

## **M:Power, the Christian Stewardship Event Manchester, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2005**

### **Bishop James Jones**

Summary notes of keynote address

#### **Introduction**

Consider Acts where 13 times it says, “and they prayed”. The first context was the search for a successor to Judas. The disciples needed to have the leadership team brought up to strength. We still have a need for spiritual people to lead in the area of discipleship and money.



#### **Unspiritual treasurers**

A local church can be blessed by leadership, but can also be blighted by the wrong people being in leadership. Two areas in particular where this can be seen are music and money. The people who lead in these matters can blight the church. If you have an unspiritual treasurer or finance director “you will find that the mission of God is blighted”.

**Inhaling treasurers** – on hearing an exciting idea for mission take a sharp intake of breath

**Exhaling treasures** – on hearing an exciting idea for mission, exhale with a sense of enthusiasm.

Treasurer’s need to be skilled in the use of money, but not interested in money itself.

Jesus spoke about money more than any other subject other than the Kingdom.

#### **Money gets a bad press**

There are two passages which we often fail to grasp and lead us to a wrong understanding.

- 1) Story of the cleansing of the Temple. This was not a statement against money, capitalism or commercialism. It was a statement against racism. It wasn’t what the traders were doing, so much as where they were doing it. By trading in the court of the Gentiles, they denied them the opportunity of drawing closer to God. Jesus was anxious to preserve the sacred space that helped others to draw near to God. Consider Isaiah “My house shall be a house of prayer, for all races, but you have turned it into a den of thieves”. We have tended to focus on the ‘den of thieves’ rather than the ‘place for all races’.
- 2) Rich man and the camel going through the eye of a needle. Here Jesus wasn’t rubbishing rich people. Camels were highly prized.

## **Money as part of the material world**

The material world is essentially very good. It existed before the fall of man. The bodily resurrection of Jesus is important. The material world has a place within the eternal as much as the spiritual. This is why we have to be interested in the redemption of the whole of creation and not just saving souls. Colossians 1: "All things, in heaven and on earth have come into being through and for Christ". The Hebrew view of the world is holistic. Money is linked to the material world, which requires a Hebrew worldview.

## **Principles of Giving**

Consider the prayer of dedication in 1 Chronicles 29:10+ "For all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours". Thankfulness is the beginning of Giving. 'How is it that we are in a position to give you anything in the first place?'. "For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you". We give out of what has already been given, not out of what we have achieved.

**What** - what we give is already a gift. We must appeal to God's people not to change the character of the gift. It is a gift, we should not make it our own.

**When** – when we give. In that moment we are most like God. This is our destiny for one day we will be like Him.

**Why** – "...for God so loved the world that he gave...". One of the surest signs of falling in love is the ongoing desire to give. Love is the root of giving. Without the love, the giving will be dutiful, but with the love, the giving will be filled with love. If we don't feel like it, then we have to go back to Jesus, to the cross.

**How** – freely, joyously and with no strings attached. "Teach about giving in such a way that you are not the puppet master that pulls the strings of giving in the congregation. Be free of that and allow the spirit of God to do the work of applying the word to people's lives." Stewardship too often seen as miserly. Stewardship is a by-word for generosity. That is how God stewardship his creation. God's giving is magnanimous and generous. Our calling is to lead people in this kind of giving.

**Where** – here, on earth. This earth is Christ's. In the Lord's prayer there is no division between 'Your will being done' and 'on earth as it is in heaven'. END