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We've heard about the little boy in the gospel who gave up his five barley loaves and two fishes so that Jesus could feed the multitude. The boy hurried home and told his mother about the exciting incident. With eyes still big with wonder, he told her how his five little barley cakes and two dried fishes had multiplied in the Saviour's hand until there was enough bread to satisfy 5000 hungry people. And then with a wistful look, he added: 'I wonder, Mother, whether it would be that way with everything we gave him'.

'The amount we measure out is the amount we'll be given back' God won't be outdone in generosity. On one occasion Jesus praised a poor widow for putting her 'last penny' into the Temple Treasury. In fact, giving without counting the cost is at the very heart of the Gospel and that applies to our hard-earned cash as anything else. Being a penny-pincher or a miser hardly tallies with the gospel mandate to love. There's an old Irish proverb which says: 'when the hand ceases to scatter, the mouth ceases to praise'. We often hear it said at funerals that he or she would give you their last penny. That's saying a lot.

We know money is necessary and we cannot live without it. Some say that 'it's the root of all evil'. However, the Scriptures tell us that it's the love of it which harms the soul. An old proverb says: 'it is easier to renounce worldly possessions than to renounce the love of them. The danger is we might turn them into a false God, an idol.

Jesus says today 'use money that tainted thing to win you friends'. He's not talking here about the 'fair weather' type. They're prone to drop us fairly promptly when hard times beckon. That's what happened to the prodigal Son in last Sunday's story, if you remember.

In using our money responsibly and for the good of our fellow human beings, we'll be winning ourselves friends right across the board and if they reach the eternal shores before us they'll be on the lookout to 'welcome us into the tents of eternity'.

'God loves a cheerful giver' the scriptures tell us. Perhaps we need to examine our consciences. Yes, we can do what we like with our cash but we'll still have to answer to God as to how we've used it or abused it. We can spend it pampering ourselves or even our family. Jesus told us to 'lay-up treasure in heaven, not on earth'. We do this by becoming less grasping and more generous. We can also squander money on wasteful things, showing scant regard for the disadvantaged and needy people of this world. Worse still we might be tempted to judge a person's worth by the size of their bank balance – not a very clever thing to do.

We cannot take it with us, no matter how much we stashed away or how long we live. The old burial shroud has no pockets. But whatever we give away with a good heart will not go unrewarded – 'a cup of cold water given in love will not go without its reward', 'Repayment will be made to us when the virtuous rise again'.