we handle money is an evident, outward sign of the way we grasp the nature of the material world.

*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,
than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.
Matthew 19:24*

Few passages from the gospels are more mistranslated and misinterpreted than Matthew 19:24. The word *rich* can be used positively, as in the description of a quality that is pleasing and satisfying, such as a *rich* note from a flute or *rich* in experience. Synonyms for rich include: *eloquent, meaningful, and expressive*. The naturalist, Wallace, noted of his visit to the primitive tribes of the Amazon that the people there were: "rich without wealth and happy without gold."

Mother Theresa said that while she has seen poverty in India, the poverty she experienced in America was more profound, for Americans were rich in things of the world and poor in the things of God. Many Indians are rich in Spirit and poor in the things of the world. She once saw a man who was starving who, being given a banana, broke it in half and shared it with another man. That man, she stated, was truly wealthy. To give what we have without reservation is to be wealthy indeed. The word *rich* can also be used negatively to describe unwholesome excess, as in *rich* food. When Jesus says, it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven than it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, he is talking about excesses of the ego and our thinking that our own worth is superior to that of others.

*The real world is not like this.
It has no buildings and there are no streets
where people walk alone and separate.
There are no stores where people buy
an endless list of things they do not need.
It is not lit with artificial light, and night comes not upon it.
There is no day that brightens and grows dim. There is no loss.
Nothing is there but shines, and shines forever.
A Course in Miracles, T-13. VII. 1, 1-6*

*I once asked you to sell all you have and give to the poor and follow me.
This is what I meant: If you have no investment in anything in this world, you can teach the
poor where their treasure is.
The poor are merely those who have invested wrongly,
and they are poor indeed!
A Course in Miracles T-12. 3:13*

The poor will be with us as long as the world is with us. The ego rules this world. God's Kingdom is not of this world. The ego enjoys playing with money as money makes right and making right is always wrong. The ego alone is poor. The ego is with us in this world. In God's world, Heaven/ Eternity, none of this world exists. I know of no document as clear as the *Course* in its teaching that we are not bodies. A body is delimitation in form, a tiny fence around a grand and glorious idea. Is it not strange that we live by eating other animal bodies? Isn't sex a strange

sort of thing that we do? And why are we so compelled to sex, to food, to drink, to things of the body? We are to respect these bodies and use them creatively as long as they last. We may enjoy them as long as we “seem” to occupy them. Ultimately, (which means now) however, they have nothing to do with who we are. Proof of that fact is that one day they will disappear. There is nothing to be afraid of, not even the loss of the body. The body is nothing.

When your body and your ego and your dreams are gone, you will know that you will last forever. Perhaps you think this is accomplished through death, but nothing is accomplished through death, because death is nothing.

A Course in Miracles T-5. V. A. 1:1-2

There are no Christians in Heaven, no Jews, no Muslims, no Buddhists, no Hindus, and no *Course in Miracles* students. These are all divisions within this world. There are also no doctors, ministers, captains, priests, or presidents in Heaven. None of these occupations are needed. I once read a sermon from the 17th Century in which the minister described Heaven as a place of fine horses and carriages. Some religions have very materialistic views of Heaven. There are, however, no streets or stores in Heaven. Notice the last line from the above section of the *Course*. *Nothing is there but shines, and shines forever*. Imagine for a moment that you are a star, a light in darkness. Maybe you are a very powerful pixel of light. Maybe that is what you really are. And maybe you have a “shining” relationship with every other one of those pixels. Maybe?

**Abundance -- Fullness and Extension
The Measure We Give -- Extension Boomerangs**

*Give and it will be given you; good measure pressed down,
shaken together, running over will be put into your lap.*

For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

Luke 6:38

Abundance comes from the Latin *abundans* meaning to *overflow*. It is a *great or plentiful amount; a fullness to overflowing*. Jesus borrowed the metaphor of the lap from the grain trade. In Jesus’ day, grain was a form of money. It was your pay for a days work. The word *lap* comes from the Greek and *means a large pocket or fold that overlaps a girdle on a garment*. In Jesus’ day, grain could be measured out to someone, by how much they could catch by holding up an open apron. As we give we receive again, even more -- it spills over; it overflows. Abundance is the experience of overflowing. It is the experience of joy. Mystics use words like enthusiastic, -- overwhelming -- running over -- exuberant – abundant – energetic and awe-inspiring to describe their experiences.

*The abundance of Christ
is the natural result of choosing to follow Him.*

ACIM, T 1. V. 6:2

*There was a man, though some did count him mad,
The more he cast away, the more he had.*

John Bunyan (1628–1688 England, author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*)

The *Course* says that a teacher of God is not generous in the usual sense. We are not talking about money -- we are also not, not talking about money. We are talking about giving, about *letting the love of God extend unimpeded*. It is a matter of giving of oneself. What is given is also received, whatever it may be. The fullness of God's being cannot be contained. It flows out in profusion, in abundance. When we first fall in love -- the love flows, bubbles over and spills out. Author Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881, Scotland, a deeply religious non-church based author) tells how, when he was a boy, a beggar came to the door. His parents were out and he was alone in the house. On a boyish impulse, he broke into his savings bank and gave the beggar all that he had. He later said he had not since that time experienced the same joy he did in that moment. "It was, he said, the experience of *sheer happiness*." Nothing makes us happier than our making someone else happy.

*The full appreciation of the mind's self-fullness
makes selfishness impossible and extension inevitable.*

A Course in Miracles

Giving-Receiving and Receiving-Giving

Think of the times when you have been most happy. Was it not a moment when love poured forth from your heart. The principle of *Giving-Receiving* or *Receiving-Giving* works on the ego level and the spiritual level. *Whatever we give, we receive*. If we project guilt -- we receive guilt. If we extend love -- we receive love. Whatever we give, we get and even more is given unto us. Receiving is giving means accepting with grace all the wonderful things that come our way -- as well as receiving with grace life's unpleasant experiences. If someone attacks you verbally, show the other that their attack is meaningless by not giving it energy, by not getting the ego involved. Respond from the level of spirit -- not the level of insanity.

To the world, generosity means giving away in the sense of giving up.

To the teachers of God, it means giving away in order to keep.

A Course in Miracles, M-VII. 1:1-5

Sacrifice and Giving To Get

According to Christian theology, we must sacrifice (*pay for*) or atone for our sins. It is said of someone who is released from prison that they have "paid their debt to society." Sacrifice, however, is not giving. To give because we have to, is not giving. To give grudgingly is not giving. Psychopaths give in order to get others in their debt. When we associate giving with sacrifice, we give in order to get something better. In the same way, if I feel that someone "owes" me something, I should ask why I have that feeling.

*'Giving to get' is an inescapable law of the ego,
which always evaluates itself in relation to other egos.*

A Course in Miracles T-4. II. 6:6

Giving and receiving are reciprocal. The principle of giving-receiving and receiving-giving reflects Heaven's principle of abundance. Spirit never loses, as the more we give, the more we receive. We are all always giving and always receiving. We are always either *projecting or extending*. What do we give? What do we project or extend? When we speak or write, we give

our thoughts away. Is what I project (extend) a curse or a blessing? Ego projects, condemns, and curses. Spirit extends love and blesses. From the standpoint of the ego, the principle of receiving-giving and giving-receiving still works only if it works as *the more guilt we give away, the guiltier we feel, the more sense of separation we feel*. There are *two major errors* which the ego stumbles on in its attempt to give its judgment and projection to the world.

First, strictly speaking, conflict cannot be shared. No one wants to be the recipient of conflict. No one in their right mind wants to share a conflict or be conflicted. A conflicted teacher is a poor teacher and a poor learner. Healing comes in the resolution, the overcoming of conflict.

Secondly, whatever we give away comes back. All projections boomerang. The ego believes that it can get rid of something by projecting it outward. Giving, however, is how we keep something. Giving our judgments, we keep them. Giving our attack thoughts, we keep them and strengthen them. Notice how often in conversation our talk consists of confirming each other's prejudices. One person tells a story and the other one says, "You think that's bad. . ." If we think that someone is unworthy of God's love, we must be seeing through our own unworthiness. Our projections continue to haunt us in our ongoing experience of guilt. We cannot perpetuate an illusion about others without perpetuating illusions about ourselves. To get rid of guilt, we forgive, let go of the past, and let the present be what it is. We are at all times projecting -- throwing away and then trying to avoid the boomerang. Or, we are extending the natural flow of love that comes when we let God take the reigns, get out of the way and enjoy the ride. We receive with *love* or *fear* everything that comes our way.

True giving is creation.
*It extends the limitless to the unlimited,
eternity to timelessness and love unto itself.*
A Course in Miracles, W. 105, 4:2

Abundance

The principle of giving and receiving is clearly seen in loving. One Sunday afternoon, as a parish minister, I called on Amy Clark, an older lady, now deceased. She was going into the hospital the next day to have an operation. While I was there, she received a call from someone offering a ride to the hospital. She said that the previous day, two other people had made the same offer. This is an example of abundance. She had more than enough help. She was a lovely lady and people responded to her with love. She had no need to worry about transportation to get to the hospital.

I met an incredible lady working the cash register at Wal-Mart. She was bright and cheery, not only with a big hello, she also gave positive affirmations about my good taste in having chosen such wonderful treasures. She literally lit up the store. I had noticed her doing the same thing with the customer before me and knew she would do it with the one behind me as well. I made a comment about her cheery nature and a supervisor turned and said that another customer had just stopped and "written her up" for being such a plus to the store. She said she loved retail and had been doing it for 36 years. Her job was not glamorous, but she had an excess of love to share with everyone and she was one of the "richest" people that I've ever met.

Undoing the Getting Concept

*The first step in the reversal of undoing process
is the undoing of the getting concept.*

*Accordingly, the Holy Spirit's first lesson was
"To have, give all to all."*

A Course in Miracles T-6, V, 3:1

Giving is Receiving and the tautological reverse is also true -- Receiving is Giving. It does not occur to us that we are seeing ourselves backwards when we look into a mirror, unless we're wearing a name badge. Then it is clear, something is amiss, either everything is backward or our perception is backward. We have to reverse the view in order to see correctly. *As we give, so do we receive.* To the ego, this idea does not make sense. For the ego, if you give something away, you don't have it anymore and if you want something you get it, you take it, you make it yours. Possession is 99% of the law. We live in a *go for it* society. So is the view of every tyrant that ever lived.

Giving/Receiving -- Lending/Repaying

*But love your enemies, do good and lend,
expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great,
and you will be son of the Most High;*

Luke 6: 35

The Catholic Church took this verse literally, meaning one should never collect interest on loans. It is not always necessary to collect interest on loans. Parents often lend money to children without interest. Churches and philanthropic organizations do the same. It is good to lend expecting nothing in return. You cannot, however, survive this way if you are in the banking business. If credit card companies lent money expecting nothing in return, there would soon be no credit cards.

As the Church took this verse literally, Christians were not able to be bankers. Bankers, however, were necessary as merchants had to borrow money and no one was going to lend money without interest. As Jews and Muslims were forbidden to own land or to join guilds and restricted to "undesirable" professions, they were *encouraged* to become money lenders. Then, as they prospered, they were berated as usurers. It is important to give, expecting nothing in return, but lending is also a means of sharing in extension and abundance. Banks earn a living by lending just as other businesses make a living by selling. We make money by lending our money to banks and earning interest on our savings. It is a complete circle ---- giving, we receive ---- receiving, we are able to give.

Spending – Giving and Blessing

Practice freely giving. Give people what they need. Give children good advice. Helping them to grow, we grow. Developing a talent, we grow. Making a garden grow, we grow. For the first two years after I started *Miracles* magazine, I put the address labels on each issue myself. As I

passed my hand over each name and looked at the label, I blessed that individual. It was a good spiritual discipline and I was rewarded by the experience.

*If paying is associated with giving it cannot be perceived as loss,
and the reciprocal relationship of giving
and receiving will be recognized.*

A Course in Miracles, T- 9. II. 10:3

When we give money to anyone, we are helping to pay for education, shelter, entertainment, etc. It feels good to tip the waitress or cab driver. (Suggestion: over-tip breakfast waiters and waitresses.) A beggar on the street is doing his job. He is a beggar. Our job is to help him. Giving to anyone at any time is a *holy* act, when we approach it as holy. *Where* we give or how much we give is less important than *how*. Give God what is God's and Caesar what is Caesar's. Be glad for the streets, highways, fire departments, teachers and social service agencies. When we pay our phone bills, we are not just paying for electronic equipment; we are helping other folks have food, clothing and shelter. The same is true when we pay any bill. Bless your bills as you pay them, write "Thank You!" on your check and happily send it their way.

As long as the ego rules, there will be poverty on earth. Poverty and prosperity have more to do with attitude and how we align ourselves with God than with how much money we have. We become fearful, poor, and penitent when we do not follow our destiny and then seek to realign ourselves with God through penitence. As we become rich toward God, it follows that we cannot but do good and manifest even greater joy and happiness for ourselves and others.

Jesus did not call upon his followers to be poor and penitent. He never said it was more blessed to be poor than prosperous. He did say that the poor will always be with us. While the meek may inherit the earth, it is helpful to remember that gentleness is a state of mind. What Jesus offers is an abundant life -- whether we have any money or not. The *Course* says that our experience here in this world can become a treasure house as rich and limitless as Heaven itself, for no instant passes here in which our brother's holiness cannot be seen.

Jesus' first concern in both the New Testament and the *Course* is to turn our attention toward God -- to *first*, be rich toward God, realizing that we must then be rich in all other ways. When we begin to take Jesus seriously, *at his word*, we inevitably get in touch with our individual destinies and discover our natural inheritance, which is nothing less than the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus never worried about money. If we lived our lives in accordance with the will of God, neither would we worry about money. Jesus put God first and realized while still here in this world the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven. He asks nothing less for the rest of us.

*What I gave, I have,
What I spent, I had
What I left, I lost
by not giving it.*

Epitaph from the Grave of Christopher Chapman
Westminster Abbey 1680

Peace, *Jon*

