

11-18-2018

Message: Followers of Jesus Are Rich Toward God

Text: Luke 12:13-21

Introduction

- A. Since life is a journey, it begs the question, “Where are you and I headed?” Jesus teaches that every human being is traveling on one of two roads, the road to eternal destruction or the road to eternal life. In the Scriptures, the Lord tells us that all of us were born walking on the road to destruction, and most of humanity has remained on that road. What about you and me?

Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and **the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.**¹⁴ "For the gate is small and **the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

- B. The way that leads to eternal life is a walk of faith in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who said ...

John 14:6 ... "**I am the way**, and the truth, and the life; **no one comes to the Father but through Me.**

- C. Living by faith in Jesus Christ is often likened in the Scriptures to walking on journey on that path or way that leads to eternal life in God’s heavenly kingdom. Christianity was early on called “The Way.”

2 Corinthians 5:7 for **we walk by faith**, not by sight--

Acts 9:2 (Paul) asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to **the Way**, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Acts 24:14 "But this I admit to you, that according to **the Way** which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets;

- D. If we find ourselves walking by faith in Jesus on this way to eternal life, it is because God has fulfilled His gracious promise to come to us in the person of His Son and continually teach us to remain on the path to life, and to cause us to hear His voice correcting us when we deviate from it.

Isaiah 30:20 Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, **He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher.**²¹ Your ears will hear a word behind you, "**This is the way, walk in it,**" whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

- E. We ought to see Christ's words to us in Luke 12:13-21 as fulfilling what He promised through Isaiah. We have previously noted that our crucified, risen, reigning Lord has inspired Luke to include a literary section in his gospel from chapter 9:51 into chapter 19 that describes Jesus's final journey to Jerusalem. We see in Luke 9:51, Jesus resolutely sets His face to Jerusalem where the cross awaits Him. It is a path of self-denial and death that leads to eternal glory in God's presence.

Luke 9:51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

- F. At this point in Luke's gospel we readers are invited to take up our crosses and join Jesus on His journey in which we follow Him in denying ourselves, losing our lives at present, yet in the end arriving in glory with Him.

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to them all, "**If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.**"²⁴ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

- G. On this journey Jesus teaches us that the path that leads to life requires a faith that works through wholehearted love for the Lord, as well as love for His people.

Luke 10:25 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, **what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**"²⁶ And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"²⁷ And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."²⁸ And He said to him, "**You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.**"

- H. Along this way, this journey of faith to the cross, Jesus has warned us of obstacles on the pathway.

1. Earlier in Chapter 12 Jesus warned of the obstacle of the fear of man and the worry of persecution.

Luke 12:4 "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do."⁵ "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

2. Now continuing in chapter 12 we see and will see Jesus warning us of the obstacles of greed for wealth and of worry about lacking or losing wealth. We hear our Teacher's voice saying "Trust Me enough and love Me enough to be rich toward Me with the material wealth I entrust to you. This is the way of the Lord, the way of faith that leads to life. Walk in it."

I. 12:13-15 Jesus warns how greed can become an obstacle to faith.

Luke 12:13 Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."¹⁴ But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?"¹⁵ Then He said to them, "**Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.**"

A. 12:13,14 We don't know all of the details of this dispute between two brothers, but we do know that Jesus saw greed as an obstacle to that walk of faith that truly leads to life.

B. 12:15 "Beware (horate" = "See!, Look out!") and guard yourselves" against every form of greed (pleonexia = desire to have more).

At the peak of his wealth, John D. Rockefeller (1839 - 1937) had a net worth of about 1% of the entire US economy. He owned 90% of all the oil & gas industry of his time. Compared to today's rich people, Rockefeller makes Bill Gates and Warren Buffett look like paupers. His answer to the question, "How much money is enough?" was, "just a little bit more."

Colossians 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and **greed, which amounts to idolatry.**

C. Life does not consist of possessions, contrary to the bumper sticker that reads, "He who ends with the most toys wins." Greed can distort our perception of reality, that life is found in objects, instead of in relationships, the chief and most necessary is a wholehearted relationship with Jesus Christ.

II. Luke 12:16-21 Jesus shows us the dangers to the path of life through the negative example of the rich fool.

A. 12:16 God blesses a man with an abundance of wealth. He was already rich, and now was given more.

Luke 12:16 And **He told them** a parable, saying, "**The land (chora) of a rich man was very productive.**

1. The warning is given to all, including his disciples in his entourage, not just to the brother. "Chora" refers to extensive land holdings, and possibly even a region.
2. There was no sin in being blessed with wealth, in and of itself (Cf. Abraham, Jacob, Job). The problem comes when greed directs how we manage whatever wealth God gives us.
3. God had long taught His people that it is He that gave them the power to make wealth, that all of our possessions come from His hand and ultimately belong to Him, that we are stewards of what belongs to Him that He has entrusted to us to manage. That the man

became increasingly rich was due to God's blessing him with what ultimately belongs to God.

Deuteronomy 8:18 "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for **it is He who is giving you power to make wealth,**

Psalms 50:10 "For **every beast of the forest is Mine,** the cattle on a thousand hills.

1 Chronicles 29:16 "O LORD our God, **all this abundance** that we have provided to build You a house for Your holy name, it **is from Your hand, and all is Yours.**

- B. 12:17-19 The rich man was faced with a dilemma - what shall he do with this hyper-abundance? Notice that his assumption was that his abundance did not belong to God, but to himself. So his orientation was to spend his wealth on himself, to be rich toward himself and not rich toward God.

Luke 12:17 "And **he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'**¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'¹⁹ 'And **I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry."**"

1. Notice also that it is often the case that the more material possessions we obtain the more additional possessions/services we need to keep them. The more dishes, pots, pans, clothes we own, the more cabinet, closet space we need to store them. If we purchase books, we need bookshelves to store them.
2. In this case, the rich man spent wealth to tear down perfectly good barns to build bigger ones to keep all of his produce. I was challenged by an English Anglican clergyman of centuries past, William Law, who asked, "Why do we assume that when God gives us more it is so we can spend more on ourselves?"
3. He also foolishly assumed that the length of his life was in his control, and not in God's.

III. 12:20-21 The folly of being rich toward self and not rich toward God with our wealth.

Luke 12:20 "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?'**²¹ **'So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'**

- A. Though the man became increasingly wealthy due to God's blessing, God's blessing reveals God's generosity but not the rich man's. God's blessing reveals His kindness, but not necessarily His favor.
- B. "Fool" is a term used of those who fail to walk by God's wisdom on the path of life, and

thus are destroyed. (Titus 3:3 For **we also once were foolish ourselves**, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures). The rich man's eager anticipation of years of indulgence and ease is cut short by the One who has power over not only wealth, but life and death.

Proverbs 1:32 "For the **waywardness** of the naive **will kill them**, and **the complacency of fools will destroy them**.

Proverbs 28:26 **He who trusts in his own heart is a fool**, but **he who walks wisely will be delivered**.

C. William Law, p. 42, A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life

If we waste our money, we are not only guilty of wasting a talent which God has given us, we are not only guilty of making that useless, which is so powerful a means of doing good, but we do ourselves this further harm, that we turn this useful talent into a powerful means of corrupting ourselves; because so far as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in support of some wrong attitude, in gratifying some vain and unreasonable desires, in conforming to those fashions, and pride of the world, which, as Christians ... we are obliged to renounce.

IV. God has taught His people specifically how to be rich toward Him with our material wealth.

- A. We wholeheartedly love God with our material wealth when we support His church's worship, disciple-making, and benevolent ministries. Later texts in Luke will focus on benevolence.

Proverbs 3:9 **Honor the LORD from your wealth** and from the first of all your produce;

Proverbs 14:31 He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but **he who is gracious to the needy honors Him**.

- B. God has taught that He be honored first with an offering from our wealth. In the Old Testament era He gave His people laws of tithes and offerings. The Hebrew word we translate "tithe" literally means a tenth part, or 10%. While there was a second tithe to be brought to local storehouses for the poor in years 3 and 6 of the 7 year economic cycle of Israel's agrarian society (Deut. 14:27-29), the first tithe was to be brought every year to the house of God, the temple, the place where God's people gathered to worship Him and be instructed by God's appointed teachers.

Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, **'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings.**⁹ "You are cursed with a curse, for you are

robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!*¹⁰ "**Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house,**

C. While to be fair, some Christians sincerely do not believe tithing is required of Christians today (E.g. Thomas Schriener of SBTS), but know that when I first came to TRB in 1999, my fellow elders then affirmed with me that such tithing laws do have application for the New Testament church. Ryan Perz also affirms this. Here are reasons why:

1. The tithing laws of the Old Testament Scriptures teach us to wholeheartedly love God and to love our fellow covenant community members as ourselves. Obeying God's law = love. Supposing to obey God's law without love = legalism. Like all obedience, tithing was to be done by grace through faith.

Matthew 22:37 And He said to him, "**YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART,** AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'³⁸ "This is the great and foremost commandment.³⁹ "The second is like it, **YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**'⁴⁰ "**On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.**"

2. Jesus affirmed tithing.

Luke 11:42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For **you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb,** and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but **these are the things you should have done** without neglecting the others.

3. Before God gave the Old Covenant to Moses, Abraham and Jacob honored and expressed love for God with a tithe of the first of their increase. Clearly for Jacob this was a way of life, not a one time event.

Genesis 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.¹⁹ He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." **He gave him a tenth of all.**

Genesis 28:22 "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and **of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.**"

4. If God charged the poorest of Israelites of robbing Him for not bringing the whole tithe into the storehouse of His temple to support the ministry of worship and God's word, then how can we assure New Testament believers that they are being "rich toward God" by giving less, especially now that God has so generously given us the riches of His grace in giving us His Son Jesus?

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,**

Romans 8:32 **He who did not spare His own Son**, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

5. While believers are no longer under the Old Covenant or required to fulfill its symbolic rituals now fulfilled by Christ, its principles of love for God and others are required by the Lord for New Testament believers.

- a. The principle of periodic proportional giving is to continue. How can we affirm that God has a lower baseline percentage in mind for us than what for Old Testament saints expressed richness toward Him, love for Him and His people?

1 Corinthians 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. ² **On the first day of every week each one of you** is to put aside and save, **as he may prosper**,

- b. God's people are to support the ministry of NT ministers of God's Word as they did the OT ministers of His Word through their tithes and offerings.

Malachi 2:7 "For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and **men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts**.

1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the *food* of the temple, *and* **those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?** ¹⁴ **So also** the Lord directed **those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel**.

Galatians 6:6 **The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches.** ⁷ **Do not be deceived**, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, **let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith**.

Conclusion

- A. Everyone is traveling on one of two pathways in life, one the wide and popular path that leads to destruction, one the narrow less traveled path that leads to life. On the one path, people are rich toward themselves. On the other, they are rich toward God.
- B. The words of Scripture we have shared that call us to be rich toward God are the words of our promised divine Teacher.

Isaiah 30:20 ... **He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher.**²¹ Your ears will hear a word behind you, "**This is the way, walk in it,**" whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

- C. We pass on His words, not for our own sakes, or because our church is hurting for money. Quite the opposite. The faithful, loving giving of many of you has blessed our body. We want us all together to love Christ with all that we are and possess. So we pass on Christ's words to be rich toward God for the sake of our souls, and the sake of Christ's honor and joy in bringing to Himself the fruit of His labors, the souls for whom He died.