

Sermon 2024 03 03 Text

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Companion on the Journey. Amen.

The theme that arose from our Lenten Study this week was that Harmony is Disruptive.

This seems like an extremely odd statement because naturally we want to live in harmony; we choose to live in harmony because we choose to live within the community of Christ.

However, the mechanisms by which we define that harmony and by which we achieve that harmony can differ widely.

I occasionally check in on what the megachurches in America (and sometimes in Australia) are doing. They generally preach a Gospel of Prosperity, the more you get in return.

Give \$10 and in some miraculous way get back \$20. Give \$100 and get back \$200. It seems like some miraculous betting scheme where you cannot lose.

And the Pastors of these Churches are proof positive of this. For they live in multi-million-dollar homes, drive expensive cars and have at least one, if not two private jets – because to fly commercial does not suit their preaching schedule.

Or as one Pastor put it, to fly commercial is to fly in one big tube of satanists. Perhaps forgetting that it is the very people they are ministering to who also fly commercial.

Or as I saw one prosperity pastor proclaim that "...if Jesus was alive today, he would drive a Rolls-Royce..."

This Parish needs to get its act together I don't have one private jet, let alone two. We need a significantly bigger house, and I need several more cars.

I have occasionally fantasised about a fleet of Ford Mustangs – one in each liturgical colour. But a similar fleet of Rolls Royce cars would be acceptable.

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These places are built on a foundation that the more you give to me (I means God), the more you get back for yourself.

And all this must be true because these churches are full of people returning time and again, in the hope their money comes through soon.

And these tele-evangelists really are rich.

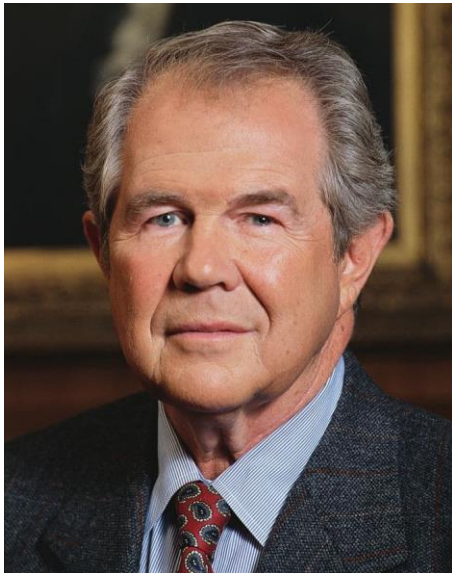
The Richest Pastors in the World



Kenneth Copeland (Net worth estimated at \$300 million)



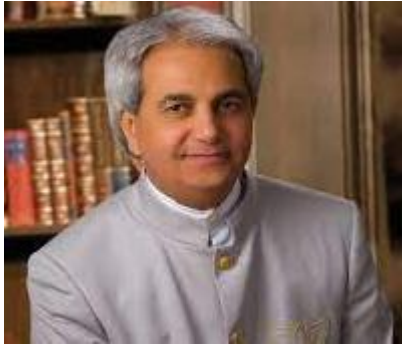
Bishop David Oyedepo (Net worth estimated at \$150 million)



Televangelist Pat Robertson (Net worth estimated at \$100 million)



Joel Osteen (Net worth estimated at \$80 million)



Benny Hinn (Net worth estimated at \$60 million)



Pastor Chris Oyakhilome (Net worth estimated at \$50 million)



Creflo Dollar (Net worth estimated at \$39 million)



EA Adeboye (Net worth estimated at \$35 million)



Rick Warren (Net worth estimated at \$28 million)



T. D. Jakes (Net worth estimated at \$20 million)

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Yet there is substantial debate about the question of whether Jesus had or carried any money of his own. And there is the

indication that Judas carried a common purse from which all took as had need.

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And as we see in the Gospel today, commercial profiteering on the outskirts of the Temple offended Jesus and drove him into an act of wild (and uncharacteristic) violence.

His offence was that the holiness of this supreme place of worship had been turned into a spectacular money-making venture.

In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

The noise itself would have been excessive. People speaking loudly over the exchange rate of currency or the cost of a goat. And everywhere straw and excrement from the animals being sold to make offerings in the temple itself.

I find it hard enough to manoeuvre around the tiny possum droppings to get into St James', without the aroma, straw, mess and noise of a full scale livestock market going on just outside.

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Harmony is disruptive because it draws to our attention the things that we are doing that are out of sync with the rest of the community of the faithful, and with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Lent is a time when we seek to come into harmony with the Christ so that we might share in a resurrection like his. To share that resurrection, we must become a community of

common values and beliefs. And for some of us, that means we must change. The good news of Jesus is that wealth and status play no part in salvation. We must put aside the things that distract us, disrupt our comfortable live so that we might then come together into the holiness of the presence of the Son of God – sent to save us, and all humanity. For only in that disrupted state where all have lived together in common do we find that true state of salvation in God alone.

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