

October 26, 2025

Paul Purdue preaching

Sometime in high school, feeling my adolescent bravado, I started calling my dad, *"the cheapest man on the face of the earth"*. I could tell a lot of stories to illustrate this, but when we ate out, and we rarely ate out, no matter where we ate out, dad slowly opened the check, shuttered, and let out a low groan "ooowuh". I think dad enjoyed being called "the cheapest man on earth". Who doesn't want to win some kind of world championship?

"We all have a money story, whether we recognize it or not. Perhaps we are living from a story of fear or shame or guilt. Or a story that our actions won't have an impact. Or a story that we don't have enough.

Often, to speak of money is to invite tension into the room. We so quickly want to avoid it. But we can reframe it! Money and possessions are one of the most common topics in scripture, and Jesus talked about money more than faith and prayer. Our money story, therefore, is a spiritual story." (Our Money Story Journal- 2020 @SacredArts)

I want to invite you to pick up this journal to think about your money story. It has questions, poems, scriptures, and stories to help you craft your money story. A money story is not a spreadsheet or budget, but a narrative of our values around money. If we do not prayerfully ponder our money story we will slide into the narrative crafted by the marketing gods, tech lords, cultural high-priests, and TV preachers. Come let us explore the spiritual side of money.

In Exodus 16, the people have forgotten their money story. Once enslaved and exploited they are now free people, but the residue of oppression clings to them. They have passed through the Red Sea and seen the most powerful army on earth tossed aside into the waters. They did not leave Egypt empty handed. No, as the Israelite domestics, cooks and nannies left Egypt they carried off the gold rings, silver necklaces, and bejeweled charms of their oppressors. They took the silken dresses they had made for their oppressor's children to clothe their own sons and daughters. (Exodus 3) As they fled they rustled up herds of Egyptian cattle, sheep and goats. (Exodus 12)

Out into the wilderness, across the Reed sea, away from Egyptian city life, the whole Israelite community complained against Moses saying, *"Oh, how we wish that the LORD had just put us to death while we were still in Egypt. There we could sit by the pots cooking meat and eat our fill of bread. Instead, you've brought us out into this desert to starve us all to death."* They longed to go back to the way that things used to

be. They adopted a money story glorifying the good old days that overlooked evil, injustice and oppression .

The people believed they did not have enough, that they were starving. But soon enough, they will cast the gold and silver plundered from Egyptians into a Golden Calf and feast on the plundered herds declaring *“these are our gods who brought us out of Egypt”* They wanted to go back to an Egypt that never existed. They reminisced about grilling steaks but forget how Hebrew midwives subverted Pharaoh’s genocide. They glossed over Egyptian violence, exploitation and oppression and embraced golden idols. They forget how they cried out to God and God answered, *“I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land flowing with dairies and pollinators... The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have seen how the Egyptians oppress them. Now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to lead my people out of Egypt.”* They forgot God’s deliverance.

In Exodus, God at times appears emotional, angry, human-like and even less righteous than Moses. Exodus lets us imagine God’s frustration and anger at our unfaithfulness. When we read of God’s anger, it can be easy to miss God’s grace, but listen to this verse: *“In the morning you will see the LORD’s glorious presence, because your complaints against the LORD have been heard.”* Not only did the people collect Manna, they saw the glorious presence of the Lord. Hear the Good News despite our complaining God feeds us, God sustains us, there is enough. They called the strange grain that fell with the morning dew “manna”. It tasted like honey wafers. If you tried to collect more than your daily bread, overnight your stockpile of “what is it” filled with bugs and worms. God called this a test: a test of our trust, reliance, and contentment.

Can we believe there is enough for us and everyone else? Or will we race out and collect more than we need?

I fear we are still bowing down to golden calves today while somehow missing God’s presence in our daily bread? The market gods preach you do not have enough, do enough, or are enough. “Your house, your lawn, your car, your school, your clothes, your vacation, your waist, your face is not enough.” Upgrade your starter house, trade that car, make an in-game purchase (I am not sure this means but I know it aggravates Caleb), parlay a bet, consider Botox, visit a more exotic location! Is not our national religion materialism- the lie that purchases can fill the void in our soul, that only love-given-away can fill.

Jesus whispers an alternative money story *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal. Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.... No moth balls there. Listen, where your treasure is, there your heart will be... “No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and wealth.... Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than fashion? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon (that dandy) in all his royal finery was not clothed like a wild rose. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, will God not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”*

I have been thinking about my money story this week. My dad, the cheapest man on earth, could fix almost anything. Living 200 miles from dad, I called dad to fix a sink, he was not much help over the phone. I complained and lamented, “Dad, how did you learn how to fix everything?” He laughed “Poverty taught me every home repair I know”

We pulled and put in engines in so many Volkswagens, we kept a spare motor in the garage. One Saturday, Dad helped one of my brother's college classmates put that engine in their car- no charge beyond a verbal one: “change your oil and get your degree”. Dad physically put a new roof on our own house, roofed my aunt's house, paid for a neighborhood widow's roof, and put roofs on strangers' homes in Appalachia. Going through his estate I saw how Mom and Dad gave well over 15% of their income to the church, agriculture in Africa, Appalachian empowerment, higher education and people in need. At dad's funeral, a young father came to the open microphone and shared how he was kicked out of his home on his 18th birthday. Dad, his Sunday school teacher, loaded his belongings into our old truck. Bill lived with my parents until he finished college. Bill closed by saying “often when I hold my daughters, I think about Bob Purdue, because everything good I learned about being a father I learned from him.”

I was embarrassed by every old car my dad ever drove, (the Puddle Jumper, Big Red, General Sherman) but I now understand my dad had a money story deeply rooted in the love of God and neighbor. Did dad ever want a new car, I am not sure, but dad invested

in pursestrings that will never wear out- treasures in heaven where rust does not exist, robbers can't steal, and moths do not chew holes.

Will we trust God and step away from the everyday materialism that pervades our lives? Will we allow God to write a more spiritual, neighborly, and loving money story for us? Let us pray this prayer from our Sanctified Art money story journal:

Giving and loving God,
I am made of stories—
stories of heartbreak and triumph, stories of love and tragedy,
stories of families who belong
and families who break,
stories of loose ends and new beginnings.
I have absorbed stories that live in me like an internal compass,
and many that I do not wish to carry at all.
But your story remains steadfast:
I am loved. I am enough.
There is enough for all.
Enough. Enough. Enough.
May this become my constant refrain.
May I believe this is who I am.
May I live trusting your holy design.
Enough. Enough. Enough.
Amen.