

Witness Unhindered:
“What Money Can’t Buy”
 Acts 8:4-25

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” - Tertullian

“How little people know who think that holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing . . . it is irresistible.” - C.S. Lewis

“Albert Einstein once said that we live in an age of perfect means and confused ends. The question which is inherent in that statement I consider to be the most important question of our times. It has to do with the boredom which is deadly, with the emptiness which frightens us, but also with the fulfillments which make life worth living. It has to do with the crucial task which has been set for us, namely, to distinguish between the "means," which make our life easier, and the "meaning" of our life, which is the only thing that makes life possible. Even the person who has perfectly solved the problem of the means can still perish in suicide because a life without meaning is dreadful. And this dreadfulness actually increases as the outward course of this life grows smoother.

I can express what I mean by this as a Christian in the words of our Lord: "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?" All the means of mastering the world can turn a man into a fool if he overlooks the crucial question. That this should not happen, I consider the most important question of our time.” - Helmut Thielicke

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- The assumption of the passage and the premise of the sermon are that we all struggle with power, agency, and control in a broken world.
 - How do you experience the frustration of powerlessness in your life, work, relationships?
 - In what instances do you find yourself trying to secure power, maintain power, or even increase power, control, and agency?
 - What are the means to that end for you?
 - Knowledge, money, right eating, right parenting, etc?
 - How are you tempted to use the Gospel as a commodity or means to an end?
- Simon the Magician seems drawn to the Gospel yet also profoundly misunderstands the implications for his life.
 - What from the text make you think he is truly converted? What from the text would lead to conclude that he is not?
 - Can Christians still struggle with sin and misunderstanding?
 - Why does he receive such a stiff rebuke from the apostles?
- This passage celebrates the Gospel moving beyond the inner circles of pious folks in Jerusalem into Samaria - folks who were outsiders and enemies.
 - What does such expansion of the Gospel require of those inside the inner-circle?
 - What are the cultural, social, ethnic barriers in our day that need the redemption of work of Christ?