

WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS



INTRODUCTION

Jesus spoke about money a lot! It's not a topic to shy away from. Do we see our money as ours, or God's? How does that shape what we do with the resources we have?

What we do with money can make a world of difference to those around us - from choosing an ethical bank to investing in companies that are building a fairer society. Do we see our financial decisions as part of our discipleship?

This Bible Study can be used on its own or alongside other [Money Makes Change resources](#) to explore issues of faith and finance. It links to the *Where your Treasure Is* Action Area in the [Money Makes Change Pledge](#).

READINGS

[Isaiah 55: 1-9](#)
An invitation to abundant life

[1 John 3: 16-24](#)
"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?"

[Luke 12: 13-21](#)
The Parable of the Rich Fool

REFLECTION | DR MARGARET SCOTT

The biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann once said: **"Economics, far from being a side issue, is a core preoccupation of the biblical tradition."** Our three texts are excellent examples of that "core preoccupation" and the searching questions that it posed to God's people then and the biblical insights that challenge us now.

At first sight, the passage from the prophet Isaiah would seem to be a consoling message to God's people pining away in exile in Babylon. "Hang in there! God has not forgotten you. Everything will be all right in the end".

But if we dig deeper, we discover a challenge addressed to the elite Jews who had been deported to Babylon. They had become involved in the economy and trade of the Babylonian Empire and so, had compromised their identity as God's people.

Now they are confronted with an urgent choice to stop collaborating with the Babylonian authorities and to resist participating in an economy based on greed, where you are caught up in a cycle of working to pay for things that do not satisfy.

"What are you doing? Why do you labour for that which does not satisfy?"

The prophet offers them an alternative: an invitation to return to the generous abundance of God who gives the gifts needed for life.

The Gospel text introduces us to a "Rich Fool". One could argue that this rich man is not foolish at all but, rather, a wise and responsible businessman.

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REFLECTION

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His land has produced so abundantly that he does not have enough storage space in his barns. So, he plans to build bigger ones to store all his grain and goods. Then he will have plenty set aside for the future and will enjoy his retirement. So why is the rich farmer called a fool in the Gospel?

The problem is that he has his priorities all wrong. He lives in his own little world - an audience of one - with not a thought for others or for God, who is the Lord of all, of life and death.

The writer of 1 John is concerned that the church members he leads are falling away from the basic truths of their faith: the Christian community should believe in Jesus Christ, God's own Son, and should love one another.

The biblical message is clear. We should love one another, but really love one another. Not just in words. Words are cheap. What counts are our actions. "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help them?"

These three texts are about the challenges that face us too: our acceptance or rejection of greed as normal, our selfishness or dependence on God, and how we respond to those in need.

VIDEO REFLECTION

If you'd like to explore the idea of ethical investment as part of this study, then [watch this short video](#). Canon Edward Carter, Chair of the [Church Investors Group](#), reflects on the Church's role in using its investments to shape a better world.

What do you think? Do you hold any investments – individually or as a church? (Remember that if you have a pension you are an investor!)

How could you steward this money justly to meet the needs of others?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does 'abundant life' look like in the Isaiah reading? How might our society's view of 'abundant life' differ from this?
- A basic question that Scripture poses is "When is enough, enough?" How do we know when we're being greedy?
- Isaiah's listeners were challenged to make a choice. What are the choices and alternatives that we are faced with today?
- How do we view wealth and possessions? Are they mine, ours or God's?
- What should we prioritise? How can we 'invest' our lives and the gifts that God has given us for others?
- What would it mean for us – individually or as a church - to "walk the walk" rather than just "talk the talk" when we see our brothers and sisters in need?
- How can we live out our faith and love as Christians in the way we use our money and resources?



FINAL REFLECTION |



DR MARGARET SCOTT

These biblical insights offer a road map for our journey away from the economy of greed towards the change that is God's dream for our world.

In the light of our current social crisis, Isaiah invites us to a radical choice that is both about our personal actions and how we work for wider social change: an option for generous self-giving; an alternative way of being; a neighbourly justice.

The passage from Luke defines very starkly the foolish desire to gain more and more that characterises our capitalistic society. It is all about living for oneself, talking to oneself, planning for oneself, and congratulating oneself: basically living in the orbit of one's own little universe. In contrast, the scriptural text offers us a radical choice between life and death.

The 1 John text offers the antidote to that foolish selfishness: a pragmatic and concrete resolve to care for others, based on the Lord's new commandment: Love one another, as I have loved you. A call to be who we are meant to be and to resist the selfishness that excludes others, particularly those most in need.

These texts summon us to engage in a community solidarity, to be different. To make a difference.

ACTION IDEAS



- Where is your 'treasure'? If you have savings or investments, is your money helping create a fairer world? Take a look at [Ethex](#), [Energise Africa](#) or the [Big Exchange](#) and see how money can be used for good.
- What do you know about your church's investments? Use your church structures to speak up for the issues you are concerned about.
- Could your church make a commitment to divest from fossil fuels and invest in clean alternatives? Join Operation Noah's [Bright Now campaign](#).
- Do you bank with an ethical bank? Visit <https://switchit.money> to find out if your bank is investing in fossil fuels. Read the [Investing in Change](#) report and ask your bank to stop financing the nuclear weapons industry.
- Explore switching to an ethical pension fund using [ShareAction's resources](#).
- Review your giving and look for ways to share your resources more generously with others.

PRAYER



Thanks be to You, Creator of the heavens and the earth, to whom all things belong.
Free us from greed and fill us with generosity.
Release us from insecurity and restore us to contentment with the treasures of your realm.
Strip us of our fear and strengthen us to love one another as you have loved us.
Guide our decisions about money so that all God's creation may have abundant life.
Amen.

These words are adapted from a [longer prayer](#) written by Ana & Tod Gobledale / Worship Words.