



This week our 21st century discipleship series is about how to improve our integrity in relation to our money. The Bible affirms working hard, persevering in our duties and saving and providing for our families. This is more about recognising that social justice and social quality of life revolves around money, so we Christians need to think about how our money and our faith interact and ask ourselves, 'what is going on in our hearts?' **Read Matthew 6: 19 – 24.**

1. The Eye and the heart. Verses 22-23.

- Jesus is using mixed metaphors here: in Jesus' time a common metaphor for the heart was the eye. Also, the thinking was that the eye 'let the light into the body', so the eye became the body's lamp. Finally, the 'evil eye' or bad eye was a Jewish metaphor for an envious, grudging and greedy heart.
- Jesus is not talking about the quality of your vision, but about the state of your heart. Is it full of integrity: sound, whole, generous and dedicated only to God? Or is it mean, greedy and envious; compromised by competing loyalties?

Ponder: How do the evil eye and the good eye manifest themselves in 21st century society?

2. Money in Public Conversation in British culture.

- Sadly most of the talk is of 'fat cats', bankers, the banking crisis, Amazon, regulation and privatisation. The NHS, Brexit, profiteering, benefit fraud and tax evasion. Education funding, student loans and university fees.
- We need to be able to be distinctly Christian when involved in this sort of conversation:
 - Not mixing Christianity into politics as in the USA – that gets messy – but demonstrating that we are facing the same questions with a generous heart and a steadfast faith in the Person in Charge ie God.
 - We need to take a 'priestly' role: standing between the worried or angry friend and the perceived source of the problem. We must avoid engaging with the vitriol.

Ponder: How do we manage when conversations get political, negative, heated or all three?

3. How to think of our private money with Christian integrity. Matthew 6: 19-21; 24-27.

- Jesus warns us against the covetousness in the human heart which drives us to hoard material possessions.
- Then He teaches us to **TRUST GOD** to provide the basics we need for living, because He loves and cares for us.
- Somehow we seem to doubt Him and start to worry:
 - We know He'll provide food and shelter – but does he know the food I want to eat, the clothes I like to wear, the car I want to drive and the house I want to live in?
 - Perhaps we are not sure God really knows what I like. So I'd better take control of my finances...then my security....then of what I eat, drink and wear....in fact of everything about me'. It all leads to a critical character and a miserly disposition.
- The issue is really about **CONTENTMENT**: am I content with what God gives me?
- Instead of worrying, seek first the Kingdom of God – verses 31-34:
 - In the Lord's Prayer 'Thy Kingdom come' comes before 'give us our daily bread'.
 - **Proverbs 30: 8-9** asks for 'daily bread': **ENOUGH TO BE FAITHFUL**, not too much and not too little. Taking control ourselves risks falling into unrighteous behaviour – little lies/evasions to cover falsehoods etc.
- Ultimately, Jesus is concerned with our hearts because the root of our behaviour is in our hearts. He will always forgive if we come to Him confessing our faults and will give us His Spirit to create a new generosity in us
- **DON'T JUDGE OTHERS. Matthew 7: 1-5.**
 - It is easier to point to society with moral outrage than to see our own faults. It's easier to judge than be judged; but we will be judged in the same way as we judge others!
 - Integrity with money is all about our hearts: have I a generous, hospitable and giving heart?

Ponder: Why does it seem easier for people with very few 'worldly goods' to trust God?
Remember our envy, greed and covetousness were all paid for by Christ on the cross.
We have His Spirit within us - pray we will hear and obey when tempted to fail again.

Psalm 86: 11-12: Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will glorify your name for ever.