

Secrets of the Kingdom Life

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Yesterday, when I was talking about the inroads of evangelical Protestantism in our circles, it's very easy to give the impression that all spirituality resides with us and if somebody leaves the Anabaptist, that means they've necessarily left Christ. I would certainly want to clarify that that is by no means the case. Even though Protestant Evangelicals, if you remember the illustration of Israel leaving Egypt headed to the Promised Land, that Evangelicals would say, "Once you're saved, that's it. You're guaranteed to reach the Promised Land." Even though we would strongly disagree with them there, many Evangelicals do live godly lives. Even though they would say it's not essential for salvation, they still do it because they love their Lord. It's important we always remember that. Hopefully, that was understood by everyone, but it is easy to give the wrong impression and get an inflated view of ourselves.

One area that I feel the Evangelicals have actually done a better job than us is in terms of the inner life or what's sometimes called the devotional life, the prayer life, that aspect of Christianity. I have written a book just recently that's dealing with this, *Secrets of the Kingdom Life*, that's why it's the title of the message. Nathan wanted me to have an opportunity to introduce the book. It's dealing with the inner life. Originally, I wanted to entitle it *The Kingdom Within*. I've written a lot about the kingdom and the external commandments, but Jesus says the kingdom of God is inside of you. That title made a lot of plain people nervous. That sounds a little mystical, so I dropped that.

Then I was going to have it entitled *The Surrendered Life* which I thought that's a perfect title and no one objected to it, other than everyone said, "Oh, that sounds boring." I guess, to me, a surrendered life is exciting, but anyway, I kept tinkering. I know that was John's suggestion and I thought it was a wonderful one. Anyway, that's where the title came from, but it's a book about prayer or your devotional life, inner life; also about living it out. It's actually three chapters that are in the book that I'll be sharing with you in the message today.

In preparation for this book, I wanted to read every spiritual classic out there or, at least, the major ones. I did spend about six months reading just all of the Godly insights that various ones have had through the years. I felt a little bad that there really haven't been any really good, I would say, devotional books written by Anabaptists. My second largest group of readers would be the Restoration Movement Church of Christ and there's not a lot from that movement either. Sometimes we can focus so much on the external that we forget the internal. Most of the writers are Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, Puritans, Anglicans, Methodists, down the line. It was good for me to take in what they had to say, because like I say, it's easy to get an inflated view of ourselves as Anabaptists and forget that others have also experienced God. Maybe they fall short in areas where we are strong but we also fall short sometimes in areas where they are strong.

The inner life is one of them. I do think it's important – we've been talking about keeping our children or keeping members – that we do have a strong inner life whether we're Old Order, Beachy, Mennonite, whatever our flavor is. The inner life should never conflict with our church's teaching. Having a stronger prayer life or closer walk with God should only make our churches and our families that much stronger.

Now, these are just some chapters from the book, and I've shared different chapters at different churches, and people seemed to like this one the best. We thought we would go with this. You'll see the three stories. They're all dealing with money and possessions. They probably won't step on your toes, but I hope they'll get you thinking nonetheless. The first story is about Andy Dimwit. Everyone remembers that. If they've heard me speak, they'll say, "You're not talking about Andy Dimwit again, are you?" "Yeah, I'm talking about Andy Dimwit." That name seems to stick in peoples' minds. As you'll see, the name does unfortunately fit him.

Andy is a 12 year old boy. It's the first day of his summer vacation, and he's hoping to be able to get to a summer job to earn some real money during summer. His dad works for Applegate Realty, a realty company that sells houses, empty lots, things like that. Now, a lot of the people selling their houses have already moved away, and so their house sits there, and during the summer, you need someone to mow the yard or it makes a very bad impression. My dad was a real estate salesman, and so one of my summer jobs growing up was mowing lawns of these vacant houses. When Andy's father came home for lunch that day, he said, "Andy, I've got some really good news." He said, "I asked Mr. Applegate whether we could perhaps hire you to mow the lawns of these vacant houses during the summer, and he said he would be willing to give you a try."

Andy said, "Oh, thank you dad. Oh, I am so glad, and believe me, I will do a super job and you'll be really pleased with it." His father said, "I'm sure I will, but remember, this is a trial basis. We have a job to give you today. In fact, I'm going to be showing the house later today. It'll probably be about 6 this evening but it could be as early as 4. As soon as lunch is over, I need you to go over there. It's just about a block away. You can walk there and push the mower with you." Andy said, "Well, that sounds good. How much will they pay me, dad?" His father said, "It'll be \$50. It shouldn't take you more than two hours to mow it," so that sounded like pretty good money for a 12 year old. It would be pretty good money probably for a lot of us.

He handed the address to Andy and Andy immediately ran upstairs and got in his work clothes. They finished lunch about 1:00 and Andy's father returned to the office. His mother had gone on some errands so he was home alone. He was just walking out the door to go to the garage to get the lawnmower to go mow the yard. When he opened the door, he saw that coming up the sidewalk was a group of his friends. His best friend Tommy was one of them, and some of the other neighborhood boys, and Andy noticed that Tommy was holding a Monopoly game under his arm. They said, "Oh, hi, Andy. Guess what? We've come over to play Monopoly."

Andy said, "Oh, I'm sorry, fellas, but I've got to mow a lawn this afternoon. I'm not going to be able to play." They said, "Oh, we're so disappointed. We had really looked forward to this. It's the first day of summer vacation. How long is it going to take you to mow this yard?" Andy said, "Well, my dad said probably two hours." They said, "When does it have to be done?" He said, "Well, he's not sure when the people are going to look at it. It'll probably be 6, maybe 4." They said, "Well, we have time for a real quick game then." He said, "Well, okay. It's going to have to be real short."

They came in. They sprawled out on the floors and set up the Monopoly board. One of the boys volunteered to be the banker, and so they got going. Next thing they knew, Andy looked up and he saw that it was 2:00. He said, "Oh, fellas. I'm sorry. I've got to leave right now. I hate to walk out in the middle of the game, but I've got to leave." His friends says, "You can't do that. The game is just getting interesting! If you leave now, it's just going to be a mess for everybody. What are we supposed to do, the rest of us?" He said, "But I've got this yard to mow." They said, "Well, look, just a half hour more. Just a half hour and I'm sure we'll wrap it up by then." "Oh, okay, I guess just a half hour more."

Things started going really good for Andy. He ends up with Boardwalk and Park Place and three of the railroads and, wow, when 2:30 rolls around, he doesn't even notice the time because he's so wrapped up in his game. He keeps gaining and gaining. By 3:00, it's just him and Tommy and one other guy is still in the game. They've picked up even more property and he's accumulating all kinds of money. The time is flying by and Andy is so engrossed in the game and how many properties he's accumulating and how much money, he doesn't notice the time. 3:00 runs by, 3:30, 4:00. Now it's just him and Tommy left and he's got another Monopoly. He thinks he's going to get this game won.

Well then, the next thing he knows, the door suddenly flings open and it's his dad standing in the door with his arms folded and not a very happy look on his face. Andy immediately looks over at the clock; it's 4:30. "Dad, I'm sorry. I'm leaving right now." His dad said, "Just go ahead. No point rushing off. It's too late now. The people decided to look at it at 4. I've just come back from there and the yard being overgrown over the sidewalk and everything did not make a very good impression, and the people decided not to buy the house."

Andy said, "Oh dad, I feel so bad I let you down. I guarantee you it will never happen again." His dad said, "Well, it won't because when I told Mr. Applegate about the situation, he told me he's going to go ahead and give the summer job to his nephew. That was your one chance and you blew it." His dad said, "You know, this was real money that you could have earned and instead you threw it all away on some silly game." Andy said, "Silly game? Dad, you don't understand. I've got Boardwalk and Park Place. Not only that, dad, I have made \$8,000."

You're probably thinking, I guess his name fits him, "Andy Dimwit." You might be wondering, "Well, what does that story have to do with any of us?" The problem is most of us are Andy Dimwits. We've been given a job to do by Jesus Christ and what happens is we get caught up in our Monopoly games and we forget all about the work that Jesus expects us to be doing. Turn with me to Matthew 25. Let's look at verses 14 to 30. Matthew 25:14-30. We read, "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one of them he gave five talents." Now, talents were a silver money. He's not talking about abilities. He's talking about some money he gave them.

"And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' " Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to hear from Jesus?

"He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.' Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Jesus is serious about this. He makes it a salvation and eternal issue. Again, we're not told we have to earn our salvation by doing business with His talents, but He does want to see that we are busy working on His behalf. If we're not, He says the outcome is He's going to cast us out into the outer darkness, and I think we know what that means. What happens to so many of us? Probably most professing Christians, well, we want to do things for Christ and maybe when we're young, we do VS work, which is very commendable, giving some of our best years to the work of the Lord. I'm glad that that is a very strong tradition in most of our circles, and that is good.

Then I don't know what happens. Something happens after those first few years when we're young. One of them is love. People end up getting married. Nothing wrong with that, that's all in accord with Christ Jesus. Obviously, we can't do the same things when we're married. We have a family that we didn't when we were single, but it's more than just that. What happens to most people, when they were single, they were content with little. At least, that's been my experience. When I was a single guy, wow, I could live in the smallest dump you could ... I lived in refrigerator at one time. Honestly, it was an outdoor meat freezer. It was on this farm. It was just big enough, I could put in a twin mattress and just barely get it in there and that was where I lived for two or three months. I was happy as a lark with that. It was warm in the winter and well-insulated.

We get married, and this American dream takes over. The American dream is, "Yeah, let's have all these nice, comfortable things." I got pulled into that like anyone else. I can talk from experience, I'll put it that way. Pretty soon, all these grand ideas, things you wanted to do for Christ, it's so easy that they just get pushed in the background. Now, without a doubt, when we're married and we have a family to support, our first kingdom responsibility is to take care of our family. No one is talking about neglecting our family or living in a tent. I doubt your new wife is going to appreciate that. No one is asking you to do that.

We get going and then like Andy, we get so engrossed. Our business, it grows and it grows and we think, "Wow. If it grows this big and I added this to it and add that, it'll be that much bigger," and pretty soon we are just wrapped up. We're accumulating all of this Monopoly money. Because the instant we die, all of our money, as far as we're concerned, turns into this. Everything that we thought was real money, it seems so real to us, the second we die, that's all it is. Now, it's still real money to the people left behind, but for our needs, for our eternal needs, that's it. The nice house or houses we've built turn into these little wooden or plastic houses from Monopoly. The car we think so much of just turns into one of these little trinkets. I mean, that's it. This stuff is just Monopoly money. It's Monopoly

possessions. It's all gone when we die as far as here on out for us. The only thing that counts is: what did we do for Jesus Christ? In the next story we're going to be talking a little bit about that.

We'll leave it at that on Monopoly money. Let's see what Christ would have us doing, among other things. This next story is about the sympathetic college professor. Dr. Rod Weiss teaches history at Greenburg State University. Every semester, he ends up having to flunk some of the students. Others he has to give a D or a C and he feels bad doing that. Now some professors I had seemed to take a lot of enjoyment in that, but not Professor Weiss. He really enjoyed his students and it just broke his heart to have to fail someone. Finally, one semester, he says, "I know what I'm going to do. Final exam is coming up and it counts for a third of their grade for this semester. I'm just going to go ahead and give them all the questions that are going to be on the exam ahead of time."

He got thinking, "They might still mess them up. I know what I'll do. I'll give them the questions and I'll give them the answers as well." About a week before the exam, he walks into the classroom with his big stack of his papers in his hand. He had some of the students hand them out. They're looking at him like, "What's this?" He says, "Well, what you have in your hand now, these are the exact questions that are going to be on your final exam. Right below them are the correct answers that I want. Now, you don't have to give them exactly the way I wrote them. Put them in your own words, but you've got the questions, you've got the answers. I want to see everybody in the class make an A this time."

The students are really skeptical. "Okay, are you pulling our legs?" "No," he says, "This is no joke. This is serious. Now, you're going to have to learn these answers. You can't bring this into class with you, but this will tell you what to study. You got the questions, you've got the answers. If any of you don't make an A, it's going to be totally your own fault." A week later, he gives the exam and at the end of the hour, he takes them up. He goes to his office and he starts grading them. He's thinking, "Boy, this is going to be fun. This is going to be all of these A's, probably a bunch of 100 percents."

He grades the first guy and next thing he knows, well, he's having to mark this one wrong, mark that one wrong. He's like, "How did this happen? Maybe the student was sick that day. I don't remember." He ends up flunking the student. The guy misses most of the questions, and he's like, "How could that happen? I gave him everything." Well, okay, that was a fluke. He picks up the next one and he starts grading it and he's finding that this guy missed this one, and he missed this one, and he missed that one. He's like, "What's going on here?" The guy ended up with just a D. He passed, but just barely. Dr. Weiss was like, "What is going on?" He picks up the next one and grades it. This guy missed his questions right and left, ends up with a C, but that's all. Pretty much the whole stack of papers went the same way.

He couldn't figure that out. "What more could I do? I gave them the questions, I gave them the answers." It had been the last day of school so he didn't see the students again, so he spent the whole vacation time just trying to figure out what happened. The first day of the next semester, he's walking towards his class and he see Susan, one of the students who had been in his class before, in the past semester. He says, "Oh, Susan. I'm wondering if you could clear up a mystery for me." She says, "Well, I don't know. I'll try." He says, "Last semester, at the end of the semester, I gave everybody the questions that were on the final exam and even the answers and all people had to do was to study them and learn them. Only you and two other people made an A on that exam. Most of the class ended up with C's and there were a number who'd flunked it." He says, "I'm dumbfounded. I mean, explain to me what happened."

Susan says, "Well, I'm surprised too. I was assuming most people made A's as well. Oh, I think I know." She said, "Okay, I think I know what happened. Right after that class that day when you gave us the answers and the test questions, we all went over the student union (that's like a snack bar thing on campus) and we were sitting around. We all got cokes and stuff and we're sitting around talking about it. Remember Luther Little? He threw out a question. He said, 'Now, do you really think Dr. Weiss would give us the questions and answers in advance? Does that make sense? I mean, the university, he could get in trouble with the university if everyone ends up making A's.' The students said, 'Yeah. Hey, that's a good point.' He said, 'I think that these aren't the real answers. He's wanting us to look deeper, to see if we'll go further than that because he couldn't possibly give us the questions and answers. No professor does that.'

"The others said, 'Yeah, I think you're right.' " She said, "So, anyway, they all agreed they were going to meet that night and go over the questions and then get out their books and find what the real answers should be." He said, "Well, were you part of that?" She said, "No. After I left the student union, I got to thinking, is that really what I think of Dr. Weiss, that he would be so mean that he would tell us these are the correct answers and these are the questions and then trick us? Do I really think he would be that mean?" She said, "No, you're not that kind of a teacher. I studied the questions and answers that you gave us and it was just like you said, I made an A. Nothing could have been easier."

You're probably thinking, "David, that story is as ridiculous as the first story." I agree with you. It is an absurd story. Unfortunately, it happens to be true. I don't mean that there's a real Dr. Weiss in some university, but this is what happens in real life. Jesus has already told us what the questions are going to be on judgment day and what the answers are going to be. Yet most Christians don't believe him. Let's look at Matthew 25 verse 31.

Now, it's very interesting, because we go to this section of Matthew 25, and this is immediately following the parable of the talents. I think Jesus is explaining here one way, maybe the chief way, that he wants us to be spending his kingdom money that he has invested with us. Verse 31: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left."

"Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'"

"Then he will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" You think, "These guys must have really done something wicked." He says, " 'For I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take me in, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you didn't visit me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Now, I don't know how Jesus could have made it more plain. He's told us he is the judge. He is the one we will be standing in front of. He says, "Look, this is what I'm going to ask you on judgment day. Did you feed the hungry? Because you're doing it to me. If you feed them, you're feeding me. Did you visit me in prison? When I was sick? Everything he mentions are ministries open to everybody. It doesn't matter if you're a brother or a sister. You don't have to be ordained to do any of these things. You can be a teenager. You can be a young boy or girl. Everybody can visit the sick. You can give food to the hungry. The only limitation is what we put on ourselves. Yet even though he tells us this is what he wants to hear from us, what the question will be, what do most Protestants say? "Your works have no role in your salvation."

I was looking at a tract as I was preparing this message and the tract said, "Remember, there is NOTHING" ... in all capital letters ... "you can DO" ... in all capital letters ... "to win heaven." That's what people hear. What's Jesus doing here? Lying to us? Is this not what he wants to hear from us? I mean what do we think of our master? The parable of the talents, the servant says, "Well, I knew you to be a harsh man and you reap where you didn't sow," and all of that. That's what people are saying to Jesus now: "Hey, I know you to be a tricky master. You said you want to see if we're feeding the poor, but we know you want to know if we are counting on our works or do we depend on your righteousness imputed to us. You're not going to fool us. We know what you're really after." That is really sad.

One final story. Now, we're going to get back to Andy Dimwit. He never did find a summer job. He blew his one chance here, and so he and his friends spent the whole summer playing Monopoly every afternoon. I did that a lot when I was a boy when I didn't have a job going. One day in the afternoon, Andy's father comes in; it's the middle of the afternoon. Andy's friends are playing Monopoly and his dad said, "Andy, I've got some really good news for you." Andy says, "Well, what is it?" He says, "My. Applegate called me into his office today and he asked me what you're doing this summer. I told him that you and your friends are playing Monopoly most of the time. Andy said, "Yeah, and I bet he disapproves of it." His father said, "No, no. No, wait. This is what he said. He said, 'I want you to go over to your house right now, and however much money, Monopoly money, that Andy has, tell him I will give him real money in exchange for it. I'll give him \$1 of real money for every dollar he has of Monopoly money."

Andy said, "Oh, come on. He's not going to do that." His father said, "No, he's serious. I asked him the same question. I said, 'This is a joke, right?' and he said no. He is dead serious. However much Monopoly money you have right now in your hand, that you've won in the game, he will give you one real dollar for every dollar of Monopoly money." Andy said, "Well, why would he do that?" He says, "He just told me he had his reasons. But let's not worry about it. Count up what you have." Andy said, "Well, I don't know." He starts counting and he ends up having a little bit over \$4,000. His dad said, "Wow, we'll turn that into 4,000 real dollars." Then his dad said, "Now, how many houses and hotels do you have? Sell them back to the bank." Andy said, "What?" His dad said, "Sell them back to the bank and then you can get cash for them." Andy said, "Dad, you don't realize, if you sell it back to the bank, you only get half of your money back that you've paid for it."

He said, "The other thing, I've got the yellow Monopoly: Marvin Gardens and Ventnor and Atlantic, and I've got four houses on each one. If I sell those back to the bank, then when people land there, I just get like \$28 rent. With the houses there, it's going to be like \$900 or something." His dad said, "Andy, what are you thinking? We're talking about real money here." Andy says, "Oh, well, all right, but when do I get this money? You're going to give it to me this afternoon?" His dad said, "No. What he said was you give him the money this afternoon, the Monopoly money, and then at the end of summer, which is only two months away, then he's going to give you the real dollar for each Monopoly

dollar." "The end of summer?" Andy said, "Oh, come on." His friends all looked up at the ceiling in disbelief. "That's the dumbest offer I've ever heard. Who would go for that?" He said, "No deal. Man, if I have to wait till the end of summer, no, that's ridiculous." He kept his game and played. You'd be happy to know Andy did win the game that day. Again, you're probably saying, "That is really dumb. If someone made that kind of offer, even an Andy Dimwit would take him up on it."

Unfortunately, it's another true story. Jesus tells us that basically on judgment day, he will take all these Monopoly money we've been earning and trade as real money, eternal money in place for it. In the Parable of the Unrighteous Steward, at the end he said, "Make for yourselves friends with unrighteous mammon so that when you fail, they will receive you into everlasting homes." We can take this funny money, this Monopoly money that we make here on the earth. We can help the poor with it and because we do that, Jesus says we will be rewarded eternally. We can get an eternal benefit for just taking Monopoly money and spending it the way that he wants us to.

We're also dumb. We say, "Well, that's a bum deal. You mean I have to pay the Monopoly money now and I don't get anything in return until I die? Who would go for such a stupid offer as that?" No one says that but that's what we do with our lives. It's like, "Well, I'll give 10% maybe, but I don't want to go anything beyond that." We're just like Andy Dimwit. "No, I want my Monopoly game. I've got all these houses on Marvin Gardens and stuff and, oh, if I give to the poor, I'll lose some of that." We are a bunch of dimwits. Jesus makes it so obvious to us. He tells us in advance how it's all going to be and we don't really believe him. This stuff seems so real right now and this stuff just seems really far away.

The point of the all three messages combined is: what is our view of money? What do we spend our time on? When we got in a situation where we can provide for our families, are we happy to stop there? Or do we say, "Let me make this business a little bigger and then a little bigger and a little bigger." And pretty soon, we're working day and night in our businesses. We can say things like, "Well, I make my business part of my spiritual worship." And yes, our secular work, there is a sacred aspect of it, but let's not kid ourselves. It's sacred as long as we are providing necessities for our family. When we're starting to accumulate all of these other stuff, we are just joking to say that that is something that is for God.

Okay, let's have some questions.

Question and Answer Time:

Unknown speaker: I just wanted to comment, I was blessed with that message. I thought that the disciples, as they were following Christ there, it was interesting that in three accounts of the gospel it said that in one account they were astonished, one they were amazed, and one that they were surprised. I just wanted to share those little passages there that were very instrumental. I read the book you wrote on Clement of Alexandria, *Intimacy with God*. That was really an eye-opener to me to why they were surprised, because I always wondered why they were surprised. They had already left everything. Christ have commanded them to leave all and follow him. Why were they surprised when he asked the rich, young ruler to do the same thing? It was that they perceived that they had not rid the passions of riches in their own souls and they had left it in action and deed but yet had those passions, I think, Christ was teaching them something. That was what the rich, young ruler had. He had a passion for riches, for money. I think Clement stated that what Christ really wants to do in our hearts is get rid of the excitement of riches in our hearts. I just say praise the Lord for this message because it is very rich to know that we can be delivered.

David Bercot: Yes, it has to start inside. If you are loving riches and are constantly thinking and planning for them, that's where your energy is going to go; where your heart is.

Nathan Overholt: Can you be a poor man, and still have that longing for wealth too?

David Bercot: Yes, a lot of poor people do. I can tell you that without any doubt, being involved in work in Honduras, just because you're poor doesn't mean your heart isn't set on riches. You can still be thinking about that, and be miserable because you don't have more than your neighbor and all of that. It has to start inside. I also wanted to say, this is a message that is meant for you to look at yourself. It's real easy to hear this message and think, "Yeah, so and so, he needs to hear this." That's not the point. It's you. What are you doing with your life, not what you feel your neighbor should do.

Dean Taylor, Altona Community, MN: David, you've been a church historian, not only the early church but throughout the different centuries. You've studied church history. Not only that, you know several different church groups in your experience throughout your life. I'm just curious, how many times have the teachings of Jesus been the things that the church was concerned about that they were losing, or they had a standard made, or it caused a church split? Are the teachings of Jesus the things that concern us?

David Bercot: That's a very good point. I think the question probably answers itself. It is interesting. We don't tend to fight and split over the commandments of Jesus, not because we're all keeping them necessarily but we may feel that they don't really apply. We are a little strange... not strange, we're very human as Anabaptists. We're real strict on the nonresistance, on not swearing of oaths, but when it comes to Jesus' teaching on possessions, we have tended to wiggle around that and I don't exclude myself from that either, that he does call us to something radically different from the world in how we view wealth. I do have Evangelical friends who I know have done a better job than me.

But yes, Dean's point is: it is odd. We don't fight so much about Christ's commandments even if they're being disobeyed, but then we'll fight over some little thing, whether you're going to have a mustache above your beard or whatever. I'm not mocking anyone with that. I'm just saying we often fight about things that aren't even a commandment in Scripture and we ignore things that are.