

## Mastering Your Money

1. Warm-up Question: On Sunday, our children led various aspects of worship and we celebrated their presence among us. Tell us about a child in your life who has been special to you. What's something you learned from being around that child?
2. Sunday's sermon focused on an ancient book written about 180 BC by someone named Jesus, Son of Sira (Hebrew: Yeshua ben Sira). The full formal name of the book is "The Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach," or for short, the book of Sirach (pronounced SIGH-rack). Yeshua ben Sira was the leader of a house of instruction in Jerusalem for theologians and sages. His book, much like the book of Proverbs, is a compilation of spiritual wisdom on various practical subjects. The original Hebrew text of Sirach was lost for many years, but a Greek translation by Yeshua's grandson survived. That Greek translation circulated widely in early Christian churches. As a result, the book of Sirach made it into the Catholic and Orthodox Old Testament, but not into the Jewish Canon or the Protestant Old Testament. To get a flavor for the book of Sirach, on Sunday we focused on the advice it offers for managing our money. Read the selections from Sirach on p. 3.
3. Before discussing the text of Sirach, let's think for a moment about how we tend to relate to money.
  - a. If you had to pick one word to best describe your "relationship" with money, what word comes to mind? Explain why you chose that word.
  - b. Growing up, what are some lessons about money (positive or negative) that you learned from your family and formative experiences?
  - c. Jeff said, "Money is to life what an operating system is to a computer. You can't navigate your computer without an underlying operating system that makes it all possible. Money is one of those basic underlying operating systems that affects virtually every aspect of our lives. If your relationship with money isn't healthy, it affects everything." Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Jeff grouped Sirach's teachings about money into three key points. ***Lesson No. 1 – Never put money ahead of quality of life.***
  - a. Sirach 11:11 says, "There are those who work and struggle and hurry, but are so much the more in want. There are others who are slow and need help, who lack strength and abound in poverty; but the eyes of the Lord look kindly upon them . . . and God raises up their heads to the amazement of many." What do you think that means?
  - b. Sirach 31:1 and 6, says, "Many come to ruin because of gold, and their destruction has met them face to face. It is a stumbling block to those who are avid for it, and every fool will be taken captive by it." What do you think that

means? Have you known people who've been taken "captive" by money? How did that happen?

- c. In what ways does money try to take control of you and boss you around? In what ways are you tempted to put money ahead of quality of life?
  - d. Imagine winning a lottery that deposited \$86,400 in your bank account each morning. But here's the catch. What you don't spend or share by the end of the day disappears. Then a new \$86,400 is deposited the next day, each day, so on and so forth, until finally one day without warning, it stops. If you won that kind of lottery, how would you respond?
  - e. The truth is, each of us has won the lottery described above, except our wealth gets paid out in the form of time – 86,400 seconds in each day. By the end of each day, those seconds are gone and can never be recovered. Jeff said, "Your goal should be to make the most of that time, and money's proper role is to serve you in the process of enjoying the times of your life." What thoughts or feelings does this lottery analogy evoke within you? Do you feel you're making the most of your time? Why or why not?
5. Sirach 14:5-6 says, "No one is worse than one who is grudging to himself; this is the punishment for his miserliness. If one is miserly to himself, to whom will he be generous?" Sirach 14:11 says, "My child, treat yourself well, according to your means, and present worthy offerings to the Lord." From verses like these, we drew: ***Lesson 2 – You will never be truly generous with God and others until you first learn to be generous to yourself.***
- a. Do you buy that? Why or why not? Do you feel you use your money in a way that is generous to yourself within your means? What keeps people from being generous with themselves?
  - b. Generosity is contagious. If we're truly generous with ourselves, we'll naturally want to be generous with God and others. Sirach 14:11 urges us to make "worthy offerings to the Lord." What keeps people from being generous with God in their tithes and offerings? How much is enough?
6. Sirach 4:4 says, "Do not reject a supplicant in distress, or turn your face away from the poor. Do not avert your eye from the needy. . . . Be a father to orphans, and be like a husband to their mother, you will then be like a child of the Most High, and God will love you more than does your mother." From this, we drew: ***Lesson 3 – We have a sacred responsibility to share with those in great need . . . through our church, through our government, and personally.***
- a. The world is full of need to the point that we could give everything to the poor and still not make a dent. How do we know when we're doing enough for the poor to make God proud of us?
  - b. Which of the three lessons we've covered most speaks to you – and why?

## Excerpts From the Book of Sirach

### Chapter 4

- <sup>4</sup> Do not reject a suppliant in distress,  
or turn your face away from the poor.
- <sup>5</sup> Do not avert your eye from the needy,  
and give no one reason to curse you;
- <sup>6</sup> for if in bitterness of soul some should curse you,  
their Creator will hear their prayer.
- <sup>10</sup> Be a father to orphans,  
and be like a husband to their mother;  
you will then be like a son of the Most High,  
and God will love you more than your mother does.

### Chapter 11

- <sup>11</sup> There are those who work and struggle and hurry,  
but are so much the more in want.
- <sup>12</sup> There are others who are slow and need help,  
who lack strength and abound in poverty;  
but the eyes of the Lord look kindly upon them;  
God lifts them out of their lowly condition
- <sup>13</sup> and raises up their heads  
to the amazement of many.

### Chapter 14

- <sup>11</sup> My child, treat yourself well, according to your means,  
and present worthy offerings to the Lord.
- <sup>12</sup> Remember that death does not tarry,  
and the decree of Hades has not been shown to you.
- <sup>13</sup> Do good to friends before you die,  
and reach out and give to them as much as you can.
- <sup>14</sup> Do not deprive yourself of a day's enjoyment;  
do not let your share of desired good pass by you.
- <sup>15</sup> Will you not leave the fruit of your labors to another,  
and what you acquired by toil to be divided by lot?

### Chapter 31

- <sup>5</sup> One who loves gold will not be justified;  
one who pursues money will be led astray by it.
- <sup>6</sup> Many have come to ruin because of gold,  
and their destruction has met them face to face.
- <sup>7</sup> It is a stumbling-block to those who are avid for it,  
and every fool will be taken captive by it.
- <sup>8</sup> Blessed is the rich person who is found blameless,  
and who does not go after gold.