

Finding your treasure: “The purpose of this class to help us live according to the greater economy of grace that God has established through the giving of Jesus, and the Spirit. It will come ultimately through reflecting on the virtues and practices of generosity.” Fr. Bill Danaher

Walter Brueggemann: “We all have a hunger for certitude, and the problem is that the Gospel is not about certitude, it is about fidelity.”

- How can we be faithful in our relationships? With our bodies? With our minds?
- How can we be faithful with our money and possessions?

A Material Faith

“The Bible is relentlessly material in its focus and concern. It refuses to let its passion be siphoned off into things spiritual.... Everywhere the Bible is preoccupied with bodily existence.” --*Money and Possessions*, p. 11

A Material World

- 1. Creation faith is celebrative of the world as a world God has declared to be “very good.”**
- 2. The Bible articulates God as a bodily agent.**
- 3. The world as creation culminates, in Christian confession, in the Word that has become flesh in Jesus of Nazareth.**
- 4. The human person is a body that is breathed on, engaged and empowered by the gift of God’s spirit (*rûah*).**
- 5. The bodily reality of creation, the bodily characterization of God, the Word become flesh in Jesus of Nazareth, and the bodily reality of the human person means that the Bible is acutely concerned with the body politic.**
- 6. When the biblical tradition comes to think about the future (popularly, “life after death”), it does not speak about going to heaven to be with one’s loved ones. It speaks rather of “a new heaven and a new earth,” a new city, a new social reality.**

#3:

“The link from creation to incarnation assumes that Christian faith will be acutely focused on the bodily life of the world. Jesus’ several miracles of healing, feeding, and casting out demons consistently have as their outcome the restoration and rehabilitation of bodily life in the world, a gift given to bodily persons who have lost their capacity for a viable bodily life in society.” --*Money and Possessions*, p.11.

#4:

When you hide your face, they are dismayed;

when you take away their breath [rûah], they die
and return to their dust.

When you send forth your spirit [rûah], they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground. –Psalm 104:29–30

Living in a Material World

1. How does living in a good, material world affect your relationship with God?
 2. How does living in a good, material world affect your relationship with your neighbor?
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Themes in the Bible About Money and Possessions

Money and Possessions:

1. **are a gift from God.**
2. **are received as reward for obedience.**
3. **belong to God and are held in trust by human persons in community.**
4. **are sources of social injustice.**
5. **are to be shared in a neighborly way.**
6. **are seductions that lead to idolatry.**

#1: Money and possessions are a gift from God.

¹¹ Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. ¹² When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵ who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, ¹⁶ and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good.

¹⁷ Do not say to yourself, “My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.” ¹⁸ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as

he is doing today. ¹⁹If you do forget the LORD your God and follow other gods to serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.
--Deuteronomy 8.11-19

"The insistence that possessions are gifts and not achievements or accomplishments is a decisive check in biblical faith on any temptation to imagine self-sufficiency or autonomy. When the gift quality of possessions is forgotten, one can imagine that one has made the produce one's self."

-*Money and Possessions*, p.2

Thus says the Lord God:
I am against you,
Pharaoh king of Egypt,
the great dragon sprawling
in the midst of its channels,
saying, "My Nile is my own;
I made it for myself." --Ezekiel 29:3

#2: Money and possessions are received as reward for obedience.

¹If you will only obey the Lord your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth; ²all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the Lord your God:

³Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.

⁴Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your livestock, both the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock.

⁵Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

⁶Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

—Deuteronomy 28.1-6

#3: Money and possessions belong to God and are held in trust by human persons in community.

Jesus said, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." ¹⁶Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' ²⁰But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God." -- Luke 12.15-21

#4: Money and possessions are sources of social injustice.

Therefore because you trample on the poor
and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine. --Amos 5.11

“The practice of exploitative economics, culminating in ‘human bloodshed’ and ‘violence,’ finally will bring trouble. The creator God will not tolerate unjust management of money and possessions.... The prophetic tradition is uncompromising concerning the linkage between mismanagement, suffering, divine indignation, and eventual loss.” --*Money and Possessions*, p. 6

#5: Money and possessions are to be shared in a neighborly way.

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin? --Isaiah 58:6–7

#6: Money and possessions are seductions that lead to idolatry.

² Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar commanded that they bring in the vessels of gold and silver that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. ³ So they brought in the vessels of gold and silver that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. --Daniel 5.2-4

“The Bible attests that money and possessions are not inanimate objects. They are rather forces of desire that evoke lust and “love” in a way that compels devotion and eventually servitude. The Bible asserts that such commodities, notably silver and gold, are not innocent but are in fact addictive and compel loyalty that rivals loyalty to God.” --*Money and Possessions*, p. 8

Finding Your Treasure
Money and Possessions, Chapter 1: A Material Wealth
Manisha Dostert (Sep 24, 2017)

Which themes resonate with your faith and the way you see your possessions?