

Morning Sermon July 6, 2014
"Rotting Riches" Luke 16:19-31

Why doesn't God make most of His children RICH (in material wealth) here on earth? Some would say, "because of lack of faith..."

Jesus Christ says riches are "deceitful" –

²² "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (Matthew 13:22 NKJ)

¹⁹ "and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (Mark 4:19 NKJ)

As such we need to see them in the same category or family with other deceitful things:

1. The human heart –

⁹ "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9 NKJ)

2. Sin –

¹² Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; ¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:12-13 NKJ)

The motto of the sinner is, "How can it be wrong, when it feels SO right?"

Oh what a horrid Hellish mess we have when all THREE of these deceitful things combine!

I. If you want to understand the deceitfulness of riches, ask yourself, who is truly WORSE OFF in this parable, the rich man or Lazarus?

¹⁹ "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ²⁰ "But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.

Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

²³ "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

(Luke 16:19-24 NKJ)

At first glance most (with only an earthly viewpoint) would laughingly or seriously argue Lazarus is WORSE OFF ...

1. But let us calculate? If we give each of them the average male life expectancy for Israel as calculated between 2009 and 2012, they would each live on earth a bit more than 76 years

- A. 76 years of sumptuous living for the rich man
- B. 76 years of begging for Lazarus

2. Yet, if we figure each of these men died during Christ's lifetime, we also have to figure:

- A. 2000 years and counting (actually eternal) Hellish torment for the rich man
- B. 2000 years and counting (actually eternal) bliss for Lazarus...

Riches may SEEM to give an advantage now but not REALLY, this is why James, the brother of Jesus wrote –

^{NKJ} James 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! ² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. ⁴ Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. (James 5:1-5 NKJ)

II. If you want to understand the deceitfulness of riches, ask yourself, in what (many) WAYS can riches deceive me?

1. *Riches can keep us from godly humility – Proverbs 28:11*

A. *Clothed in purple and fine linen, he looked, he appeared, the best! But he lacked true righteousness, he lacked beautiful spiritual clothing –*

In this he was like the Laodiceans and the Pharisees –

¹⁷ "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'-- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-- ¹⁸ "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. (Revelation 3:17-18 NKJ)

B. *He fared sumptuously in regard to physical food but it seems he missed the Spiritual –*

⁴ **But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4 NKJ)**

C. *The problem is we start thinking we have these things only because we deserve them and the poor person lacks them only because they LACK our imagined greater moral character.*

Now, sometimes (maybe even often) it is the case, the poor man is POOR because of sin or laziness –

¹⁷ **He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not be rich. (Proverbs 21:17 NKJ)**

⁴ **He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. (Proverbs 10:4 NKJ)**

Yet, it is NEVER the case that the rich man is rich due to sinless perfection ... and in the rare cases where RICHES are some kind of reward from God, will not that man be humble in receiving riches and generous in giving?

¹⁷ **He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given. (Proverbs 19:17 NKJ)**

2. *Riches can keep us from SEEING or FEELING NEED –*

A. *The NEED of others –*

²⁰ "But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

Where was Lazarus living during his life on earth?

- *At the rich man's gate*
- *Close enough to desire crumbs*
- *Licked likely by the rich man's dogs*
- *Close enough the rich man knew his name*

B. *But the rich often do not even FEEL their own real needs – Revelation 3:17-18. "have need of nothing"*

3. *Riches can keep us from HEARING: they choke off the Word of God – Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:19. Please note two kinds of unfruitfulness are communicated!*

4. *Riches can keep us from GREATER riches –*

¹⁹ **"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19-20 NKJ)**

5. *Riches can keep us from enjoying even one drop of pleasure from Heaven, while condemning us to the full force of Hell's FOREVER torments – Luke 16:23-26*

*Not one drop relief! May seem beyond belief!
But Heaven can't reach Hell! So, get right, RIGHT NOW!*

6. *Riches can and often do combine with other deceitful things to make a big, deceptive mess – Jeremiah 17:9 & Hebrews 3:12-13*

III. *Application:*

1. *Be careful about riches & prosperity, don't let it fool you!*
2. *Be thankful even in poverty or difficulty, realizing you may have riches in Heaven!*
3. *Give to the poor, yet have compassion on and pray for the rich ... Luke 18:25*

Arnold A. Brevick