

## The Price of Affluence

Spring Weekend Bible School  
Oak Grove Mennonite Church  
April 21-23, 2006  
Presented by Dave Nisly

## Introduction

- Christianity should be flourishing and vibrant
  - Free country
  - Anabaptist heritage
  - Born-again president
  - Abundance of resources
  - Sustained economic growth
- Christianity in America in 2006 is just the opposite
  - American Christians are sick with **affluenza**

## What's the big deal about money?

- The Bible has much to say about money and possessions
  - More than 2,350 verses
- Jesus knows some things we have a difficult time comprehending
  - Wealth is alluring and grips tightly
  - Not Lord of money, not Lord at all
  - Wealth can be a barrier to genuine new-birth and spiritual growth

## Money and Salvation

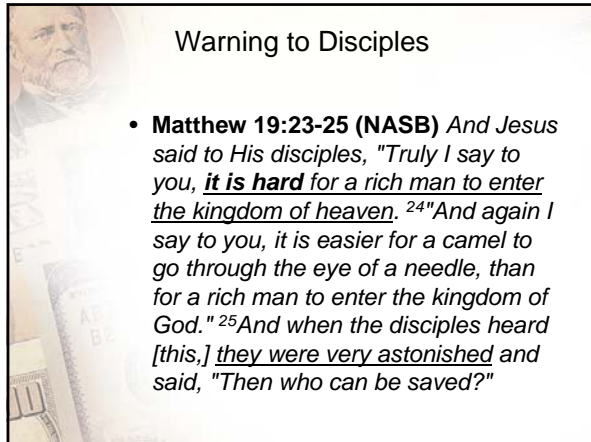
- Zachaeus (**Luke 19:1-9**) desperately wanted to see Jesus
- As a result of his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus volunteered to give half of his wealth away and repay wrongs four-fold
  - Jesus didn't say that was unnecessary
  - Jesus didn't say good idea, but...
  - **Luke 19:9** *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house...*

## Money and Salvation

- Rich young ruler responded very differently
  - (Matthew 19:16-30 and Luke 18:18-30)
- He was a good religious man, kept the law
- Jesus didn't say – just believe, that's it!
  - He wasn't thinking what an asset a wealthy man like this could be to the church
    - Many poor could be helped
    - His influence would attract others
    - His power could be used to change the culture

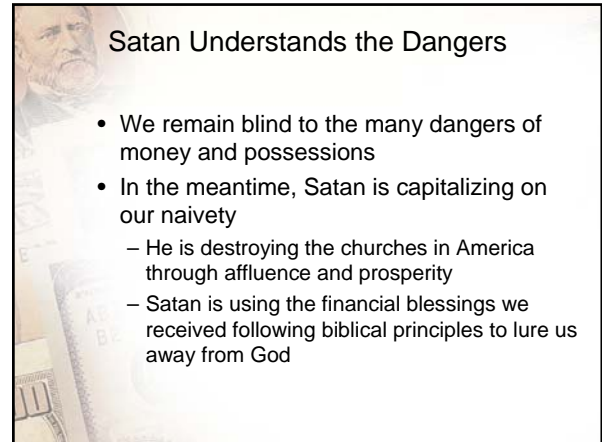
## Rich Young Ruler

- **Matthew 19:21** *Jesus said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."*
- **Matthew 19:22** *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*



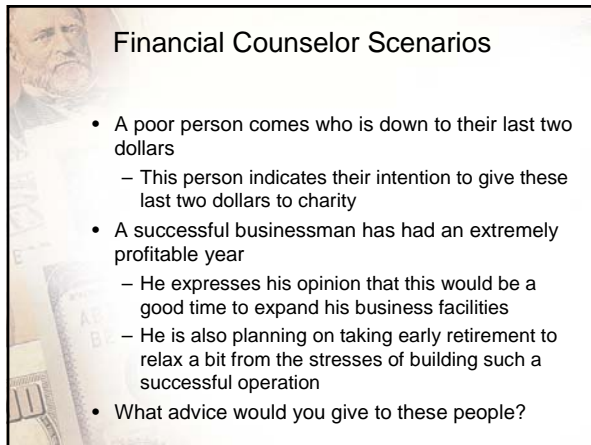
### Warning to Disciples

- **Matthew 19:23-25 (NASB)** *And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, **it is hard** for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup>And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>25</sup>And when the disciples heard [this,] they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"*



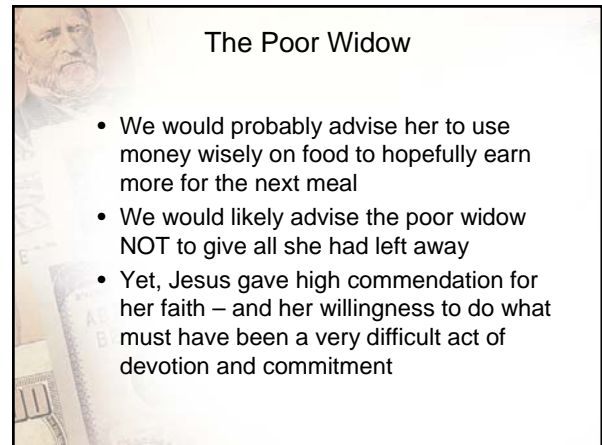
### Satan Understands the Dangers

- We remain blind to the many dangers of money and possessions
- In the meantime, Satan is capitalizing on our naivety
  - He is destroying the churches in America through affluence and prosperity
  - Satan is using the financial blessings we received following biblical principles to lure us away from God



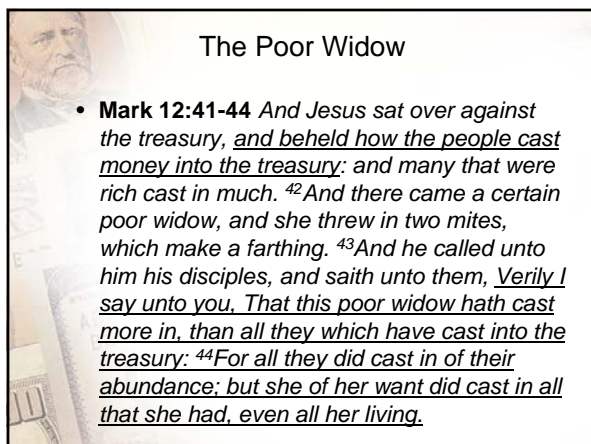
### Financial Counselor Scenarios

- A poor person comes who is down to their last two dollars
  - This person indicates their intention to give these last two dollars to charity
- A successful businessman has had an extremely profitable year
  - He expresses his opinion that this would be a good time to expand his business facilities
  - He is also planning on taking early retirement to relax a bit from the stresses of building such a successful operation
- What advice would you give to these people?



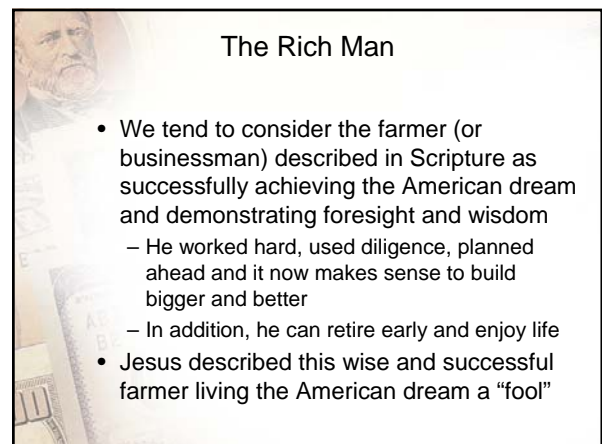
### The Poor Widow

- We would probably advise her to use money wisely on food to hopefully earn more for the next meal
- We would likely advise the poor widow NOT to give all she had left away
- Yet, Jesus gave high commendation for her faith – and her willingness to do what must have been a very difficult act of devotion and commitment



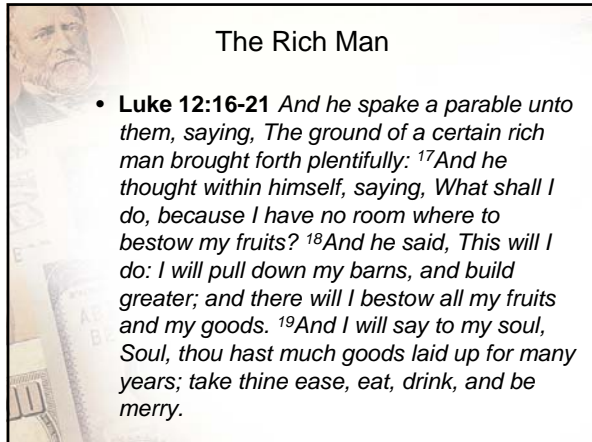
### The Poor Widow

- **Mark 12:41-44** *And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. <sup>42</sup>And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. <sup>43</sup>And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: <sup>44</sup>For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.*



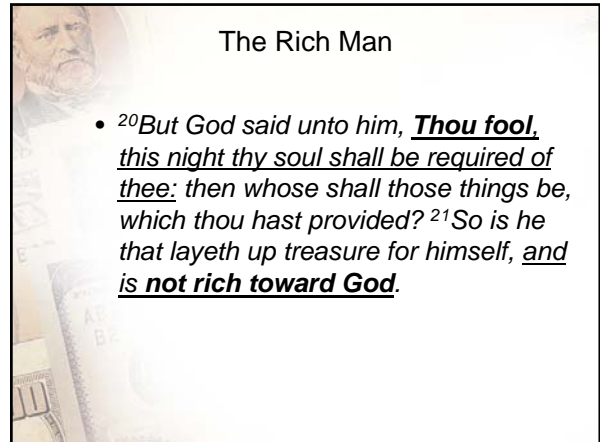
### The Rich Man

- We tend to consider the farmer (or businessman) described in Scripture as successfully achieving the American dream and demonstrating foresight and wisdom
  - He worked hard, used diligence, planned ahead and it now makes sense to build bigger and better
  - In addition, he can retire early and enjoy life
- Jesus described this wise and successful farmer living the American dream a “fool”



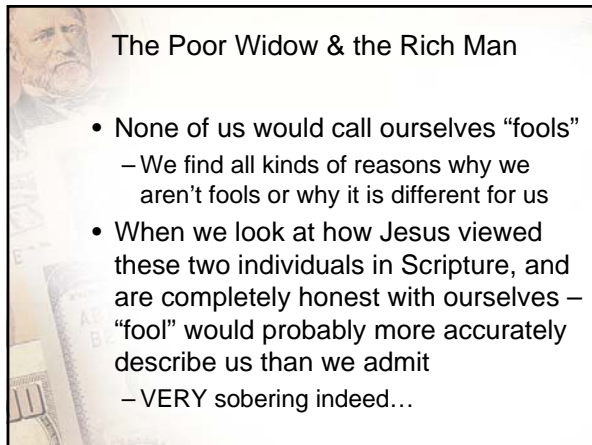
### The Rich Man

- **Luke 12:16-21** *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: <sup>17</sup>And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? <sup>18</sup>And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*



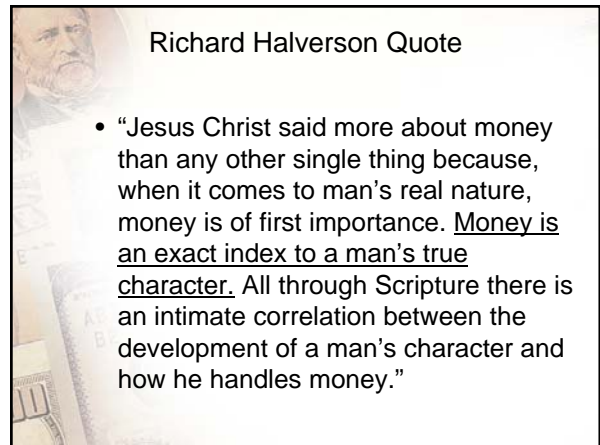
### The Rich Man

- <sup>20</sup>*But God said unto him, **Thou fool,** this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? <sup>21</sup>So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, **and is not rich toward God.***



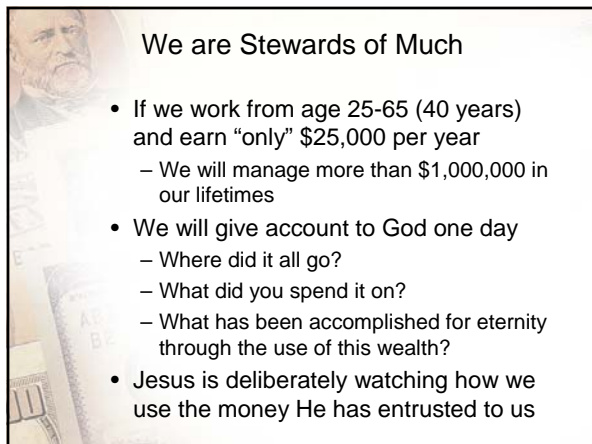
### The Poor Widow & the Rich Man

- None of us would call ourselves “fools”
  - We find all kinds of reasons why we aren’t fools or why it is different for us
- When we look at how Jesus viewed these two individuals in Scripture, and are completely honest with ourselves – “fool” would probably more accurately describe us than we admit
  - VERY sobering indeed...



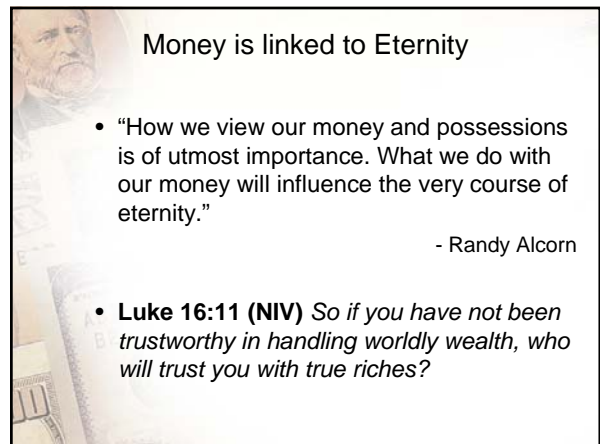
### Richard Halverson Quote

- “Jesus Christ said more about money than any other single thing because, when it comes to man’s real nature, money is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man’s true character. All through Scripture there is an intimate correlation between the development of a man’s character and how he handles money.”



### We are Stewards of Much


- If we work from age 25-65 (40 years) and earn “only” \$25,000 per year
  - We will manage more than \$1,000,000 in our lifetimes
- We will give account to God one day
  - Where did it all go?
  - What did you spend it on?
  - What has been accomplished for eternity through the use of this wealth?
- Jesus is deliberately watching how we use the money He has entrusted to us



### Money is linked to Eternity


- “How we view our money and possessions is of utmost importance. What we do with our money will influence the very course of eternity.”
 

- Randy Alcorn
- **Luke 16:11 (NIV)** *So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?*



### Affluence and Materialism

- Materialism is the fuel that drives the economic engine of our society
- Materialism is attaching the wrong price tags to the things of this world and the things of God
- “Materialism results from a failure to realize that we are made for one person (Jesus) and one place (heaven).”  
– Randy Alcorn



### John Wesley Quote

- “Wherever true Christianity spreads, it must cause diligence and frugality, which, in the natural course of things, must beget riches! And riches naturally beget pride, love of the world, and every temper that is destructive to Christianity. Now, if there be no way to prevent this, Christianity is inconsistent with itself and, of consequence, cannot stand, cannot continue long among people; since, wherever it generally prevails, it saps its own foundation.”



### Destructiveness of Materialism

- Materialism prevents or destroys our spiritual life
- Materialism blinds us to the curses of wealth
- Materialism brings us unhappiness and anxiety
- Materialism ends in ultimate futility
- Materialism obscures many of the best things in life, which are free – including the gift of salvation



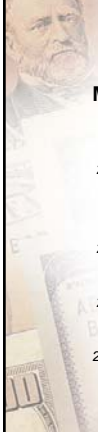
### Destructiveness of Materialism

- Materialism spawns independence and self-sufficiency, which are deadly to faith
- Materialism leads to pride and elitism
- Materialism promotes injustice and exploitation
- Materialism fosters immorality and the deterioration of the family
- Materialism distracts us from our central purpose



### Seeking First the Kingdom of God

- Where is our treasure?
  - There are two treasuries
    - The earthly treasury
    - The eternal treasury
- What is our perspective?
  - There are two perspectives
    - Life on earth
    - Life for all eternity
- Who is our master?
  - There are two masters
    - Jesus Christ
    - A substitute



### What is Jesus' Perspective?

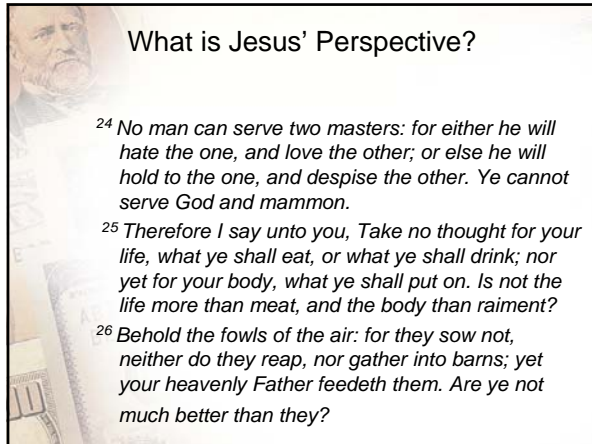
**Matthew 6:19-34** *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:*

<sup>20</sup> *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

<sup>21</sup> *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

<sup>22</sup> *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

<sup>23</sup> *But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

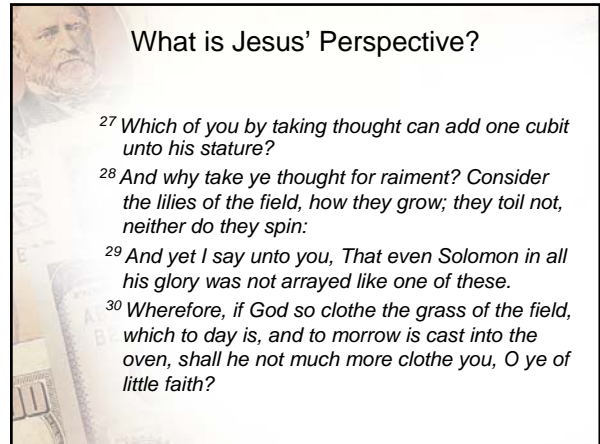


### What is Jesus' Perspective?

<sup>24</sup> *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

<sup>25</sup> *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

<sup>26</sup> *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*



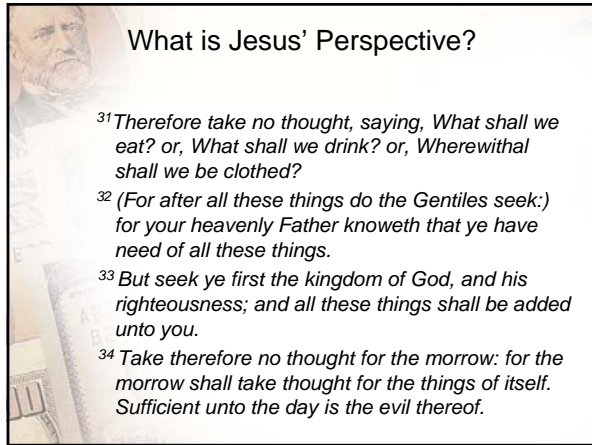
### What is Jesus' Perspective?

<sup>27</sup> *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*

<sup>28</sup> *And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:*

<sup>29</sup> *And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

<sup>30</sup> *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*



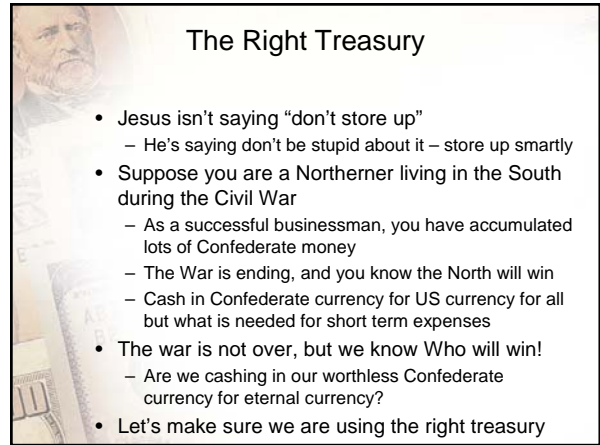
### What is Jesus' Perspective?

<sup>31</sup> *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

<sup>32</sup> *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

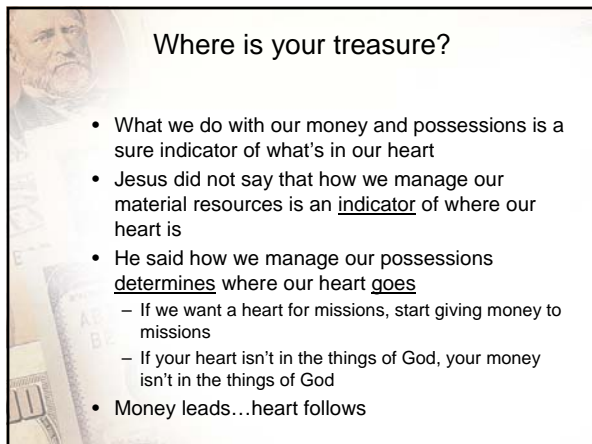
<sup>33</sup> *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

<sup>34</sup> *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*



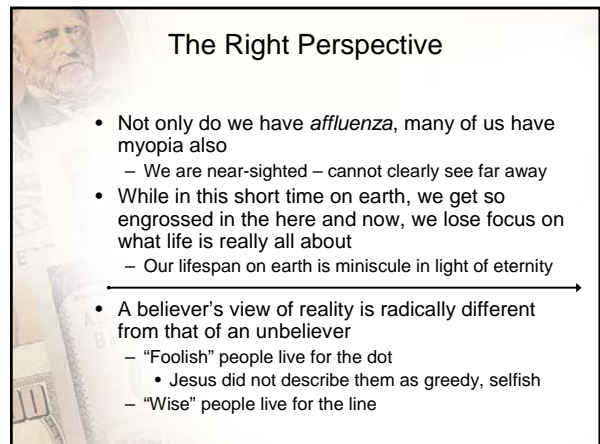
### The Right Treasury

- Jesus isn't saying "don't store up"
  - He's saying don't be stupid about it – store up smartly
- Suppose you are a Northerner living in the South during the Civil War
  - As a successful businessman, you have accumulated lots of Confederate money
  - The War is ending, and you know the North will win
  - Cash in Confederate currency for US currency for all but what is needed for short term expenses
- The war is not over, but we know Who will win!
  - Are we cashing in our worthless Confederate currency for eternal currency?
- Let's make sure we are using the right treasury




### Where is your treasure?

- What we do with our money and possessions is a sure indicator of what's in our heart
- Jesus did not say that how we manage our material resources is an indicator of where our heart is
- He said how we manage our possessions determines where our heart goes
  - If we want a heart for missions, start giving money to missions
  - If your heart isn't in the things of God, your money isn't in the things of God
- Money leads...heart follows



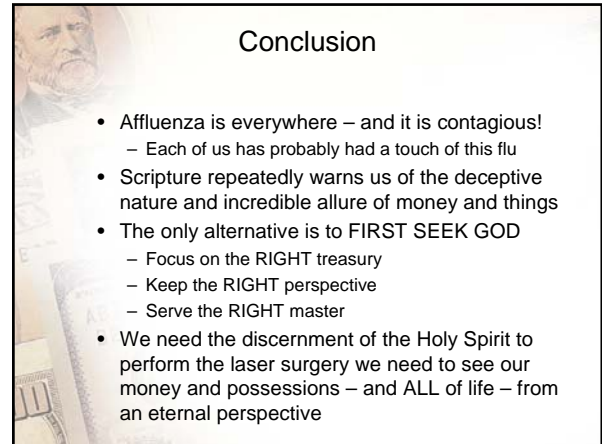
### The Right Perspective

- Not only do we have *affluenza*, many of us have myopia also
  - We are near-sighted – cannot clearly see far away
- While in this short time on earth, we get so engrossed in the here and now, we lose focus on what life is really all about
  - Our lifespan on earth is miniscule in light of eternity →
- A believer's view of reality is radically different from that of an unbeliever
  - "Foolish" people live for the dot
    - Jesus did not describe them as greedy, selfish
  - "Wise" people live for the line



## The Right Master

- Our master demands exclusive loyalty
  - There is one throne in our hearts
    - Jesus Christ may be on that throne
    - Money may be on that throne
- Mammon is a false God, God-substitute
  - Replacing God on the throne is spiritual adultery
- At the end of our dress-rehearsal for eternity, we will stand before Jesus and give a full account
  - Our eternal destiny will be determined by our conduct and stewardship of what God entrusted to us
  - If Jesus discerns we replaced Him with another, we stand guilty of adultery and condemnation



## Conclusion

- Affluenza is everywhere – and it is contagious!
  - Each of us has probably had a touch of this flu
- Scripture repeatedly warns us of the deceptive nature and incredible allure of money and things
- The only alternative is to **FIRST SEEK GOD**
  - Focus on the **RIGHT** treasury
  - Keep the **RIGHT** perspective
  - Serve the **RIGHT** master
- We need the discernment of the Holy Spirit to perform the laser surgery we need to see our money and possessions – and **ALL** of life – from an eternal perspective