

January 5, 2019 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
 Psalm 24:1, 1 Chronicles 29:10-16 My My My: My Money My Business by Andy McDonald

I love the start of a New Year. For me there's this freshness that comes. All the good and the not so good from the past year is past and together at the stroke of midnight this last Monday we all got to hit the "Restart" button as we stepped into a new year, 2019.

I've been saddened this first week by some unfortunate attacks by some people on social media of our church's wonderful children's Christmas musical, "Straight Outta' Bethlehem" that was presented on December 1. I wouldn't draw any attention to the terrible, and very un-Christ like comments except I know that some of you have bumped into them on social media.

When Vicki and I got back from celebrating our anniversary and sat down and watched the entire musical, I smiled, I laughed and I cried and I told Vicki, "I'm so proud that I get to pastor this church."

The musical our kids performed was a fun contemporary retelling of the Christmas Story and the effect worshipping Jesus can have on our lives, and it fits our context here as we seek to expand God's kingdom by loving people into a lifelong friendship with God.

Those who see it differently and want to condemn are highly unlikely to be persuaded to think differently and as followers of Jesus our only resolution with them is to agree that we disagree and we cannot let them divert us from our mission as a church. I am so very proud of every child who participated, you were awesome as you presented the gospel in a new light. I'm so very proud of every adult who supported them, and leadership who directed, thank you, and to God be the glory.

Let's Pray. Father you are good and your mercy endures forever. You brought us through 2018 and now you have introduced us to 2019. I pray especially for those whose life circumstances make it hard to think positively about the future. Please pull back the curtain a little and let us all see that you are in charge. This is your world and you are sovereign over us and over all things. Please send your Holy Spirit to teach us your wisdom in these next few moments together. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

If you want to make the dinner conversation move from friendly and fun warm and hospitable to a place of discomfort, start probing into how your guests use their money!

Oh you can talk about the economy in general. It's okay to maybe give thanks for how blessed everyone around the table is. We can talk about the problems of poverty in real big brush strokes of conversation. But for the sake of civility and camaraderie please don't probe into what kind of percentage of everyone's income do they live on or keep to themselves and what percentage do they give to worthy causes!

There's just something about my money that is my business and correspondingly is none of yours! And if you start trying to make it your business tension seems to just naturally build in the conversation.

Over the years I've noticed that it doesn't seem to change the discomfort levels whether those visiting have a whole bunch of money or a more meager supply. We seem to share the idea that when it comes to my money it is my business!

We may be very open about our spiritual walk, both with steps forward and back. We may be comfortable talking about how we grow spiritually and even times of darkness on that journey.

We may be very candid about our family sharing about our parents, siblings, children. Even telling sad stories about tragic family events or that strange uncle or aunt.

We may love to talk about our career and what we've accomplished or goals we have set for the new year. We might share how we stack up against our competition and what we are doing to find our competitive edge.

But too often I think it is easy for us to go down the rabbit hole that "My Money is My Business.

That's what caught that successful young business guy so off guard. I mean he was just coming for some spiritual advice. He just wanted to get some confirmation that he was on the right track, performing his good deeds correctly and that his adherence to his denomination's beliefs and practices would get him the results he was looking for.

That was all couched in his question. He was use to using a little flattery to gain access to information and so he does this as he asks Jesus: "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

He sort of asks it like a player might ask a coach. "Hey coach, I'm a really good player, you are lucky to have me on the team. So what's your advice on the next play. I mean I've got this, I'm one of your star players, this is really my game, but what can you tell me, how can you coach me so I get the very best result.

The conversation sort of plays out that this young inquirer already had the answer. Jesus first pushes back on the flattery. "Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments; 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"

This young ruler is like cool. I thought I was in! I was pretty sure I was on the right track and that my performance would gain my access to my eternal life. I've got this one in the bag.

"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "You still lack one thing." Gnawing away deep within this very together very spiritual very obedient wealthy young ruler was this sense that something was missing. And now with these words of Jesus he is anxious to hear what this "one thing" is so he can get it corrected and have full assurance of inheriting eternal life.

Then he hears Jesus next words sort of like in a fog. Echoy, shadowed, the scene might blur a little if we were shooting a movie, to sort of show the confusion as these words penetrate his mind.

"Go sell EVERYTHING you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. The come, follow me."

Wait just a minute there Jesus. I came for some spiritual advice. I was just looking to sort of confirm the path the church people have put me on. You are turning Bible class into economics class. You are mixing things spiritual and material. Stay in your lane. Stick with exegesis and hermeneutics, the ten commandments and sermons on a mount.

Listen, My Money is My Business. The story says that the man's face fell, he became very sad because he had great wealth. Jesus said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God?" In fact it is so hard that with man it is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God!"

Why? Why is it so hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God? I don't like it that it's hard nigh impossible humanly for the rich to enter God's kingdom. Really? We live in America, we believe in the American dream. We love the Horatio Alger's novels about impoverished boys and their rise from humble backgrounds to lives of middle-class security and comfort through hard work, determination, courage and honesty.

I don't like hearing that such a coveted journey toward wealth is a detriment for our spiritual journey into eternal life.

I like two clear lanes. A spiritual lane and an economics lane. And Jesus, all through his teaching keeps merging these lanes as he teaches us that the underlying foundation of his kingdom is poverty not possessions.

Part of the risk of wealth is that it masks the true reality of humanity. Worldly wealth, having in our hands money-stock-real estate slows us down on a journey that at best always takes us a long time—the journey to believe that we are actually poor!

When we have an attitude, whether or not we actually say the words, but if in our hearts we believe that my money is my business it's because we haven't absorbed the truth of scripture into our practice.

If we adopt a My Money is My Business we imagine ourselves to be in charge of our lives. We let ourselves imagine that we worked hard, too jobs at a young age, studied diligently in school, earned our degree, got our internship, slaved away to impress our employers, got that promotion and raise, exercised thrift and savings, invested wisely, made good and our barns are full because of the labor of our hands. Oh, along the way we did call in for God's assistance.

We prayed to do well on a test in school!

We asked God to help us get that internship!

We sought strength to over work to impress the boss.

We requested power to resist spending our money foolishly

We plead for wisdom on which investments to choose

On our journey God became our helper, servant, assistant but what became ours was due to our hard work.

The obtaining of wealth in large or small accounts may delude us into imagining ourselves sovereign but scripture can clear this fog in our brains.

The Lord God of the Universe says to Job, your perspective is off, listen carefully and understand fully "Everything under heaven is mine." Job 41:11

Moses reminds Israel, "To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it." Deuteronomy 10:14

The Psalmist wrote: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it." Psalm 24:1-2

"The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth, you founded the world and all that is in it."

Maybe one of the most powerful texts to counter the idea that my money is my business are the verses recording David's Prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10-14. It is a prayer that follows the collection of resources by David for Solomon his son to use in the construction of the temple.

I invite us to hear these words, read them, allow them to penetrate our minds and to lodge there to influence how we think about "my" resources.

"Then David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly:

'O Lord the God of our ancestor Israel,

may you be praised forever and ever!

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,
the victory and the majesty.

Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord,
and this is your kingdom.

We adore you as the one who is over all things.

Riches and honor come from you alone,

for you rule over everything.

Power and might are in your hand, and it is at your discretion
that people are made great and given strength.

O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name!

But who am I,
 and who are my people, that we could give anything to you?
 Everything we have has come from you,
 and we give you only what you have already given us!

Paul's counsel is so apropos today that we should not think more highly of ourselves that we ought.

Sometimes I've heard it or sensed it and sometimes I've been guilty of it. Of giving a gift, putting in an offering, and imagining that I've done this great thing. And in a world of self-interest and selfishness, not grasping all our resources for self-fulfillment and self-comfort or self-advancement is an amazing thing, but let's preserve the context: EVERYTHING is the Lord's and EVERYTHING that comes our way is from the Lord, so that when we "give" what we are doing is giving God what he has already given us!

The founding principle of all good stewardship is remembering who the owner is. Our family has been privileged over the years to enjoy other people's property—condo's at the beach, cabins in the mountains, guest houses. And when we've had those privileges we are totally aware that these places are not ours. And each time we have sought to treat the resources well, to try and leave them better than we find them, because we recognize they aren't really ours even though they are in our possession for a time.

Just saying My Money My Business evidences a lack of understanding.

Whatever we hold in our hands we must hold loosely because, no matter how inflated our ideas may be of our accomplishment, our acquisitions, and our achievements, at the deepest level, they are not ours.

I was reminded of this as I interacted with our aunt and uncle. They are now deceased. They were fine people who for years had a strong sense of pride of possession. At one point they owned a bit of real estate. Eventually sold and relocated here to Florida. I watched and assisted them as they downsized a couple of times. Things eliminated from their life each time. I watched as Alzheimer's for her and dementia for him continued to remove the "my" from their stuff. They had no children and so after their death I had much of the responsibility of disposing of their things. And I remember my mother-in-law and I looking through one of their picture albums taking out a few photos of people we knew and then just throwing the rest away, records of events and people who had interacted, shared life, and were gone.

As life winds down or ends tragically we are again reminded "my" stuff isn't really my stuff and so like the rich young ruler thinking my money my business is wrong headed.

When we are considering giving, whether it is here through this church or some other worthy cause and we feel a slight hesitation before we let that money go, it's because we've started to imagine that our money is "our" money rather than God's money in our hands.

I believe God involves as channels of resources, bringing them into our hands and then inviting us to let them go, is to remind us and teach us to enable us to trust that God is Sovereign. He's had a plan from before time began, with him there is no shortage no scarcity, and when you and I choose to recognize the mistake of thinking of My Money My Business we can then come to remember that EVERYTHING is the Lord's and that when we give we only returning what he has given to us.



When have you found yourself in an uncomfortable conversation about money?

What are some “touchy” subjects that you find it easier to discuss than talking about your money?

Why do you think so many have the attitude “My Money My Business”?

How can this thinking hurt or help families and their planning?

How fair do you think it was or wasn’t for Jesus to tell the young ruler to go sell everything, give it to poor, and come follow Jesus?

How do you feel about the idea of wealth getting in the way of our spiritual development?

What does it mean to you that God owns everything?

Where is it hard for you to trust that God’s got your back financially?

What advice would you give to someone about how to best manage their resources and about how much to give away?



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