

“God Wants Your Car Keys”

A Sermon Delivered at St. Andrews United Church, Sudbury Ontario

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Scripture Reading: Mark 10:17 – 22

By Dr. Ed Kruse

You have such a wonderful church and marvelous United Church of Canada, especially with your respect for people in the First Nation. And the openness of your sanctuary and your hearts, and your inspiring banners. I hope you appreciate them all, every day.

I appreciate my friend Bill Steadman. Please thank him for me. Bill is a transformational leader, and we could use some transforming, every day. There is no subject that fits our needy world today any better than our transformation, ourselves, our congregation, our families, our communities, and our nations!

Thank you for the privilege of sharing God’s Word and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our title is, “God Wants Your Car Keys,” and that idea could also transform your life. It really is all about money and how you look at money. Jesus said that a person can have a huge problem over money. It could even keep someone from salvation. God’s Word says, “The love of money is the root of all evil.” Today’s Bible story is the one that ends with Jesus saying, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get in heaven.”

Why do you suppose that is? There are several reasons, and I am only going to share one – greed. By the way, that is same reason we have so much violence – greed. And greed, Jesus says, is more common among the rich. Rich people are more prone to oppress the poor and the powerless and the voiceless – out of greed.

I was greedy when I was young. And it makes me sad to confess to you that I am still greedy. I am even greedy with my time. I still have not learned to work my schedule around Jesus. My stewardship is **still trying to fit Jesus into my schedule.**

Here was a surprise for me in my life. I experienced poverty when I lost my job, my house and my farm. It was bad. But what was worse was that when I made the most money I was greediest! When I was rich I experienced questions I never had when I was poor, like,

1. “How can I keep this earning level?”
2. “How can I protect myself from those who want my money?”
3. “How can I get more?”

Can you hear the greed? Money idolatry is so powerful that it can even lead a person to stop trusting in God! Fortunately for us, God loves us in spite of our riches. This story proves it. It says, “Jesus looked at this rich young man and loved him.” But money tempts us to think too highly of money or a nice house or even a nice car.

The rich young ruler had a secure position. With his talents and contacts he could easily have gotten another job. What’s wrong is that he trusted in things instead of God! There are a lot of warnings against the misuse of money.

Churches even favor rich people sometimes. Have you ever heard a church leader talk about “giving to the church?” What’s wrong with that picture? Instead of saying give money to the

church say, "Give money **to God through the church!**" Every time we give money to God through the offering plate, credit card or giving our time and talents, through the church or charities, or to people in need or in our last will and testament, it is a reflection of our commitment to God.

I was taught that every morning that I wake up, it is a signal that it is time for me to renew my baptismal commitment to God through Jesus Christ. When I wake up grateful I thank God for the gift of waking up, the capacity to work at a job, and to trust in Jesus Christ for eternal life.

The Bible story in Mark chapter 10 tells about the rich young ruler who came running to Jesus, and asked him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus answered, "You know the answer. What did you learn?"

The rich young man said, "Do not steal or murder, or disobey your parents, or commit adultery or defraud God or anyone else."

Jesus said, "Good job, young man. Standing ovation! Just do that and you can follow me."

The rich young ruler responded, "I have done all those things ever since I was young."

Again Jesus replied, "Good job! You only lack one thing – sell everything you have and give the money to the poor." We could add, "You can easily find another job with all your connections." The rich young man could have said, "OK, I can do that. I can trust God to provide."

But he did not. He turned away from Jesus, and as far as we know, he never came back. Can money have that much power over a person? Of course!

I also see a lot of humor in this story and that stewardship is hilarious. Let's retell the story one more time, with its meaning in today's world, and see how funny some of this is, and pick up a healthy perspective about money.

In order to tell this story with humor, I will be the rich young man if one of you will be Jesus (pause while someone comes forward).

(Taking out my check book), "Jesus, I heard what you said about giving money to the poor, and to whom should I make out the check?"

Jesus replies, "You've got a check book?!... No need to write out a check Ed. Just give me your check book." Jesus asks, "Do you have anything else?"

As I reach in my pocket and pull out everything I say, "I have some cash."

Jesus replies, "You've got cash?!..." And Jesus waits until I give him all my cash. Then Jesus asks, "What's that card?"

I reply, "That's my credit card!"

Jesus asks, "You've got a credit card?!..."

I ask, "Do you want that too?"

Jesus answers, "Yes, especially the way I see you using your credit card!" Then Jesus asks, "What is that other card with your picture on it?"

I reply, "That is my driver's license!"

Jesus asks, "You've got a driver's license?!..."

I reply, "Where I live we need a driver's license in order to drive a car!"

Jesus asks, "You've got a car?!..." I reach for my car keys to give to Jesus, and Jesus asks, "What is that other key for?"

I answer, "That is my house key!"

And Jesus asks, "You've got a house?!..."

As I give Jesus my house key, I say, "Wait till my beloved finds out."

And Jesus says, "You've got a beloved?"

I say, "Do you want her too?"

And Jesus replies, "Yes, especially if you think she is yours. You see I just loaned her to you until you complete your stewardship and come to be with me."

Then I get it. I realize that even if I give everything I have to Jesus, it still would not come close to what Jesus gave for me when he died on the cross for my sins. And I ask Jesus, "What else do you want? My heart is yours."

Then an amazing thing happens. Jesus turns the whole story upside down, saying, "Ed, your heart is all I wanted in the first place. Now take your house key and just let me live there with you, in every room. And here are your car keys and driver's license and just drive within the speed limit. And here is your credit card; and just quit maxing it out with bad credit. And here is your cash and check book. Just know that I have a lot more to give you, more that you can imagine.

"I will bless you every time you look at your car keys and think of me and how much I love you."

Please pray with me: **Dear God, in Christ You have given us so much. Give us one thing more – a grateful heart. Amen**