

Taking Our Turn In the Crucible of Wealth – Hard Lessons for ALL Men on a Sensitive Subject

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(Jesus and the Rich Man Series – Part Three)

Jesus had plenty to say to you and me about our wealth—regardless of the number of significant figures and commas that comprise its total.

The first two lessons in this series, summarized below, dealt specifically with Jesus' piercing interactions with two rich men. The men in both stories approached Him with self-serving motives—not the way to engage the most generous Man Who ever lived.

The Rich Young Ruler – The Love of Money

*“But when the young man heard this statement, **he went away grieving**; for he was one who owned much property...Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”*
(Matthew 19: 22,24 NASB)

Takeaway: Jesus does not want a “tip” from the wealth of men. When He says ALL, He means ALL—time, talent, and treasure. Is there a limit to what you will surrender to Him?

The Rich Fool – How Much Is Enough

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul

*is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared (saved)?' So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not **rich toward God**. (Luke 12: 20-21 NASB)*

Takeaway: Amassing “net worth” is a concept of men focused on building their own kingdoms– Men, rich toward God, build His kingdom.

The final lesson of this series casts a broad net that covers every man reading it who thinks he may be exempt from Jesus' strong warnings to men of great wealth. One of many lessons I have had to personally learn over the last fifteen years of ministry to men from every walk of life and income bracket is this:

***Lust, envy, pride, and greed** – sins often associated with the love of money and lust for more – do not discriminate among men whether we live in gated communities, tract homes, rescue missions, or prison cells. They gladly take up residence despite our zip code. That is why Jesus warned: “be on your guard against every form of greed...”. (Luke 12: 15)*

Two Reality Checks for ALL men concerning wealth

- Global Perspective: To most people groups in the world, all of us are rich. The U.S. possesses more than 40% of the world's wealth with one of the largest distribution inequities (how it is spread around or not). **1% of our population owns ~43% of the wealth.** Most of us claim to be on the outside looking in on them, but, globally speaking, we are rich compared to the rest of the people in the world. Ever heard this? *“If you have two pairs of shoes, you are rich.”*
- Jesus began teaching on wealth and treasure in the Sermon on the Mount speaking to large crowds that

included ALL levels of wealth and poverty. Thus, His words on worrying about provision and storing up earthly treasures were spoken for the benefit and instruction of all (Matthew 6: 19-21)

*“And others (seeds) are the ones sown among thorns. They are (people) who hear the word, but the cares of the world and **the deceitfulness of riches** and the desires for (more stuff) other things enter in and **choke the word**, and it proves **unfruitful**.”* (Mark 4: 18-19 ESV)

Another hard question arises from Jesus’ teaching on this challenging subject.

Am I so bogged down by life’s circumstances, trying to “get ahead”, and desire for more that I have been rendered impotent in my worship of God and fruitless in my work on His behalf?

Closing Food for Thought, Consumption, and Digestion

We know the Holy Spirit acts in complete harmony with the teachings of Jesus. Here are three means by which He approaches ALL Christian men concerning our wealth—regardless of the size of its shadow.

- **Confronts** men about our love of money that supplants our love of God.
- **Convicts** men about our Use of Funds revealed in our personal cash flow analyses.
- **Counsels** or **Condemns**. There is a distinct bifurcation here, the path of which depends on our response to the last point.
 - The Holy Spirit **counsels** men whose hearts are rich toward God with the desire to honor Him first and best with whatever level of wealth we possess.
 - The Holy Spirit **condemns** men (as God did the Rich Fool) whose hearts are selfish and inwardly

focused on what to do with all the wealth ***their work*** has produced.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

(Matthew 6: 24 NASB)

THE BOTTOM LINE: *Do we own our possessions or do our possessions own us?*

These words of reminder and admonition are not new. They are more than two thousand years old. When He spoke them, Jesus intended for them to either encourage our hearts or deeply trouble our spirits—depending on where we are storing the treasures with which we have been entrusted this side of Heaven.

Your desperate brother in Christ,

Walter