

# *The Model from God*

## **Money Models for Believers:**

Luke 16:10-15

January 4, 2004

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During Christmas break, grandmother babysat little Bobby. Walking through a park after a fresh snowfall, Grandma remarked, “Doesn’t this look like an artist painted it? Did you know God painted this for you?” “Yup,” said Bobby, “and he did it left-handed.” Grandma was confused. She asked, “What makes you say God did this left-handed?” “Sunday School!” answered Bobby. “They told you God makes things with his left hand?” Grandma asked. “No,” Billy replied, “but Teacher said that Jesus sits on God’s right hand.”

Children do not have a monopoly on misconceptions about God. We adults can be just as misguided. One misconception is that God is neutral or even negative about wealth. (I’ve put down the screen because I want you to) Read this passage on money along with me:

*If you fully obey the LORD your God by keeping all the commands I am giving you today, the LORD your God will exalt you above all the nations of the world. You will experience all these blessings if you obey the LORD your God: You will be blessed in your towns and in the country. You will be blessed with many children and productive fields. You will be blessed with fertile herds and flocks. You will be blessed with baskets overflowing with fruit, and with kneading bowls filled with bread. You will be blessed wherever you go, both in coming and in going. The LORD will conquer your enemies when they attack you. They will attack you from one direction, but they will scatter from you in seven! The LORD will bless everything you do and will fill your storehouses with grain. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. If you obey the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways, the LORD will establish you as his holy people as he solemnly promised to do. Then all the nations of the world will see that you are a people claimed by the LORD, and they will stand in awe of you. The LORD will give you an abundance of good things in the land he swore to give your ancestors — many children, numerous livestock, and abundant crops. The LORD will send rain at the proper time from his rich treasury in the heavens to bless all the work you do. You will lend*

***to many nations, but you will never need to borrow from them. If you listen to these commands of the LORD your God and carefully obey them, the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you will always have the upper hand. You must not turn away from any of the commands I am giving you today to follow after other gods and worship them.*** (Deuteronomy 28:1-14, NLT)

Anyone who thinks God is neutral or negative about money hasn't read these verses from Deuteronomy 28. Simply put, wealth is a blessing, and God desires to bless. That is why this promise is given. God desires to honor and lavishly bless his deserving children. That does not mean that his deserving children are rich and his undeserving children are poor. Many righteous are poor and many wicked are rich. Why is that? If all wealth comes from God, why is there such disparity... even unfairness?

First, understand that wealth does not come by chance. There is not a great lottery in the sky and by chance you pull a lucky ticket. Wealth actually comes from God. David declared:

***Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O LORD, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Riches and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and it is at your discretion that people are made great and given strength.*** (1 Chronicles 29:11-12, NLT)

David made these comments as he reflected how he, a lowly shepherd, was protected and then exalted by God to become a prosperous king. David understood that in no way was he self-made. But if he was not self-made, and if he was not just lucky, then what was he? And what does that mean for you and me?

David wasn't just passive. He wasn't just lucky. He pursued a path that brought blessing. With God's promises of wealth to Israel were conditions for blessing. One reason David was blessed is that he paid attention to those conditions. But there is a second reason. It has something to do with how blessings come to us. Thomas Ken in 1674 penned a famous Doxology. It goes: "*Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*" Ken poetically noted that

**blessings come from God and flow to people.** They have movement. They can move from person to person, from generation to generation and from leader to followers. In the promise of Deuteronomy blessings flow to persons because of their participation in a nation that is obedient to God. There are literally hundreds of blessings you and I share today because of our presence in America. We have opportunities, protections and privileges that most of God's children in this world will never see. Most of these blessings have come not because of our righteous behavior, but because we live here in this country and in this community in relationship with this people. They flow to us because we are blessed right now, in this way, at this point in history, as a nation and as a community.

A second flow of blessings come from parent to children. In the Ten Commandments we read some fine print. Listen.

*Do not make idols... I do not leave unpunished the sins of those who hate me, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations. But I lavish my love on those who love me and obey my commands, even for a thousand generations.* (Exodus 20:4-6, NLT)

The Bible says that we suffer deficits or curses because of our parents' and our ancestors' sins (to the third and fourth generation). However, God pours blessings through them much longer, "even for a thousand generations." Indeed, we are called to break the curses and become instruments of God's blessing for our neighbors, descendants and all nations.

Deuteronomy 28 has 14 verses of blessings and 53 verses of curses. Nearly four times more material is devoted to curses than blessings. God didn't want his children to be ignorant of curses. He wanted them to know when they are dealing with curses, to identify them and not tolerate them. He wanted his children to seek blessing. Poverty is not a blessing. Debt is not a blessing. Hunger is not a blessing. Sickness is not a blessing. Slavery is not a blessing. God is not neutral about these things. They are curses to be broken, not blessings to be received. God

wanted us to know that much of our lot is tied with our people and our families. We are not islands. We need to seek more than selfish gain. We need to identify curses and seek the blessing of our people.

Before David was exalted and blessed as king, he was a blessing. He was still a shepherd boy when he took on Goliath. David was exalted to bless others. The blessing is to flow.

Great news! Blessings also flow from God directly through Christ and his Body the Church. Position yourself to embrace those blessings. God will birth blessings in your life as you act on his word. Over the next three weeks, we will look at people from the Bible who experience financial blessing. We will consider models for dealing with money.

Today, however, we are considering how blessings flow and why they flow. In Luke 16, Jesus painted pictures that together constitute a model from God. He first spoke of a dishonest, shrewd manager that was going to be audited and fired. Quickly, the manager made friends with the owner's debtors by giving them large discounts. He knew they would take care of him. Jesus said that you and I need to do that with God. We need to become a friend of God with our management of his resources. Secondly, Jesus challenged his disciples that they must become trustworthy managers to be entrusted with material blessings. He told them to be faithful with even a little. Then they'd be entrusted with more. Finally, he told the story of a beggar and a rich man that neglected him. After death, the beggar was blessed and the rich man suffered torment. The rich man did not remember that his blessings were to flow through him to others.

God desires to bless you and me monetarily. That is clear. We must learn to faithfully manage his blessings. As we grow both in faithfulness and skill, and as we seek from him the blessing of our people and our poor, money becomes a gift that heals and not a god that kills. Let us commit ourselves to grow as God's managers and Christ's ambassadors.