

Title: THE MORAL CASE FOR ECONOMIC FREEDOM, JOHN 12:1-8
(Chatham, NJ; 03/17/13, AM) [S-P, Topical]

Theme: Although the Bible condemns greed, having the freedom to exercise our gifts is still the best way to enrich society and elevate people out of poverty.

Purpose: To enlighten the church on how free market capitalism generates opportunities for everyone and eradicates poverty in a way that government programs never can.

Introduction:

1. What do the Prodigal Son's father and the Good Samaritan have in common? They both had money.
2. Is the handling of money a moral issue? Of course.
3. Which economic system is most closely linked to human freedom, human flourishing and opportunity, and man's purpose on earth? Which economic system has proven to raise people out of poverty and elevate the economic state of most people? Free Market Capitalism is the answer.
4. In the Parable of the Talents servants are given money and the freedom to use it as their abilities allow them. Only one refuses to exercise his freedom; he is condemned for it.

I. The End of Greed as We Know It

- A. Which job would you choose between two offers?
 1. With all other things being equal (job satisfaction, good employer and coworkers) there is a salary difference
 2. If you choose the lower salary, most likely it is because some other things outweigh that difference.
 3. This is not greed but self-interest at work, and nobody will call you a greedy profiteer.
- B. The politicizing of greed
 1. When we think of greed, why do we assume only big corporations are guilty of it?
 2. Economist Milton Friedman said, "Of course none of us are greedy. It's only the other fellow who's greedy."
 3. Why are we upset at the profit motive but not the self-interest of other things: oxygen on airplanes; "save yourselves" says Peter in Acts 2:40?
 4. Phil Donahue asked Friedman about capitalism and greed. (See the quote)
 5. Capitalism is no more inherently greedy than any other system of economics.
 6. Governments, because they are run by humans are also greedy.
 7. Free market capitalism is about the freedom to use talents and is characterized not by greed but by human flourishing and creativity.

II. Greed In All Its Biblical Glory

- A. Greed is coveteousness
 1. Most passages insert greed for covet
 2. Luke 12:15, Eph. 5:3, 1 Cor. 5:10, and Col. 3:5
 3. Paul associates coveting with idolatry
 4. The 10th commandment relates to the 1st
 5. "An insatiable desire to have more"
 6. We should talk more about coveting because we think only of corporate greed
 7. Whereas all of us are likely to be guilty of coveting
- B. Who are those who covet in the Bible?
 1. The prophets denounce the politically powerful who enrich themselves by violence (Jer. 22:17, Ez. 22:27, Hab. 2:9)

2. Who managed the money for Jesus (Jn. 12:1-8)?
3. A new look at the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21)
4. Should we only denounce his greed or is there another lesson for us?
5. Money gave him an opportunity to be rich toward God
6. Each of us has the same choice no matter how much we make
7. Each of us is subject to coveting no matter how much we make
8. It isn't just corporations and fat cats who covet what others have

III. The Best System for Human Flourishing; Most Consistent with Biblical Teaching

Who made the following statement? "The problem is not that there is an unequal distribution of wealth in the world. The problem is that there is an unequal distribution of capitalism." John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods, *World*, 3/9/13, 20)

I've always liked another quote from Margaret Thatcher, "Socialism is great until you run out of other people's money to spend."

Read the following books: *Money, Greed, and God*, Jay W. Richards; *The 5 Big Lies about American Business*, Michael Medved; *Defending the Free Market*, Rev. Robert Sirico. (Look up the Acton Institute online while you are at it.)

- Sirico is a Catholic priest who "ran with Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden and the whole New Left Coast crowd of the early 1970s." By his own admission, he grew up.
 - A. The best system for freedom and the human expression of his God-given talents
 1. Centralized economic planning and redistribution can never accomplish what human freedom and ingenuity unleashed can accomplish.
 2. Economics is not just about numbers, logarithms, and equations; it is about human choice and action. (Sirico)
 3. It demands the best of what humans can do (see *Money*, p. 130)
 - B. Ownership is consistent with biblical stewardship
 1. If fact, it encourages stewardship like nothing else
 2. That may sound like a contradiction because we realize that God owns all things
 3. The fact is that if we own something we are more likely to take care of it
 4. When we are all responsible for something, no one takes the responsibility
 5. One of the best predictors of wealth accumulation is the ownership of property
 6. Capitalism and the Bible both respect property rights

Conclusion:

1. Giving people the freedom to blaze their own path with their own God-given talents results in more opportunity for all. (One economic myth assumes a limited amount of pie.)
2. We will never legislate greed out of humanity, and governments will always be just as greedy as corporations.
3. Discover what free markets really do for you. Read these books.
4. Pursue your self-interest for the sake of fulfilling your obligation before God to do everything as if serving the Lord, Col. 3:23-24.
5. See your opportunities as a means of storing up treasures in heaven.
6. See them as your entrepreneurial vocation, and give God the glory for them.