

Luke 12:13-21 Parable of the Rich Fool

When I was looking at the list of topics for this series on What Matters in Life I had to laugh a little when I came to the topic of finances. What Matters in Life often is based on your circumstances and situation in life. After traveling to Sierra Leone I have a new appreciation for what matters in life.

In a country where most people live on a dollar or two dollars a day you quickly realize that money doesn't matter in life. While these beautiful people struggle to survive daily- overcoming hunger (most eat one meal a day), lack of clean water (even where wells exist the dr. at the hospital told us there are still things swimming in the water), little or no medical care and disease (there is free health care for children 0-5 and pregnant woman...but there are only 70 drs. for 6 million people...and in most cases little or no medicine to cure the simplest illness); they approach life so differently from us. There is a genuine joy that we experienced in so many people and the reality was that none of it was associated with money or the lack thereof. These people have learned that what matters in life is not in any way associated with money- the lack or abundance it- but in something far deeper and meaningful. And that I hope that will be the lesson that we will learn today as we struggle with this statement:

“What matters in life is not the money, but the place that the money has in our lives.”

The place that money has in our lives is something that we all struggle with; whether we have an abundance or a perceived lack. What the closing months of 2008 and the last few years have taught us is that we all have placed our trust in money- despite the fact that our currency says: “In God We Trust.”

Trusting in money generally sneaks up on us. Most of us believe (maybe secretly) that money can bring happiness. Maybe you don't believe that. Maybe like the Beatles you believe that all you need is love. Let's try a little experiment and ask ourselves, “Could even just a little more money make your life better?” Most of us would say yes. The contradiction is convicting. Many of us say money won't bring happiness but we believe more really will. Let's think for a moment about the contrast in God's plan for our finances and the world's actual goals for our finances.

The world says: *What can I get for me?*

God's plan teaches us to ask: *How can I give what I have received?*

The world says: *How can I get more and keep more of it?*

God's plan teaches us to ask: *How much am I willing to sacrifice for the needs of others?*

The contrast of these two plans comes to life in the scripture lesson that was read earlier. (Luke 12:13-21) Parable of the Rich Fool

Notice that the rich fool is all about what he can get for himself.

Instead of being thankful to God for the abundance of his crops to meet his need; the rich fool is focused on his own greed. The rich fool is making plans to keep his good fortune, to add to what is already stored up and gives no thought to sacrificing his abundance for the needs of others. Or for that matter, he gives no thought to thanking God for the blessing God has given him.

How do you respond to the good fortune that God has blessed you with? I'm certain that each of us say 'thank God' when we find that extra is coming our way; but do we really thank God or do we merely mouth the words and go about thinking like the rich fool, 'What can I do to reward myself?'

When was the last time that you received an abundant harvest in your life and your first thought was how can I give away what I don't need? In our way of thinking we always need a little more than what we have so we figure out how to build bigger barns.

Years ago John D. Rockefeller was one of the richest men in the world. Someone asked him how much money was enough. And he thought for a second, and then replied, just a dollar more. Isn't that true; we always think just a little bit more. But when is it enough?

Andy Stanley recently shared the outcome of some research about our views on what it means to be rich. I think the research tells us why we tend to respond like the rich fool.

Americans who make \$30k or less were asked what they needed to make to be rich. The answer was about twice what they make now or \$74k. Now if you were making \$74k and I were to ask you this morning if you were rich, I'm sure you'd look at me and say hold on a minute I've got...(bills...) I'm not rich!

Likewise, Americans who make between \$30k - \$50k were asked what they needed to be considered rich. The answer, \$100k. My guess is if I asked those of you making \$100k if you are rich you'd say hold on a minute I've got.. I'm not rich!

Rich is a moving target. For some reason we don't know when we will cross the line, but we'll know it when we get there. As a matter of fact let me share this statistic with you: If you make \$37k you are in the wealthiest 4% of the world's wage earners. If you make \$45k or more you are in the top 1% of the wealthiest wage earners in the world!

Let me just add something in here; I'm not out to make you feel guilty by sharing those statistics. We should be grateful that we have the abundance that we have. But what I want you to think about is the statement I posed earlier:

What matters in life is not the money, but the place that the money has in our lives. (*Couple kidnapped by Somali pirates, Jean & Scott Adams, distributing Bibles around the world. Drs. at Kamakwie Hospital in Sierra Leone gave up their practice to stay in Sierra Leone*)

Our problem, like that of the rich fool, is that we have bought into the world's plan for our finances instead of God's. As a result of buying into the world's plan for his finances, the rich fool didn't own his crops, his crops owned him. He was enslaved by his possessions. And I think that at times that is what happens to us.

The more we trust in our finances the more those finances become our god in whom we trust.

It was someone who was struggling with trust that asked Jesus the question that led him to tell the parable of the rich fool.

So what are some things we can learn that can help us realize that our 'life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions.' (v.15)

The first principle is that of rightful ownership.

The rich fool saw everything he possessed as his own. He sounds like a spoiled two-year-old saying mine, mine, mine.

The rich fool fell into the trap that God warned the Israelites about before they entered the Promise Land. In Deuteronomy 8 God warned the Israelites that they should not forget that all they possessed came from God and begin to buy into the lie that by their own power and with the strength of their own hands they produced their wealth.

We easily fall into this same mindset and buy into the lie that what we have is by our own blood, sweat and tears- after all we're proud Americans who pulled ourselves up by our own bootstraps!

When we think of our possessions as our own; we miss out on the principle of rightful ownership. In Psalm 24:1 we read: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it."

This verse points out one of the keys to the principle of rightful ownership. As disciples of Jesus Christ we need to think in terms of stewardship and not ownership. A steward is one who is entrusted with something that is not his/her own. Stewards are responsible for caring for and handling appropriately what has been entrusted to them.

Under the principle of rightful ownership we acknowledge that nothing truly belongs to us but it is a gift entrusted by God to our keeping.

When we begin to see that everything we have is entrusted to us by God it means that we trust God to provide for us and it means that we can more freely part with what has been given to us.

When we live by the principle of rightful ownership; then 'the place that money has in our life' is not as the god that we worship or the god that we place our trust in. Money doesn't have the power to control us when we realize that it all belongs to God. And when it all belongs to God, we are more likely to seek his direction on how to use that money wisely and for the sake of things that God cares about.

"What matters in life is not the money, but the place that the money has in our lives."

Let me offer one more thought on what we can learn that can help us realize that our 'life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions.' (v.15)

How you manage your money says a lot about the place that money has in your life.

One of the biblical principles that we hold up is that of the tithe, or giving 10% of our income to God. Tithing is a means by which we manage our money and put our finances in the right place in our life.

Some people come undone when you mention tithing. People often say, "To give ten percent would mean I'd have to totally rearrange my life!" Well they are exactly right! Tithing will encourage you to rearrange your life around God!

Tithing will also challenge you to place 100% of your trust in God to provide for your needs. Again, how you manage your money says a lot about the place that money has in your life. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

So where is your heart?

Are you thinking about building barns or meeting needs? Are you trusting in your own abilities and resources or trusting in God and the abundant resources God has?

Wealth isn't the issue. God isn't against people having money and things, but he certainly hates when money and things have his people. I want to challenge you this morning to take some time to reflect upon where your heart is as it relates to

your finances. Go back to the statement that I've shared several times this morning and ask yourself some tough questions:

What matters in my life?

How am I being a steward of the gifts of time, people, resources, and money that God has entrusted to me?

What place does money have in my life?

Am I laying awake at night thinking about money or do I rest well because I trust God?

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What Matters in Life: Finances
Pastor George S Reynolds
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Luke 12:13-21 The Parable of the Rich Fool

"What matters in life is not the _____, but the place that the _____ has in our lives."

In God We Trust

Can money bring happiness? Y / N

Could even just a little more money make your life better? Y / N

<u>World's View</u>	vs.	<u>God's View</u>
What Can I Get For Me		How Can I Give
Get More...Keep More		Sacrifice for Others

What Do You Need to Be Rich?

If you earn \$37,000 + you are in the top ___ % of the wage earners in the world.

If you earn \$45,000+ you are in the
top ___ % of the wage earners in the world.

'Life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions.' Luke 12:15

Rightful Ownership

Deuteronomy 8:10-18

Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the
it, the world and all who

Lord's, and everything in
live in it."

Stewardship vs. Ownership

Manage You Money

_____ - 10%

"To give ten percent would mean I'd have to totally rearrange my life!"

Tithing will also challenge you to place _____ % of your trust in God to provide
for your needs.

Matthew 6:19-21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where is your heart?

God isn't against people having money and things, but he certainly hates when
money and things have his people.

Questions

What matters in my life?

What place does money have in my life?