

“Rich Toward God!”—Luke 12:15

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is “Rich Toward God!”, is Luke 12:15 → *Jesus said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

“Who wants to be a millionaire?” “You too can be financially independent!” “Dakota Magic . . . the place where everyone is a winner!” Slogans like these supposedly promote “opportunities” to be rich and have everything you’ve ever wanted in life. Even though money is very important for living it is a very common misconception that being “rich” financially guarantees security, happiness, joy and contentment.

What would you be willing to do “for a buck?” Would you be willing to take on a job or promotion you didn’t really enjoy because of a pay raise? Do you get excited when you receive an unexpected amount of money? If you know that a substantial amount of money is “coming your way” do you make plans for it before you even have it, whether those plans involve spending it or investing it? The answer to these questions will tell you a lot about your

concept of money, its importance in your life and even your relationship with the LORD.

Jesus was confronted by a man who tried to pull Him into a family squabble concerning the inheritance which he believed rightfully belonged to him. Children fighting over their parents' possessions and money, sometimes even before their death, is nothing new! Jesus' refused to get involved in something so trivial as inheritance desires. (cf. Luke 12:13-14)

Actually, this inheritance issue was a symptom of a much deeper problem of greed, as His warning in our text states: *Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.* Coveting is the desire for something which does not rightly belong to you. It is simply one more form of idolatry. It is the act of desiring something so badly that the acquiring of it is more important than anything or anyone, including the LORD Himself.

Jesus is not saying whether its "right" or "wrong" to be rich. Our lives constantly involve possessions of one kind or another. They come with life and are important for sustaining life. His warning is directed toward a wrong tie with those possessions so that we end up **servicing** them rather than **using** them as God's blessings for daily living in service to Him and our neighbor.

The issue is not being "rich" or "poor," having much or little. Each of these

situations in life present their own challenges in our relationship with life and the LORD! Philippians 4:11-12 records Paul thanking the Philippian Christians for the financial support they had given Him. He said he *learned in whatever situation . . . to be content . . . In any and every circumstance, he learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. Covetousness, envy, greed and other forms of idolatry can easily arise whether hungry or full, having abundance or living in need.* Contentment must be found somewhere else. Paul summed it up in the next verse: *I can do all things **through Christ Who strengthens me.*** (cf. Philippians 4:13)

It is just as difficult to be content with lots of stuff as it is to be content with a little bit of stuff. Why? Because it really has nothing to do with our stuff—it has everything to do with our attitude, our devotion, our hearts. That's why God says in 1 Timothy 6:6-10 → *Now there is great gain in godliness **with contentment**, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the **love** of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

In our text Jesus is saying that there is a real **spiritual** and **eternal** danger for us of trusting in possessions and money for security, happiness, joy and contentment. This was the focus of the parable about the rich man who thought his wealth “set him up for life” with no concern for his eternal destiny. Unfortunately, the majority of humanity is living in the same satanic delusion as this rich fool. This man acted as if faith in God was not that important so upon his death he was in desperate trouble in a couple of ways.

From an earthly perspective, the acquiring of all his stuff would mean nothing in the end since there is no guarantee how the people who get it all would use it. If this parable doesn't seem real to you simply take a look at everything you own, that you've worked so hard to acquire and maintain and means so much to you. Then ask yourself: “What would happen to all this stuff if I were to die today?” The answer to that question should be rather revealing about the importance of your stuff and your heart's devotion!

The writer of Ecclesiastes said he *hated all his toil under the sun, seeing that he would have to leave his stuff to the man who will come after him, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which he toiled and used his wisdom.* (cf. Ecclesiastes 2:18-19) From a human perspective life is meaningless when we're focused so strongly on our possessions while realizing we have no control over them in the end.

From a spiritual perspective the man in Jesus' parable was in desperate trouble because he neglected his relationship with the LORD and thus was destined to hell by his own choice. Idolatry leads only one place and it is certainly not the life eternal for which Jesus lived, died and rose again to give you by repentance and faith in His atoning work.

Real life is lived by faith in Jesus, recognizing that **all things**—possessions, money and even relationships—are given by God to be enjoyed and used to the glory of God. Our “wealth” comes because of our relationship with Jesus Christ and not because of our earthly circumstances which challenge our faith so often. This is what Jesus meant when He talked about being *rich toward God*. (cf. Luke 12:21) Relying on His gracious forgiveness of sins and providence in our daily lives makes us “rich” in faith! 1 Timothy 4:4-5 says: *For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the Word of God and prayer. We worship the Creator and use the created as God intended.*

Being *rich toward God* means that we receive all we have with gratitude as undeserving sinners. We recognize that no matter how hard we've worked for something we are still not deserving of it and that it is a blessing **of grace** from God's hand. Even the ability to do the work to get the things is dependent upon the LORD giving us that ability! (cf. Deuteronomy 8:18)

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19 God warns us *not to be haughty, nor to set our hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy*. He tell us to *do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share . . . so that we may take hold of that which is truly life*. Notice it says that God *richly provides us with everything to enjoy*—**not for our security**. Notice also how being “rich” is described here as *doing good, being rich in good works . . . generous and ready to share*. Being “rich” is reckoned in terms of our faith relationship with the Lord Jesus!

Thus, the primary focus of being *rich toward God* is grace—**G**od’s **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist’s **E**xpense. The “price” paid by Jesus for you to receive the “riches” of forgiveness and eternal life was His sacrifice on the cross. Being *rich toward God* is functioning in every area focused on God’s grace for us sinners in the Person and Work of Jesus. 2 Corinthians 8:9 puts it this way: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich*. Jesus *became poor*—He gave up the glory of heaven to live the perfect life, die the perfect death and rise again to bring us into the glory of heaven!

Being *rich toward God* also involves recognizing how poor we are in our sins, how needy we are for forgiveness and how Jesus is the only “treasure” that can meet our need. Focusing on Jesus Christ gives us a proper

understanding of “rich”—**rich in grace, love, forgiveness and heavenly blessings!**

Is it time in your life to stop coveting in greed and envy, thinking that somehow all your problems would be solved and life would be fulfilled if you had more money? Do you need to get focused off of striving to keep up some kind of “standard of living” at the expense of your soul? Is there a need to “downsize” your life in some areas in order to meet Jesus more through His Word, at His Supper in worship, in prayer and Christian fellowship?

Jesus has made it possible for you to have the greatest treasure in this world **and the next**. Bring your greed, envy, coveting and idolatry to Him in repentance and He will give you a new perspective on what it means to be “rich” in forgiveness. You will be rich in grace—forgiven completely of sin and freed under His Spirit’s power from satan’s hold on you. You will be rich in life—seeing every part of life as an opportunity to both enjoy what God has given you as well as use what He’s given you to serve Him and others. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, to life everlasting. Amen.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.