

Rev. Dan Welch Pentecost 17 9-15-24 Text- Genesis 19:1-11

[Slide] Ecclesiastes 10:19, “A feast is for laughter. Wine gladdens the heart. And money is the answer to everything.” Don’t you love that? Money is the answer to everything! You’ve got a problem? I’ve got the solution—money! It comes straight out of the Bible! Ecclesiastes 10:19, “Money is the answer to everything.” Amen. Let’s close in prayer.

Solomon, who wrote Ecclesiastes, is speaking in hyperbole. Solomon is exaggerating. What’s his point? Although money isn’t literally the answer to every problem, money can solve a lot of problems. Car repairs? Medical bills? Mortgage? Heat? Water? Money meets tangible needs. And money solves intangible problems like our need for happiness and peace of mind. Need to get out of Minnesota for the winter? Need a lake house? Need a more exciting life? What’s the answer? *Money!*

[Slide] Money is an essential part of life. That’s Solomon’s point and that’s why today we begin a three-week emphasis called *Money Talks*. Why do that? If we don’t manage money biblically, in the end, every other area of our lives will collapse. Let me say that again, only slower so it sinks in. *If we don’t manage money biblically, in the end, every other area of our lives will collapse*—our families, our marriages, our emotional and our physical health. Really? Yes. Really.

[Slide] Don’t believe me? Then meet Lot. Lot shows us *money’s dark side*. Money definitely has a bright side. But money also has a dark side. What is money’s dark side? The belief that money is *literally* the answer to everything. I will make five points today as we look at Lot—money’s dark and dangerous side.

[Slide] **The Historical Setting.** Abraham is born in Ur. He and his family move to Haran. Then, in Genesis 12, God calls Abraham to leave Haran and go to the land of Canaan so that God can bless all the families on earth through him. Remember this. We will come back to it later. Abraham leaves Haran and takes his nephew Lot with him. They now live in Canaan.

Abraham’s livestock grows and so does Lot’s. But the land isn’t big enough for all their livestock. Abraham’s men begin fighting with Lot’s men. Abraham tells Lot, “Look, let’s not fight about this. Instead, let’s divide the land between us. Lot, you get first pick.”

[Slide] “Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, *like the garden of the LORD*, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east.” (Gen 13:10–

11) Lot looks at the Jordan Valley and what does he see? Abundance. Prosperity. Wealth. Lot sees *money, money, money!* The land looks like the Garden of the LORD—that would be the Garden of Eden. And that would that be? Paradise! Lot sees the prosperity of the Jordan Valley and he thinks, “This is paradise!”

Meet money’s dark side. Life is defined solely in financial terms. “Once I get that land; once I get that promotion; once I get that house; once I get that inheritance; once I retire, I’ll finally be in paradise!” With his new land, Lot thinks he’s in paradise. Money has a dark side.

[Slide] **The City of Sodom.** “Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.” (Gen 13:13) The city of Sodom had grown prosperous through oppressing people. The city of Sodom had raked in boatloads of big bucks by taking advantage of people. Oppressed people in Sodom cry out to God for justice. Both Genesis 18:20 and 19:13 state that, “the outcry against Sodom was very great.”

[Slide] In Genesis 13, Lot lives outside of Sodom (13:12). But in chapter 14, Lot moves within Sodom (14:12). And in chapter 19, we read that Lot stands, “in the gate” of Sodom (19:1). In the ancient Near East, to stand in the gate meant you were a community leader—you’d been elected to the city council! You’d have high standing in the chamber of commerce. So, Lot is an upcoming mover and shaker in the city of Sodom!

Before God destroys Sodom, he shows mercy to Lot and his family. He sends two angels—disguised as men—to come and save Lot and his family from Sodom’s judgment. These two “men” enter the town. Everyone refuses to show them hospitality—everyone except for Lot.

Soon the men of Sodom gather at Lot’s door. They want to rape the angels disguised as men. Lot says, “No way!” [Slide] Then, in one of the most epic parenting failures in history, Lot says, “Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them.” (Gen 19:8) Lot is willing to sacrifice his own daughters to keep his financial standing in Sodom. Money has a very dark side!

[Slide] **The Sorry Standard.** Thankfully, the angels intervene. They strike the men of Sodom with blindness. Then they tell Lot, “Look, you need to leave right now.” Lot goes to his sons-in-law and says, “We need to get out of here. God is going to destroy this place.’ But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.” (Gen 19:14) When Lot starts talking about God, his family thinks he’s joking. That makes a lot of sense, doesn’t it?

Lot has lived as though money is literally the answer to everything but now he says, "It's time to listen to God." His family says, "What? You're kidding, right? This is a joke, right?" Lot's actions don't line up with his words. That's why his family doesn't take his words about God seriously. The same is true for us.

Our children imitate who we are; not who we *say* we are. *Our children imitate who we are; not who we say we are.* Lot says, "Listen to God." But his family doesn't take him seriously because Lot doesn't take God seriously. Lot's God-talk is a joke.

[Slide] The angels say, "Leave! Don't look back!" But Lot's wife looks back at the city. Why is that? Lot's wife can't let go of all her money. She becomes a pillar of salt. The last time we hear about Lot, he's living in a cave with his two daughters. Lot's two daughters fear they won't have children so they get their dad drunk and trick Lot into sleeping with them. Lot ends up impregnating both daughters.

How ironic! Lot tells the men of Sodom to take sexual advantage of his daughters. But his daughters end up taking sexual advantage of Lot. The upshot? Lot's family loses everything—literally! And why is that? They thought money was the answer to everything. That's money's very, very dark, destructive and demonic side.

[Slide] **The Lasting Salvation.** "All the *families* on earth will be blessed through you." (Gen 12:3) Through Abraham, God wanted to bless Lot and his family, but money's dark side destroyed them all. God also wants to bless our families. How? Through Abraham. And through Abraham to Isaac and Jacob and Judah and David and finally Jesus.

[Slide] *Jesus.* Money meets tangible needs. Money meets intangible needs. Only Jesus hanging on a cross, outside the city of Jerusalem, meets our deepest needs—forgiveness, love, meaning, acceptance, purpose. Only Jesus bleeding on the cross fills the gaping emptiness in our hearts. Jesus hanging on a cross, that's how God blesses all the families on earth including even and *especially* you.

Money is temporary. Jesus is eternal. Money comes and goes. Jesus stays through thick and thin. Money says, "Work to get more of me!" Jesus says, "I've done all the work for you." Money leaves us when we die. Jesus stays with us when we die and leads us to everlasting life!

[Slide] **The Sensible Solution** to breaking the dark side of money. "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in

keeping with his income.” (1 Corinthians 16:2) God directs our giving to be personal, planned, and proportionate.

The dark side of money says, “Get! Get! Get!” That destroys us and our families. Don’t believe me? Just ask Lot. Want a better way to live? [Slide] G-I-V-E. Give! Amen.