

This is the second week in a sermon series called *In God We Tru\$t*
And you'll recognize that phrase from our currency
And you know, it didn't strike me until this week
What an interesting thing it is that we have this phrase on our money

It was first added to coins during the Civil War when a pastor
Wrote to the secretary of the treasury in 1861 and admonished him
To include some language acknowledging almighty God
On our coins, lest others think us to be a heathen nation (his words)
Two years later, it was on our coins
It was added to our paper currency & adapted as our national motto in 1957

Now, what intrigues me so much about "In God We Trust"
Being printed on our money
Is that money tends to be the *one thing* other than God
That most of us, most of the time are most tempted to put our trust in.

Having *In God We Trust* on our money is almost logically incoherent
It's like singing Boomer Sooner at an OSU home game [OU/OSU image]
Or going to Wrigley Field and seeing "Go Cardinals" on the marquee [image]
Or getting the award for being "Most Humble" [image]

It's strange to have *In God We Trust* on our currency b/c
Money is the one thing other than God that most of us, most of the time
Are most tempted to put our trust in.

In the OT, the people of Israel were tempted to trust in idols/false gods
Truthfully, I'm not too concerned about anyone here worshipping Baal
I'm not worried anyone is going to worship the gods of the Philistines
But am I concerned about the affect of money on my heart & yours?
Absolutely.

Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount:

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. (Matthew 6:24)

Jesus said: OK—God, money. Pick ONE. There's no gray area. You have to be all in.

Another time Jesus told a story about a farmer who went out to sow his seeds
Some fell on the path (where birds snatched it)
Some fell on rocky soil (where it quickly sprouted & then withered in heat)
Some fell among thorns (where the thorns choked out any growth)
And some fell on good soil where it put down deep roots & produced fruits

Jesus explained that in his parable
The seed that fell among the thorns
Is the person who hears the gospel and is eager to respond
But the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it out

Jesus said money was the #1 rival to God for our loyalty and trust
And \$ had the potential to choke out one's response to the gospel
And yet, unless we hide out in a cave for the rest of our lives
We are inevitably all going to earn, spend and decide how to manage money
So, why is money—which is unavoidable in nearly any society
Such a hot-button issue for Jesus?

He knew:

People have a tendency to love money and desire money and TRUST money
B/C money is like magic in the ways it can practically
Open doors to opportunities and experiences and relationships and assets
There are many things that having money DOES help with.
Quote: "I've been poor and I've been rich. Being rich is better."
Money is, in my ways, a form of power (can be used for good or for evil)

But our obsession w/money (whether you have it or not) can blind us
To our spiritual poverty apart from relationship w/God revealed in JX
Story again and again of athletes, celebrities, lottery winners, regular folks
Who get what they always wanted (boatloads of \$)
Only to find that it isn't all it's cracked up to be

I heard from someone in recent weeks who is off the charts wealthy
But confessed all they really wanted was to mend a broken relationship

No amount of \$ can buy you out of spiritual/relational/emotional poverty
So, b/c \$ was such a BIG issue to Jesus
And b/c \$ can be such a fierce rival for our allegiance
We need to talk about \$

To guide our conversation, open your Bible to the book of 1 Timothy 6 (p. 1850):
Timothy (the one after whom the book is named) was a young pastor
Leading an affluent church in a bustling port city called Ephesus
And his spiritual father, his mentor, Paul wrote this letter to him
To bolster his leadership & give coaching on how to handle issues in church

One of those issues was a group of people who loved stirring up controversy
They loved to speculate/argue/make people question sound doctrine
They would prey on the wealthier members of the congregation
And pose as a kind of spiritual guru or teacher
And teach things that were contrary to the truth of gospel
And they were trying to make a living off of it.

Last week we read about these so-called gurus who
“Think that godliness is a means of financial gain.”
These men were ultimately serving and trusting in MONEY, not in God
On the outside they were spiritual/religious
But on the inside they were greedy & using the appearance of spirituality
As a way of covering up their first love (money)
It's like they were using God to get good financial Karma

Paul used the particular situation of group stirring up controversy in the church
To speak to the universal struggle of relating to money (diagnosing problem)
Against those who wanted to use godliness to make \$ gain (v.6):

But godliness with contentment IS great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Now, believe it or not, in spite of what we just read, Paul is not against BEING rich.
In fact, in our study next week, Paul has specific instructions
For the RIGHT way to be rich

But if your aspiration in life

If the thing that wakes you up in the morning is to get rich

If you love \$ to the point that acquiring it becomes your life's ambition

You're a fool! Loving money is a gateway to all kinds of grief/pain

In the words of Admiral Ackbar: "It's a trap!"

Then Paul shifts focus to his spiritual son: **1 Timothy 6:11-16 (Pew Bible p. 1850)**

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time— God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

This passage starts: "But you, man of God..."

This "*but you...*" is a powerful two-word summary of Christian ethics

Yes, there's a way people typically think/act regarding:

Money/sexuality/politics/entertainment/fill in a category

But YOU...

Our engagement in any/all of these issues is *supposed*

To look/sound/smell/feel *different* than people who don't know Jesus

This is what Jesus demonstrated in his Sermon on the Mount

You've heard it said (Yes, there's a dominating way people think about X)

BUT I SAY TO YOU... (the way of Jesus is at odds with the way of the world)

You've heard it said: "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy"

But I say to you: Love your enemies & pray for those who persecute you."

You've heard it said: "You have the right to do anything you want w/your body"
But I say to you: Your body is the temple of the HS, therefore honor God...

You've heard it said: "You can do whatever you want with your money..."
But I say: "Whoever has been entrusted w/much, much will be expected."

We could do this again and again with any number of topics:

You've heard it was said (here's the conventional wisdom on a topic)

But I say: Here's how the way of Jesus turns worldly wisdom on its head

The way of Jesus is *necessarily and by definition* at odds

With the prevailing logic and reason of our time

We're supposed to maintain what you could call a "prophetic edge."

We're always coming at things from a different angle than the world

Yeah, this is how so and so thinks about X, BUT YOU, man/woman of God...

I think many of us have sensed how emotionally tense things are in our country

After the election on Tuesday (some pleased/sad/not sure what to think)

But in moments like this where it's easy to get swept up in emotional rhetoric

We need to remember that our 1st allegiance is to a king & a kingdom

And regardless of who holds a political office, the values of the kingdom

Are *almost always* going to be at odds w/the political parties of our country

& our life as God's people is supposed to reflect the values of that kingdom

And unless we elect Jesus as president, we all know, there's work to be done

"BUT YOU... man of God, woman of God..."

Paul continues—in spite of how some people get swept up with obsession with \$

I want you to do 2 things: I want you to FLEE & I want you to PURSUE.

I want you to FLEE/get away/run like the wind

In the opposite direction of all who thinking getting rich is the key to life

Run away from that kind of thinking like it's the plague; it's poison

It's a gateway to all kinds of grief and pain and self-destruction

Folks who think that the chief value of life is securing our prosperity

Are deceived—a life all about \$ is not the deep, abiding/abundant life of X

I want you to FLEE from this;

But then, says Paul, there are some things you need to pursue/chase after...

He says, "Timothy, I want you to pursue:

Righteousness/godliness/faith/love/endurance/gentleness"

I want you to pursue things that *really* matter

I want you to pursue the values of the kingdom

I want your chief pursuit to be the things that GIVE life

Not things like money that—if you allow them to—will rob you of life

He says, "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called

When you made your good confession in the presence of witnesses."

I have to think Paul is talking about Timothy's baptism

"Timothy, I want you to live into your baptism."

In baptism you count yourself dead to sin and alive to Christ.

I want you to FLEE from the corruption of life acc. to the values of world

And I want you to PURSUE the kind of flourishing/abundant/holy life in X

Now, I want you to take your bulletin / journal / scrap of paper

And I want you to make two columns [FLEE / PURSUE]

When it comes to our relationship w/money

What behaviors/ways of thinking/values do we need to FLEE from?

What are those trains of thought you know are only getting you in trouble?

One of those for me—in the area of money—that I need to flee from

Is the comparison game (which is all about image)

Candidly, as a young person (many of you will relate)

You're getting started in life, you are eager to prove yourself

As you get married, start having kids, careers starting to get rolling

There's that strong compulsion to compete (house/car/vacations/clothing)

There's a fierce inner *pull* to be (OR LOOK) as successful as your peer

That struggle of "keeping up with the Joneses" is absolutely poisonous

It's antithetical to gratitude; & it turns friends into competitors; robs joy.

If we spend all our energy keeping up our outer life (appearances)

We won't have any energy left for the work of cultivating a rich *inner* life

What's something I need to FLEE? I need to flee from the comparison game.

Some of us need to flee from DEBT

Some of us need to flee from buying so much stuff (or WANTING so much)

With regard to the topic of money, what do you need to FLEE from? Write it.

And what are those things that we need to PURSUE?

It's easy to name the things that are wrong or askew in our relationship w/\$

But what are those RIGHT practices/mentalities/etc. we need to adopt?

For me, my parents & my mentors modeled tithing (first 10% goes to church)

Tithing is a great thing (if you don't tithe, working toward 10% is great goal)

But one of the things that Emily & I want to pursue is joyful/costly generosity

We want to get in the habit of giving to the point of squirming

When it comes to your finances, what are those things that you need to PURSUE?

What do you really value? What's your big WHY you need to chase after?

Think it over, write it down.

In the area of your finances, what is God calling you to chase after?

One of the best books I've read in the last yr. is by Andy Crouch - *Strong & Weak*

Andy argues in the book that a real life of flourishing requires

The right combination of authority (our ability to act/engage/do stuff)

And vulnerability – which he defines as “exposure to meaningful risk.”

Having HIGH authority and HIGH vulnerability (we're regularly taking risks)

Leads to FLOURISHING

God made us w/agency (ability to do stuff), but also w/vulnerability

We aren't invincible; this sermon is authority/vulnerability

I'm using my authority to preach, but there's V, it could fail, you could hate it

But there's so much joy in in that tension of taking on a challenge

LOW authority (nothing we can do) & HIGH vulnerability = SUFFERING (sick/dying)

LOW authority/LOW vulnerability = WITHDRAWING (great temptation of our day)

HIGH authority/LOW vulnerability = EXPLOITING/taking advantage/tyrants

As I think back on my life through the lens of authority/vulnerability

The great moments of my life—when I've felt most alive & most fulfilled

Have been those moments I've had ^ authority (pushed my gifts/abilities to limit)
But also ^ vulnerability (this could fail, I could bomb, it might not work)
Preaching, parenting (talk about authority and vulnerability)

When it comes to our finances, we all want ^ authority and ↓ vulnerability
We all want to have more money than we know what do with
But the sweet spot for our flourishing, for us to find real life is ^ A and ^ V
To take what we've been given (A), place it into hands of God (feels like ^ V)
Praying: All you've given me I now give back to you; do with it what you will.
Every dollar under my care I now place under yours.

And when we do that, when we give, when we surrender
It's sending a strong message to our soul
This is one less dollar that I'm going to serve/that I'm going to trust in
This is one less dollar I'm going to put my identity in or hide behind

And it's in that sweet spot of leveraging every ounce of our authority
To entrust ourselves to our creator
That we have the possibility of finding real life

When it comes to our money, it's not that God wants something FROM us
God doesn't *need* your money—he doesn't want something FROM you
But God does want something FOR YOU
And one of the things God wants for you is to experience the joy
Of unclenching your fists, entrusting yourself to his care
And finding out what it means to experience real abundant life

And what a beautiful and powerful thing it might be
IF everyone of us took on this mentality of openhandedness w/regard to \$
What might God do among us?
What wrongs might be righted?
What injustices might be brought to light?
What joy might we uncover on the other side of surrender?

Let's pray.