

The Problem of Wealth

Matthew 19:23-26

One hotly contested aspect of Jesus' teachings involves His words toward those who are rich in material wealth. Some have taken Jesus' words and made them a call for a more level playing field. Others take the opposite approach, attempt to minimize these teachings and try to find some way to glorify wealth. Many have the same question as the disciples:

Some wonder how just it is for Jesus to come down so harshly on the rich.

Jesus' words were not designed to overthrow the concept of money or wealth.

Nor is it an absolutely true statement that all rich people are going to be condemned.

1Timothy 6:9-10 *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.*

1Timothy 6:17-19 *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*

Jesus' words strike at the heart of the problems with wealth.

These words are spoken immediately after the "rich young ruler" departs from Jesus sorrowfully.

This young man wanted to inherit eternal life and even had great respect for the Law - **Matthew 19:16-20**

Nevertheless, when asked to give up all his wealth and to follow Jesus, he walked away - **Matthew 19:21-22**

What would lead this young man to make such a fateful decision?

Jesus perceived that he trusted his wealth more than God. His material wealth kept him from the Kingdom of God.

We must greatly respect Jesus' statement that it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven without turning it into an absolute. Wealth casts a strong spell upon people.

Wealth provides the illusion of stability and contentment: if we have much stored up, we end up entrusting our future to our wealth and not so much on God.

Wealth rarely comes without great effort expended to obtain it, and for those who desire great wealth, what they have is rarely enough.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.*

Covetousness, selfishness, arrogance, and idolatry often mark those who have wealth.

Who do we trust?

We have learned the lesson that riches are uncertain.

1Timothy 6:17 *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.*

But that has not stopped many from continuing to press on after wealth.

Yet there is no true stability there; Salvation can never be found in riches, no matter how vast.

Matthew 16:26 *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?*

We must trust in God, the One who is able to accomplish what is impossible for mankind.

How do we know whom we trust?

Put yourself in the shoes of that rich young ruler.

If Jesus asked you personally to sell all that you have, give to the poor, obtain treasure in Heaven, and follow after Him, would you be willing to do so? Or would you also go away sorrowfully?

We all know the answer that we should give, but would that be the answer we would give?

Let us not put our trust in the uncertain material wealth of the world that causes anxiety for so many.

Instead, let us trust in the Lord of Heaven and Earth, and obtain the peace that comes from Him.

Matthew 6:33-34 *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

Matthew 28:18 *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

Philippians 4:4-7 *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*