

Sermon Series: Sowing for the Future—the Art of God Giving” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN–7/27/2008

Title: “Investing the Lord’s Wealth for the Future”

Text: Genesis 41: 41-57

Intro.: *Illus.: Stumbling Over God’s Gifts*

Theme: When we see our lives in the redeemed purpose of God for us in Christ, we begin to take a different view of all that he entrusts to us and seek to carry out his comprehensible plan for its use in the world around us.

Re-calibrating our attitude towards what God entrusts to you

- Sometimes, we can allow envy and discontent to cloud our point of view
- 1. Joseph’s success – don’t some guys have all the *luck* (Genesis 41: 41-45)
 - a. He gets a “big” promotion (“*head*”-41, 44) but with it came more responsibility/headaches/bureaucracy
 - b. He gets the threads and the ride to match (42-43)
 - c. He gets the gal (*vs.45*) — but be careful to see the slippery slope – daughter of heathen priest
- 2. When we live in discontent with our present circumstance and wish for more, we miss the reason and the bigger purpose for why God may be giving us what we have (storms on horizon, impact on future generation)
- 3. *From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. Luke 12:48*
- Putting all of life’s possession, power, and prestige into perspective
- 1. Everything pales in comparison to our greatest treasure
 - a. *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ . . . I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. Phil 3: 7,10*
- 2. God’s has and always will give me His best
 - a. *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8:32*
- 3. God’s plan always has perfect timing and execution
 - a. **Ills.: Just in time delivery manufacturing**
 - b. God’s just in time delivery of Egypt, the then-known world, and the Messianic line
 - c. *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philip. 4:19*

Carefully consider the “stewardship” God is calling you to (Print Genesis 41: 46-52)

- Incorporating Solomon’s prayer into our lives
- 1. *“Two things I ask of you, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. Prov. 30: 7-9*
- Keep your spiritual head about you divinely-given stewardship (possessions, children, talents, ministry)
- 1. *Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 1 Cor. 4:1*
- 2. Joseph was pretty young for such a responsible job (*vs. 46*)
- 3. Joseph could have/probably was tempted by the “abundance” who would miss if taken for self/friends (*vs. 47-48*)
- 4. It is easy to become “unaccountable” with God’s abundant blessings (*vs. 49*)
 - a. **Ills.: French Investor caught in \$7 Billion Fraud**
 - b. *So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Cor 5: 9-10*

Being generous with God’s stuff when the need presents itself (Print Genesis 41: 53-57)

- Resisting the urge to be tight-fisted to assure our happiness and imitating the Father’s joy in overflowing generosity
- 1. *You shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. Deut. 15:7-8*
- 2. **Ills.: The Deception of the Happiness Culture**
- Focusing our eyes on the greater mission field rather than the present fear when times get tough
- 1. As in tough times like ours, it would have been easy for Joseph to become protectionist and locked out the world
- 2. He would have unwittingly condemned his own family and the future Messiah to certain death
- 3. When considering our gift to **Sowing the Seed**, think beyond today to the lives of your great-great-grandchildren
- 4. *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” Heb 13:5*

Stumbling Over God's Gifts

The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night. For all the ill that Satan can do, when God describes what keeps us from the banquet table of his love, it is a piece of land, a yoke of oxen, and a wife (Luke 14:18–20). The greatest adversary of love to God is not his enemies but his gifts. And the most deadly appetites are not for the poison of evil, but for the simple pleasures of earth. For when these replace an appetite for God himself, the idolatry is scarcely recognizable, and almost incurable. Jesus said some people hear the Word of God, and a desire for God is awakened in their hearts. But then “as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life” (Luke 8:14). In another place he said, he desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:19). “The pleasures of this life” and “the desires for other things”—these are not evil in themselves. These are not vices. These are gifts of God. They are your basic meat and potatoes and coffee and gardening and reading and decorating and traveling and investing and TV-watching and Internet-surfing and shopping and exercising and collecting and talking. And all of them can become deadly substitutes for God. **John Piper, A Hunger for God (Crossway, 1997), p.14&15**

French Investor Caught in \$7 Billion Fraud

Have you ever gotten yourself in big trouble—really, really big trouble? So big you can't even conceive of how much trouble you're in? That's what 31-year-old Jerome Kerviel is accused of. Jerome worked for a prestigious bank in France. He had worked his way up from the back room to being one of the men who did the bank's investing. In January 2008 he was caught allegedly committing investment fraud. In other words, he carried on bogus trades designed to make him money. Here is the amazing thing: he was dealing not just in millions, but in some \$7 billion! According to an article in *The Times*, at one point in the alleged scam, Kerviel had put his bank in a position where they would lose "the equivalent of about half of all the gold and currency reserves held by France. The sum also exceeded the entire value of the bank at which he worked." Imagine what it felt like when the market turned the wrong way, and he realized that it was only a matter of time until he would get caught. It was forgetting that he was accountable to his employer for his dealings on their behalf and imagining that he never would be caught. **"Bank's billions burnt in 10 days,"** www.business.timesonline.co.uk (1-27-08)

The Deception of the Happiness Culture

In *Dangers, Toils & Snares*, John Ortberg writes: When we take our children to the shrine of the Golden Arches, they always lust for the meal that comes with a cheap little prize, a combination christened, in a moment of marketing genius, the Happy Meal. You're not just buying fries, McNuggets, and a dinosaur stamp; you're buying happiness. Their advertisements have convinced my children they have a little McDonald-shaped vacuum in their souls: "Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in a happy meal." I try to buy off the kids sometimes. I tell them to order only the food and I'll give them a quarter to buy a little toy on their own. But the cry goes up, "I want a Happy Meal." All over the restaurant, people crane their necks to look at the tight-fisted, penny-pinching cheapskate of a parent who would deny a child the meal of great joy. The problem with the Happy Meal is that the happy wears off, and they need a new fix. No child discovers lasting happiness in just one: "Remember that Happy Meal? What great joy I found there!" Happy Meals bring happiness only to McDonalds. You ever wonder why Ronald McDonald wears that grin? Twenty billion Happy Meals, that's why. When you get older, you don't get any smarter; your happy meals just get more expensive. **John Ortberg, Dangers, Toils & Snares: Resisting the Hidden Temptations of Ministry (Multnomah, 1994), pp.99-100**

Genesis 41:41-57

⁴¹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." ⁴²Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. ⁴⁴Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt." ⁴⁵Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

⁴⁶Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. ⁴⁸Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. ⁴⁹Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure. ⁵⁰Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On. ⁵¹Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵²The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

⁵³The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. ⁵⁵When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you." ⁵⁶When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. ⁵⁷And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.