

Upside Living in a Downside Economy; finding and keeping God's perspective. Seek First His Kingdom...and Do Not Worry!

October 11, 2009

We begin today a series on "Upside living in a downside Economy". The Bible has a lot to say about how to live, and a lot to say about money and how to acquire it and spend it. One of the reasons for that is we spend so much of our times in the acquisition of wealth. It is one of our primary goals in life...our jobs center around it, much of our economy and our world is built about wealth acquisition and expenditure.

And there is nothing inherently wrong with wealth. Remember, the Bible does not say that Money is the root of all Evil. It does say that the LOVE of money is the root of all kinds of evil. It is the priority you give to wealth and its acquisition... the place you put it in your life, that often causes the problems. As Jesus said, you can not serve two masters...God and Mammon or God and Money.

So in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus talked about not wasting time worrying about what we would wear or what we would eat...matters of wealth. Instead, we are to focus on God and putting our trust in Him.

Jesus tells us to not worry. He reminds us that God provided for the flowers and the Ravens. Your worry does no good. Which of you can add a single day to your lives by worrying? What do you think? Actually studies have shown that worrying can shorten your life considerably. It drives up your blood pressure, and adds undue stress to your system. It is bad for you! And in truth, by worrying about a problem you really do not change the problem at all. You loose sleep and emotional energy, you become worn out...but you don't change the problem at all. It is wasted energy really.

And it express a lack of faith in God. Instead of worrying, we should pray. We should begin at the beginning, and understand who God is...that God is our loving parent, who cares for us in ways that are

too deep for us to understand. Jesus said we should address God as ABBA, as our Daddy or Mommy...as a loving parent who adores us and wants the very best for us.

And so we are to First seek his kingdom and his righteousness. We are to focus first on Him...instead of on us. We are too self centered. We worry about ourselves. Instead, we are to focus on God first. To put all our troubles in God's hands...As Peter says in his letter, to "Cast all your cares upon him, because he cares for you". As we seek his Kingdom First, a lot of things will simply fall into place. These things we seek will be added unto us...they will follow. We will receive the things we truly need as a byproduct of a life lived in faithfulness and joy. And the truth is, the things we often worry most over don't really matter that much. If we have our head on straight and have the right perspective on life and family, we can see that at least some of what we worry about does not really matter in the long range view of things.

We need to trust God, and to seek his wisdom. We get in trouble when we become impatient. The problem is our society has built an economy on the immediate, where no one is encouraged to plan or to be patient and wait...but to get it now! Why wait is a common advertizing slogan! But we get into trouble when we are impatient. We don't think things through. We don't have our priorities right. We have not thought of the long term consequences.

And the book of James tells us that All Good Gifts come from God...all of them. Coffee, chocolate, sunshine, birds singing, children laughing, every single good gift on earth is a gift from the hand of God. All good gifts come from God above. God loves us that much that he who is the God of the universe knows us and gives us the treasures of life. Wonderful to consider and behold.

So how does this work, Pastor? Where do I put my faith in to get out some green? I need some money...I need/ want a new flat screen

TV, everyone has one! I got to have one of those Wii fitness things, for my health you know!

God is not foolish! You can't trick God. Nor do I believe in the blessing preachers who teach that we can all be rich and powerful if we just pray correctly and give enough(usually to them, of course!). God is not some kindly grandfather who will shower extravagant gifts on all his grandchildren who say some secret word or some secret prayer! It doesn't work that way at all. Sometimes God says NO to our prayers. Like any father, God wants what is best for us, not what WE want or think is best for us. And we can't all be rich, we can't all win the lottery, that prayer is just for me, so give it up will you---but don't worry, I'll share! Just kidding! (about the lottery, or the sharing? Hum?)

God is the author of all good gifts. But he does not promise us that we will have a life of ease and plenty. He does not promise us that we will be Rich in the things of the world.

We are to put him first, and live according to his principles. We know that money is a thing. That is has a corrupting power...that it gives people a sense of power over others, and a sense of value in themselves that can be inflated. It must be handled carefully. We are called to be stewards, knowing that all gifts come from God, and so we have a responsibility to use money to honor God the giver. God therefore calls us all to be givers too. To give to Him and to give to others in need.

That Call is a call to generosity and caring. The caring does not lessen if we have less or increase if we have more. It is equally shared by all. That is the beauty of the Old Testament idea of a tithe, a percentage gift. Everyone shared an equal sacrifice, a percentage of their income was given, whither they had a little or a lot.

God calls us to be cheerful givers, helping others is a great joy. Our perspective and our motives results in our actions and our emotional response of joy!

But remember, everyone has trouble sometimes. Sometimes the trouble is no one's fault. You are caught in a great storm, like now in our economy. You are laid off and it is no one's fault. You can't find work, and it is not your fault. No one is hiring.

And sometimes it is our fault. We have been tempted and enticed by our own desires and impatience and got carried away. We got off the path somewhere and now have fallen in the woods somewhere. Sometimes we can find the path and make it back with a lot of effort, and other times we can't. However we got here, We take stock, we set priorities and we do what's important now...what's important according to God's principles, and let other things go. God helps us weather the storms and is with us even here and even now...as lost as we are. There is no place we can go where God is not there with us. We are never alone, never. And through it all, he helps us endure and grow through it all...becoming more mature Christians, more full and complete human beings. Better parents, better partners, better friends.

In our weaknesses, in our failures and in our faults...it is then that we learn and grow. It hurts like hell, but it makes us who we are, doesn't it? it molds us and shapes us and through it all God is there to help us.

These are hard times, but don't worry. God is with us. Focus first on Him...and everything will work out in the end...it really will.