

Forging Our Future

Message about Finances and Stewardship Part 1

Thesis: If we are a people of his presence, then, our lives will reflect the values and priorities of the King and his kingdom regarding our finances and stewardship.

Text: *Proverbs 23:18 NIV: There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.*

Joshua 1:1–5 (NIV84): After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. 3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west. 5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

It is the Lord's presence that is our great promise, our great inheritance. God promised to be with us, to never leave us, nor to forsake us. The Lord has given us great promises, plans, purposes, and prophetic words. But God's most amazing gift is his presence with us. Calvary, we are a people of the Lord's presence. The Lord's presence is everything. If we get God, we get everything else.

So, we are forging our future with God, in God, and through God, and we are forging our future together as the community of his presence. *Forging our future* is done together-- with God and with each other.

Since God is spirit, believers experience God when the Lord allows them to become aware of his invisible presence. The Lord can reveal himself to our inner man. Or, God can manifest himself in our outer man.

In the OT: Throughout Scripture, God also makes himself known in other ways. For example, God appeared in human form to Abraham in Genesis 18. So, the God who cannot be seen has chosen ways to reveal himself.

The Glory of God is what God possesses in his own right, a visible extension of his nature, a "concrete" form of his divine presence. The heavens are a visible form of God's presence (Psalm 8; 19:1–6; 136:5), for they are his glory. The glory that appeared to Israel as devouring fire on Sinai (Exodus 29:43) filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34–38). By the manifestation of his glory, God

consecrated the tabernacle as the place of his presence. In Isaiah 6 the glory appears as the normal expression of the divine presence. In Ezekiel the glory is identical with God (Ezekiel 9:3–4). Throughout the OT, the glory of God is the transcendent God making his presence and nearness visible to his own.

In the **Holy Spirit** the transcendent God draws near to his people. The Spirit is the way God's presence becomes real among his people (Isaiah 63:11–14; Zechariah 7:12) and by whom God's gifts and anointings operate the people (2 Chronicles 15:1; 20:14; 24:20; Zechariah 4:6; 6:1–8). The Spirit was the presence and power of God with his people—God himself acting in accordance with his essential nature. Humans cannot be in the presence of God without the aid of God's Holy Spirit; to be deprived of the Holy Spirit is to be deprived of God's presence (Psalm 51:11). Without the Spirit, communion between God and humans is not possible.

In the NT: The clearest expression of God's presence is revealed. It is in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, that God is present among his own (John 1:14–18; 17:6, 26). Jesus' mission was to reveal God to humanity. Jesus revealed God through his whole life's work as well as through his words. His revelation of the name of God was expressed in his own name—Jesus ("The Lord Is Salvation"). And in the person of Jesus the function of the name of God found fulfillment. **Christ was the new temple (John 1:14; 2:21; Colossian 2:9). He was the reality of the tabernacling presence of God.**

But that was only a first installment of the unveiling of God's presence.

The church now constitutes the temple of God in the NT. The Living God dwells among us. Christianity is essentially the religion of the presence of God and of communion with God. The body of Christ, "the spiritual temple" (Ephesians 2:22), made of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5), is the residence of the presence of the glorious God.

And now, the individual Christian is also a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16). The Living God dwells in us (see John 14:23). (Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). In *Tyndale Bible dictionary* (pp. 1071–1072). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.)

So, we are forging our future with God, in God, and through God, and we are forging our future together as the community of his presence.

Forging Our Future

There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off (Proverbs 23:18).

Our God has a future and a hope for us (Jeremiah 29:11).

Forging our future is done together-- with God and with each other.

When the Lord talks about our future, he ties the present with the future. *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20b)*. What we do now matters for then. We live now by the Kingdom of God, by the rule and reign of Christ in our lives, and by anticipating the Kingdom that is coming. So, we live anticipatory lives: *“on earth [and in me] as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10)*.

There is continuity. The Lord has a glorious future for us: partnering with him in the present, in the millennium Kingdom of Christ, and in eternity.

What we do now matters for our present and our future in God. Individually and collectively, we are forging our futures right now.

In these next 2 sermons, I want to talk specifically about forging our future together in the areas of finances and stewardship. In the Scripture, the Lord talks a lot about money, stewardship, giving, tithing, offerings, and resources.

If we are a people of his presence, then, our lives will reflect the values and priorities of the King and his kingdom regarding our finances and stewardship. Consider Luke 12:13-34. Anyone who is a follower of Jesus and his kingdom message will learn to abandon the greed and anxiety of the world, and will live by the values and priorities of the King and his kingdom.

So, how are we stewarding our lives, our finances, our talents, our skills, our capacities, our potentiality?

Let's consider some of the values and priorities of the King and his kingdom regarding finances and stewardship.

1. **If we are faithful with little now, God will make us rulers over much.**
 - a. Key verse: *His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness (Matthew 25:21).*

- b. Context Matthew 25:14–30 NIV: *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. 19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ 21 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ 22 “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ 23 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ 24 “Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ 26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 28 “ ‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:14–30).*
- c. God honors those who express faith in the Lord, who step out and take risks.
- d. We are a people who learn how to be faithful with little so that we can be trusted with much.
2. **If we are faithful with money now, he will entrust us with true riches both now and then.**
- a. *Luke 16:1–12 NIV: Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. 2 So he called him in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your*

management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' 3 "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— 4 I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' 5 "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 " 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' 7 "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' " 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' 8 "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. 9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. 10 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? (Luke 16:1–12).

- b. Conversely, if we are unfaithful with money and stewardship now, why would the Lord entrust us with anything now or in his coming kingdom?
 - c. Yes, we pray for provision and for our daily bread. And, we pray for the true riches of the Kingdom of God: salvation, deliverance, healing, encouragement, spiritual gifts, character, forgiveness, baptism of the Holy Spirit, and fire, intimacy with Jesus, love, etc.
 - d. We are a people who learn how to use money righteously now so that we can be entrusted with the true riches of the kingdom of God both now and forever.
3. **Our motivation for willing surrender and servanthood now is because of hope.**
- a. *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 John 3:1–3).*
 - b. Our hope in the One who is coming again. Living in the awareness of Christ's return inspires us to align (purify) ourselves now.
4. **We can have confidence in what we entrust to God now and in the future.**
- a. *So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of*

anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day (2 Timothy 1:8–12).

- b. We can trust God with our **eternity**.
 - c. And, we can trust God in the **present**.
 - d. Our God is trustworthy and faithful. He has proved himself over and over again to us.
5. **If we are to lay up treasures in the presence of God (heaven), then, we get to practice doing that now, for we won't have a chance to do that after Jesus returns.**
- a. *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matthew 6:19–24).*
 - b. Our treasure is found in the presence of God. Our treasure and trust are not found in money.
 - c. *Luke 12:35–48 NIV: "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 37 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. 39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." 41 Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" 42 The Lord answered, "Who then is*

the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? 43 It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. 44 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 45 But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. 46 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. 47 "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. 48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked (Luke 12:35–48).

- d. We are a people who do everything with a vision of the finish in mind, using earthly resources for eternal good.

6. We are a generous people.

- a. *2 Corinthians 8:1–9 NIV: And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will [presence; community]. 6 So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7 But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. 8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:1–9).*
- b. Generosity is not based on the size of your bank account nor on the size of your gift. Generosity is based on the heart and sacrifice.
- c. Jesus watched the people giving at the temple. He affirmed the gift of the widow who gave generously and sacrificially.
 - i. *As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very*

small copper coins. 3 "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on" (Luke: 21:1-4).

- ii. The widow as an example of one who was rich toward God (Luke 12:21), who was not anxious about this life, but who sought first God's kingdom (Luke 12:22-31). She, like Jesus' other followers, was willing to sell everything (Luke 12:31-34) and leave everything (Luke 5:11, 28) in her love for God. (Stein, R. H. (1992). *Luke* (Vol. 24, p. 509). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

7. Giving is ministry, where we get in on the flow and economy of the Kingdom of God.

- a. *2 Corinthians 9:6-15 NIV: Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 *Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:6-15).**
- b. Russ Gressett shared at one of our recent elders' meetings:
 - i. When I look back on my life, and how God has dealt with me over time and developed me, I reflect back on a period of time when God taught me about giving. I was looking at it all wrong. Here is the main understanding God gave me. God taught me, "it's not you giving to me; it is me giving through you." Giving is a ministry. We give it lip service, rather than real application in our lives.

- ii. When I began to see that giving is ministry, I went from being a rote, mechanical giver, to someone who developed a relationship with God on what and when to give (2 Corinthians 9:11). It changed me forever. Our faith for God bringing provision for the church is no different than God giving me faith for God providing for our family. *Giving is ministry* is on a plaque in my office.
 - c. **Giving is ministry.** It is not about me giving to God. Rather, it is about God giving through me and empowering me to get in on what God is doing in, through, and around me.
8. **We need an eternal perspective: what we do now matters then.**
- a. *Matthew 6:19–34 NIV: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. 25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow [retirement, economies, financial collapse, etc.], for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:19–34).*
 - b. How do you store up treasures in the presence of God (heaven)? We invest with our time, talents, and treasures in partnership with God.

- c. So, ask yourself where you are investing your time, talents, and treasure: in the things of this world (short-term reward or pleasure), or in things that matter both now and for eternity.

Summary:

1. *There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off (Proverbs 23:18).*
2. God has a future for us, and our hope will not fail to manifest because of who God is.
3. If we are a people of his presence, then, our lives will reflect the values and priorities of the King and his kingdom regarding our finances and stewardship.
4. Let's commit to forge our future together with God and with one another.

Ministry Time:

1. **Let's take time to acknowledge the presence of the Lord with us** (Psalm 23:5; 46:1-11).
2. **Let's listen to *Your Presence is Heaven*** and meditate on what the Lord is doing in us (Darlene Zschech: *Revealing Jesus*).