

Sermon Wesley Box Hill 28 September 2025

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES – Luke 16: 19-31

Greetings once again in the precious name of our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ.

Every day we make choices. Sometimes they are good choices. Other times they are poor choices.

The choices begin right at the start of the day. This morning, our church had its monthly men's breakfast. Men had the choice as to whether they would come or not.

If they came to the breakfast, they were faced with menu choices - to choose a healthy breakfast or a decadent breakfast of pancakes and cream. If the men didn't come to breakfast, they had the choice as to whether to stay in bed or to get up and do things.

Everyone here today had the choice of whether to come to church or not. All of you chose to come, but others chose differently. That is not to say that others did not have good reasons for not being here, but all of us had the choice.

As we continue through the day we continue to make choices. Some are more significant than others. However, all choices have consequences, some of which are positive and some negative consequences for us.

One of the choices constantly before us is how to use money. Again, we can make good choices and poor choices. There is nothing wrong with money in itself, but both Jesus and Paul had things to say about the way people use, desire or hoard wealth.

To provide context to today's gospel reading, before this parable of Lazarus and the rich man there are a number of parables recorded that were told by Jesus.

We have the parable of the lost coin where a woman loses one of her ten silver coins, lights a lamp and searches carefully until she has found it. She then calls her friends and neighbours to celebrate, to rejoice that the lost coin has been found.

We then have the parable of the lost son. The man's younger son asks to receive his inheritance, then goes off and squanders his wealth in wild living. When he comes to his senses, he goes back home to his father who welcomes him back and throws a feast.

This made his older brother angry because his brother had wasted all his money on prostitutes and his father has killed the fattened calf for him.

Immediately preceding today's reading is the parable of the shrewd manager where Jesus concludes "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. In the epistle reading today, Paul was writing to his great friend and disciple Timothy, a church leader, telling him to urge others to live in a way that pleased God.

Today's gospel reading urges us to live in a way that pleases God by the choices that we make. We often make choices that we think will be good for us, but they can have negative consequences. In looking at this further, let us consider three coins, each with two different sides.

The first coin is the coin of discontent. The rich man in today's gospel reading was very rich and lived in luxury. People who put their trust in their wealth can never be satisfied, because there is always more that they can have, more clothes, more possessions, things that are bigger and better than what they currently have.

Human beings are on a journey through life and beyond. Where we are going, money won't ultimately buy anything.

We come into this world with nothing and we leave this world with nothing.

In his Alpha course talk "How can I make the most of the rest of my life?"

Nicky Gumbel tells how there are some people, who, when you say, 'What do you want to achieve in life?' reply 'Well, I want to make a lot of money.'

That's my aim in life - I want to make lots and lots of money.' Isn't that a sad ambition! I mean, what's the point? You make 1 million dollars - 'Hm, exciting! Now what do I do? Oh, well, I could make 2 million dollars, 3 million, 10 million dollars!' They get to 10 million dollars: 'Now what do I do? Ooh, 11 million dollars.'

What is the point? You get to the end of your life and God says to you: 'What did you do with your life?' 'Oh, I made 11.5 million dollars! Look, here it all is!' God says, 'Great! We can play Monopoly in heaven!' For other people, the whole of their life is focused on achieving fame, success, power or status. That's all pointless! These people put their trust in wealth and status,

They live their lives discontent with what they have or discontent with their status in life. As Paul pointed out to Timothy, we too should be satisfied with what we have.

The flipside of the coin of discontent is to put your trust in God. God is immensely rich, and richly blesses us with everything that we need to enjoy in life.

The second coin we will look at is being blind to the needs of others. The rich man lived his life of luxury.

He must have regularly seen Lazarus, the beggar, at his gate, but did nothing to help him.

The story says that he thought about his five brothers after he was dead. However, he did not think of anyone else apart from his family. He was blind to the needs of others.

The flipside of the coin "Blind to the needs of others" is "Help everyone. Share what you have". Paul urged Timothy to tell those who belong to God to do as many good deeds as they can and help everyone. This is why we participate in outreach projects so that we can share our wealth and resources with others.

If all comes from God, then we have an obligation to God to use the resources we have for the benefit of God's kingdom. This realisation moves us from being consumers of resources to stewards of God's good gifts.

Christ invites us into a life that is far greater than our anxious fears over things that have no ultimate worth. He invites us into a deeper closer relationship with God and with others, a treasure far greater and more enduring. The story is told by the late Rev. Dr. Leslie Weatherhead of how, when the Titanic was sinking, a famous, wealthy woman who had been allocated to one of the life boats, hurried back to her cabin and snatched up, not her jewellery, but three oranges.

Up until a few minutes before, diamonds had been more valuable to her than the oranges. However, now she was to embark on a journey where diamonds were useless but where oranges could satisfy her hunger and thirst and spell the difference between life and death.

We should ask ourselves questions about the use of our money: "Do I really need this? Is this a want that I can live without?" "Where can I best use this money for the benefit of the community?" "How can my wealth be a blessing?"

It doesn't mean that our personal needs will be left out of the equation. It does mean that we will balance personal needs with the needs of others, the environment, and promoting healthy and holy relationships to bring glory to God.

Therefore, Jesus' teaching is not a condemnation of wealth or ambition. Rather it is an invitation to view our material possessions and our priorities differently.

What do you seek most in life? Are your priorities in order?
Where is your treasure? Where your treasure is there will be your heart also.

Instead of building up for ourselves material treasures that are worthless and meaningless, let us offer ourselves, our lives, our time, our money, our minds, and our hearts, afresh - to enter into a deeper relationship with God and others - a treasure that is enduring. Finally, let us look at the third coin,

"Not interested in God's way". The rich man had lived his life without reference to God's law. After dying he wished he had read what Moses and the prophets had said. But it was too late. He had not wanted to live a life that pleased God. The flipside of the coin "Not interested in God's way" is

Live life like God wants us to. If we seek to live like God wants us to, then we will handle our money in the right way. Our wealth will not stop us from being aware of the needs of others and sharing with them. This is the way that leads us to the Kingdom, to live in the presence of God forever.

Therefore, what should you do? Where should you go? What should you watch? What should you read? Whom should you follow?

All choices have consequences. Keeping in mind that there are two sides to every choice that we make, the very best choice that you and I can make is to follow Jesus.

Trust in God. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in all of the choices that you make - today, tomorrow, and in the rest of your lives.

Amen.