

Banking On the Kingdom

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[0:00] Thanks Stuart. Folks, great to see you this morning. If you have a Bible, then please keep it open. If you don't have a Bible, then please use your phone or grab one in the pews round about. You're going to need that passage open in front of you.

If nothing else, so that you can test what I'm saying, hopefully, is what the text is saying, which is the most important thing. Always the clue to preaching is let the text do the talking. So please have that passage open in front of you.

And because many of us are probably, I'd imagine, certainly if your home is in Scotland, you're just back from holiday. Let me give you a quote from Radio 2 DJ Ramesh Ranganathan, explaining in a slightly comical form what a holiday always does to him.

And see if this resonates. He says this, that's exactly what a holiday is. If you're going to have an existential crisis about why exactly it is we feel the need to get on the property ladder, have children, burden ourselves with debt, and work ourselves to the bone until we're 65 or dead. All because we need to maintain an illusion of purpose. You might as well have it somewhere sunny. You know, I love the honesty in that. That's why I love comedians so often, is they say the things that people are thinking but just don't want to say.

[1:21] Friends, I wonder if you've ever had one of those moments where life has thrown you a time out. And you stop and you think to yourself, hang on a minute. What's it all for?

That space, that what is it all for space, that's exactly where Jesus wants to take our hand and take us today. As we come to this passage. Here's what we're going to see.

Is that Jesus is going to get us to think about the things that we give ourselves to. And the way that we view and use, not exclusively but probably primarily here, our money and possessions.

And he's going to get us to think about the things that we do and the things that we invest in. And the things that we give ourselves to and the things that we hope for. And then he's going to show us a much better way.

But here's what we need to appreciate. Remember, we thought about this as we've journeyed through this series in Matthew. Maybe particularly in the Sermon on the Mount a little bit between chapters 5 and 7.

[2:24] This is all about the beating heart of kingdom people. I've kind of been saying that every time we meet. This is the beating heart of kingdom people. So this is not how do we perform in order to get God as our father.

This is how we live now that we've been welcomed into the relationship where we have God as our father. Right? So this is how kingdom people live.

And it's so important that we see that. We thought last week about the kind of last few sections in chapter 6. How if it were a heat map, the word father is coming up a lot there. In other words, Jesus is saying this is the motivation for everything that you do.

And it's worth pausing and reflecting on that wonderful privilege. You know, came to 7 o'clock last night and watching TV with older two girls. And we're flicking through the channels and we see the voice.

Never watched the voice before. Before we're getting into it together and somebody's standing there and singing their heart out. And we're with the judges. Turn, turn, turn.

[3:31] Do you know what I mean? They've got to hit the button. They've got to turn. They've got to show I'm in. I like the sound of what you've got. And it struck me how often we can think about Christianity like that.

Like we have to perform. That we have to, in the context, we have to fast. We have to pray. We have to give. We have to do all these things in order that God would turn and be favorable to us and

look upon us with love.

And friends, let me just underscore this point that that is not the gospel. If anything, the gospel says it's the other way around. Because we were dead in our transgressions and sins.

We wanted nothing to do with God. We loved our, as it were, we loved our sin. We loved the desires of the flesh. We had no interest in God. But the gospel is saying that God sent his son in order to save us from our rebellion and sin.

He died on the cross so that we could be forgiven. And as he ascends to heaven, he sends the spirit. And the spirit opens our hearts and eyes so that we understand who Jesus is.

[4:41] And so this God is not just about saving us from hell. This God is about transforming our desires so that we no longer want the stuff that we used to chase.

But what do we want instead? We want him. He is our greatest treasure. And that is the gospel. No wonder William Tyndale, when he translated the Bible from Latin into English, he called the gospel news that makes a man's heart glad and makes him sing, dance and leap for joy.

And they killed him for it. That is the gospel. That is what our faith is built upon. And so when Jesus chucks out that term father, that is not cheap sentimentalism.

That is the blood-bought privilege of every single person who has put their faith and trust in what Jesus has done for them through his death and resurrection. And so Jesus says, your father, knowing God as your father, is right at the heart of kingdom-minded people who have been turned from sin, saved by Christ, and loving our father in the power of the spirit.

Now, we've entered a new section in the Sermon on the Mount. Let me show you how this works. Jesus changes the angle as we hit this section. Okay? See, if you scan your eye over the rest of chapter 6 and the first bit of chapter 7, you will see that repeated phrase that's in yellow on the screen.

[6:23] Do not. Do you see it? So track with me. Do not. This is our passage today. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth. Verse 25, do not worry.

Verse 1 of chapter 7, do not judge. And in verse 6 of chapter 7, do not throw your pearls before swine. Now, we're going to get to each of these over the next few weeks.

But what's interesting is that Jesus talks in the negative. Yeah? Talks in the negative. And we've got to ask ourselves, why? Here's my best shot.

Friends, if you've ever played Mario Kart. And you know this game where you're whizzing around the track and all of a sudden you hit the banana skin.

And the banana skin sends you off course. Yeah? And you kind of have to get yourselves back to the center. Sends you off course. I genuinely cannot look at a banana now without thinking about it.

[7:26] But when you think about that, that's what Jesus is doing here. This is what he's doing with these do nots. He knows that these are things that disciples will encounter in their lives that might well cause them to trip up.

And stumble and fall and be totally thrown off track. And so here's the first banana, if you like. It is money and possessions.

Remember, Jesus is after our wholehearted devotion. We have a God who is jealous. That means he is not jealous of things. That's what we do. Our God is jealous for us, for his people.

He wants all of us. Jesus is about wholehearted devotion. And that's why he talks about these things. So come with me to this passage and see that as well as being the perfect saviour, it also turns out that Jesus is also a brilliant financial advisor.

Do you have it there? And as it were, he invites us into his office in this passage. And he says, take a seat. And let me ask you three questions to search your heart. Now, number one is way longer than two and three, in case you're panicking.

[8:38] But it really is because it flows. The other two flow from number one. But here's number one. This is verses 19 to 21. Jesus would ask us firstly, what are you banking on? And Jesus compares two types of treasure.

And as it turns out, when you read it here, I love this. Jesus is hugely security conscious. I don't know about you, but I opt for the Fort Knox approach to security in our house.

Alarm, cameras, patio door lock. You like me? But Jesus would say, it doesn't matter. You can do everything that you like. But you need to see how precarious it all is.

Right? And see the images that he uses in this text, which are not only timeless, but they're absolutely genius. Come and look at that. Come and look at it here. If your treasure is the things

that are here, Jesus says that is open to moths and vermin.

I remember once when Alex and I, we went to Malawi for five months before we started at Brunnsfield. I remember hanging up my suits from my law days, stored them at her mum and dad's house, coming back five months later, trying on the suit because we were going for a wedding, and thinking to myself, it's quite breezy down there.

[10:01] Yeah? And I look down and I've got a hole in the place, the one place where you don't want a hole. Right? I don't know if you knew this, but I found out recently that moths' clothing of choice is cashmere.

Did you know that? They don't go for the cheap stuff. They go for the expensive stuff. It's almost as if God has made them that way to teach us this lesson. But do you see moths and mice?

What is the thing? If you think a bit more about this image, there's a little bit more here for us. Moths and mice, what is it about them? I take it as that they are quite subtle. Right?

You don't see a moth straight off. It takes you a while to be able to see it. Same with a mouse. Have you ever tried to catch a mouse? It's subtle. It's unseen. And couple that with what Jesus says here when he throws in that phrase, thieves.

So what is it about thieves? Is that they are unexpected. Isn't it? So I mean you wouldn't be a very good burglar if you told the people you were coming. If you slipped a note through the letterbox the day before.

[11:08] Just saying is there any chance you could not be in tomorrow evening at 9.13. It's not how thieves work. But see when you bring these images together. What is Jesus saying about storing up for ourselves treasures on earth?

Bank accounts, investments, partnership, mortgages, health. All of this stuff. You've got to see just how precarious it all is. And there are unseen threats that will come your way in life.

And there are undetectable things that are going to come your way in life. Curveballs are going to come your way in life. And I think the thing to see is that so much of those things are out with our control.

Has that not been our world in the last year? How the starting of a war on the other side of the world can send a stock market into panic.

And all of a sudden your investment that you thought was a sure thing. All of a sudden it loses half its value overnight. Or that doctor's appointment where that diagnosis was revealed to you.

[12:17] Or to someone you love that you just didn't see coming. And all of a sudden that means that you have to down tools or reduce your hours. Or all of a sudden you are now a full-time carer.

All of these things, friends. Unseen. Unexpected. And Jesus is saying if our treasure is here. Then do you see how precarious it all is.

But on the flip side. And he just uses the same metaphors to draw the comparison. See if your treasure is in heaven. Right? If that's what you're truly longing for.

Then you've got to know how secure your investment is. And do you notice how there is no small print there when Jesus uses that phrase? It's often the case, isn't it, with anything financial in our world.

Companies load the terms and conditions. With phrases in the small print like. Interest levels may go up and down. Subject to market volatility.

[13:19] Past performance is no guarantee of future results. It's amazing what you can find on Google. In other words, there's no way that we can 100% exclude the risk. But Jesus says, not like that when your treasure is in heaven.

He's telling us that when we invest what we have in kingdom things. Out of love for God. Then that investment is totally safe.

Now we're used to that idea, aren't we, in our culture of long-term financial planning. I mean how many of us here will have had kids or grandkids. And we'll have set up when they were born a savings account or a trust fund or something for our children.

But the thing is, they won't be able to touch that fund for 20, 40, 60 years. And I take it that's really good thinking. But do you see in this passage how Jesus is calling us as his people to be even more long-term in our thinking than that?

Invest yourself, says Jesus. Invest. And again, this is primarily about money, but it's bigger than money. The things that you give yourselves to invest with heaven in mind.

[14:39] You know, a good friend of mine, Archie, many of you will know him. He used to work here 18 months ago. Before, he went down to Peebles to be part of a church there, be the pastor of a church there.

And I remember when Archie was training here, kind of halfway through his training program, there was a financial gap. And we made it known to the church. And some really generous people stood up and said, we'll plug that financial gap.

And Archie was able to continue his training and finish here. And then he goes down to Peebles. And he was texting me this week about guys on his rugby team who are coming along and taking an interest in what's going on.

And he's got Rico Tice coming to do an evangelism training morning at church. And he's telling me about this fruit that they're seeing in Peebles. And yes, it's hard, but they're beginning to see fruit. And I suddenly thought to myself, can you imagine when we get to heaven and imagine meeting somebody from Peebles who became a Christian during Archie's time there.

And they come along and they look out the person who gave towards his training when he was here. Look out that person and just say, listen, you have got no idea. You've no idea what your praying did and your giving did and the fact that you cared did.

[15:53] You, because of your investment, you were part of me coming to faith. And I think that's what Jesus has in mind here, friends. We might not see the fruit of our investment until we get to glory, but it is never wasted.

Because our investments, it's true, isn't it? What we give ourselves to are telling a silent story. They are telling a story about what we love. And what we value.

And what we think is going to work. And it's not about having money per se. Right? It's the love of money which Jesus calls people out on.

Because you can have lots of money and not love it. Right? I know so many people all over the world, actually, particularly in the UK, who learn tons of money.

But just give it away to Christian gospel things. Right? It's not having money. It's the love of money. And it's also true that you can have little money and love it.

[16:56] Chase it. Dream about it. Want it. And Jesus would say, what do you have? What have I given to you? Right?

And some of us will be able to do this on a big scale. Right? God has entrusted us with lots of money and possessions. And what a wonderful thing to be able to have that.

To be able to use for his glory. Right? But let me just say that this doesn't need to be dramatic.

There are so many little ways that we can invest in his kingdom through our money and time.

So many little ways. And I hope that there's an encouragement for some of us here who are maybe weary in this. Yeah? Just tired thinking, is it all worth it?

I mean, emotionally investing yourself in that friendship. Giving your time to care for somebody. Giving to the church. Giving up your time to go to growth group.

[17:55] And you're thinking, is it worth it? I wonder if that's exactly where the disciples are at. Because remember in the immediate context, Jesus has just talked about giving, praying, and fasting.

And all of those things he wants us to do in secret. One of the disciples are asking, is this worth it? Underscore the fact that Jesus is saying here.

That when we invest in his kingdom, friends, one day our Father will reward us. Jesus wants us to be certain of the fact that when we make kingdom decisions like that, with what we have.

Friends, we have sent it on ahead. And it's totally secure. And all of that takes us to the second question that Jesus would ask us.

And these other two are really shorter. So, in case you're panicking. It's just verse 22 and 23. It would just be, what are you letting in? Because he moves from talking about two types of treasure to talking about two types of I.

[18:59] If you've ever watched one of those home makeover shows on TV, you'll know how the experts always tell us that letting in as much natural light as possible to your home can totally transform your space.

You know that kind of stuff? You know the house right opposite us on the other side of the street for weeks has had scaffolding up because they're ripping off the roof and putting in two massive skylights there.

We kind of get this kind of thing. And that's what Jesus has in mind here when he talks about the I being the lamp of the body. It's an idiom that we might not get, but that's exactly what he's talking about.

What are you letting in? What are you letting in? Right? And we talk on our phones, don't we, about doom scrolling. All of a sudden you look at your watch and think, goodness, there's 40 minutes gone.

Where on earth is that gone? Question, when you doom scroll, do you feel better or worse? Right? The clue's kind of in the name. We don't call it joy scrolling, do we? We're used to this idea of what we let in influencing how we behave.

[20:04] We're kidding ourselves if we think it doesn't. What are we putting into our bodies? What are we putting in front of our eyes? And Jesus is saying, see this investing in kingdom, think kingdom mindset.

If you put that in front of your eyes, if you fill your eyes with the beauties of God and the glories of the kingdom, if you put that in front of your eyes, and if you convince yourself by the Spirit that we're thinking long term with what we have, you put that in front of your eyes, it's going to totally transform everything else.

For good, this treasure in heaven mindset, embrace it. And what will it do? It will turn you outwards. And it's why some of your Bibles there, if you've got an NIV, I'm not sure it'll be the ESV, but you might have a footnote there that says generous.

In other words, like a submarine coming to the surface, your periscope will be up looking for ways that you can bless people and serve God with what he's given you. Right?

You'll be outward. But see, if you close that skylight and make treasure on earth your aim, then it will turn you inward.

[21:23] And again, do you see the footnote there, if you've got one? Stingy. Just want more and more.

And be self-serving with what we have. You know that famous quote from John Rockefeller, America's first ever billionaire, once asked, how much money does it take to make a man happy? To which he replied, just one more dollar. One more bedroom on the house. One more promotion at the job. One more holiday in the calendar.

Friends, even when we chase these things, possessions and security, it's like drinking salt water. It just leaves us thirsty and never, ever being quenched.

And we become like Gollum with our stuff, don't we? It is mine. And all of that takes us to question three, which is really just Jesus trying to land the haymaker.

[22:22] Right? He's going for the final punch. He moves to getting us off the fence. To helping us think about decision time. And so the question just comes, who are you living for?

And Jesus talks about two types of master. Two types of treasure. Two types of I. Two types of master. And when you dance with his language here, do you see how categorical he is?

When he says you cannot. Do you see it? You cannot serve both God and money. You cannot have two masters. Jesus is talking here about an impossibility.

But listen, maybe you're here and you hear that and you think, do you know what? See that whole serve two masters thing? And I guess this is the gig economy, isn't it? Listen, I've got two part-time jobs.

Right? I've got my main job. I've got a wee side hustle on the go. You know, Jesus, honestly, the first thing I've got on my CV is that I'm really good at multitasking. But we need to appreciate that Jesus' listeners know fine well in this first century that a slave cannot have two masters.

[23:37] Right? Just a whole economy based on that whole premise. Slave cannot have two masters. And Jesus is saying, at the end of the day, who's going to call the shots?

And I've got, my dad's got a wee parsinterrier. I'm not my dad, but they've got a little parsinterrier. My dad takes it walking so often, takes it up the moors. I've gone for walks with him and heard him just shout from miles away and the dog just comes galloping towards him.

You ever done that with your dog? But here's the scenario. Imagine you're in a park. And you take your dog for a walk. And all of a sudden, there's another person at the other side of the park who somehow knows your dog's name.

And the two of you, the dog's in the middle. And the two of you are shouting at the dog, come here, come here. Heel boy, heel boy, come here, come here. Question, who's the dog going to run to? It's

going to run to its owner, isn't it?

And that's the kind of thing that Jesus has in mind here. At some point, God and money are both going to shout at you for your devotion.

[24:43] At some point in your life, friends, that will happen if it's not already happened. And do you know what? You're going to have to work out which voice you're going to go to because you cannot go to both. That's what Jesus is saying here.

Who are you going to run to? Dear friends, can I just say so many of us, because this is the start of a new term. I beg of you to get your head around what Jesus is saying of you here.

Because some of you are at particular points in your careers, points in your life. See, if you decide now who is your owner, who's going to call the shots, it will save yourself so much heartache down the line.

Before the decision is thrown in front of you and what to borrow on your mortgage. And you think to yourself, see if we gave less to the church, we could get another bedroom.

We could go into right move and go from three bed to four beds. We could do that if we cut on our savings. Cut on what we give to the church. We could get our kids into that school catchment area and they could do really, really well. Before that's thrown in front of you.

[25:46] Before the promotion is dangled like a carrot in front of you. That will see your earnings skyrocket. But it will mean a move to another part of the world. And you think to yourself, listen, we'll deal with the church thing when we get there.

Friends, Jesus loves us enough to say, decide if you're going to serve God or you're going to serve money. When they both call, who are you going to run to?

And he leaves it on that note as if to say, decide today who you are going to serve. And if you know your Bible story, you know that question, decide today, is not new with Jesus.

It's the one that Joshua asked God's people. It's the one that Moses asked God's people. It's the one that God asked Adam and Eve right at the beginning of the Bible story. Choose this day who you are going to serve.

And so Jesus, friends, as we bring this to a close, is getting us, so renewing our minds because he loves us by his spirit. He wants us to have that first thought of think kingdom.

[26:56] Think kingdom. You know, just as we close, for two of my university summers, I worked as a teller at the Clydesdale Bank.

If you're a certain generation, you'll think, I've never heard of Clydesdale Bank. Clydesdale Bank was bought by National Australia. National Australia was bought by Virgin Bank.

So, Virgin Bank, if you're looking for that. Worked at the bank for a couple of summers. One in Glasgow City Centre, one in Aberdeen City Centre. Went from a training the week before I started. And they train you when you're sitting at the front to ask two questions of every single customer that comes your way.

Ready for these? Question one. How would you like your cash? Have you been asked that before? And I was always struck me as a strange question. Always waiting for a cheeky Ouija to come along and say, how would I like my cash real, please?

But it never happened. How would you like your cash? Question number one. Once you got through that, and particularly if you looked at their account and you could see there were some serious numbers, digits in their account for money, you would hit them with the second question.

[28:03] And the second question was, would you be interested in speaking to one of our financial advisors? In other words, what you have, we want you to be investing it here.

And friends, that's exactly what Jesus is calling us to hear. To invest the things that he has given to us, which, again, playing Monopoly with the kids yesterday.

Let's be honest, we have our fun, we have our fun. And at the end of the day, it all goes back in the box. What you have now, what he has given us now, invest it in his kingdom. It's almost like he's giving us a map, having marked heaven on it for us.

And he's saying to us, X marks the spot. Where are you investing your money, your possessions, what we have, how are we doing?

Friends, feel the challenge of what Jesus is saying here. We need to feel it. But also feel the comfort. And if ever there's an excuse to play this wonderful quote from Jim Elliot, now is the time.

[29:11] Jim Elliot, wonderful man of God, missionary. This line, friends, I think it was one of the most transformative in my life. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he

cannot lose.

Amazing quote, right? Let me pray. Father, we think of the words of the psalmist who would say, who on earth do I have beside you?

And what on heaven would I want apart from you? And Lord, we pray, Lord, we recognize that this is fundamentally a heart issue. Lord, we pray that you would so work in our hearts that we love Jesus.

Fascinated by him, captivated by him, our affections for him, Lord, that you would so capture our hearts. Lord, that the things that you have given us, that we would so used to ask you, where do you fit into our lives?

But thank you that you invite us to see that the way more adventurous and exciting question is to think about what you are doing in the world. And how by grace you have invited us into what you are doing in the world.

[30:51] And to use what we have as small as we maybe think it is in that wonderful purpose.

Father, thank you that you are a God who loves us and is in the business of transforming lives.

Just, Lord, as this resonates, as the word goes forth, thank you that it will accomplish your purposes. And so, Lord, I pray that as we finish our time together and as we have tea and coffee together and, Lord, as we interact and speak into each other's lives, Lord, that you would be encouraging us this morning, being at work in our hearts, we pray.

All for Jesus' glory. Amen. Amen. Amen.