

Rich Toward God

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prioritizing God in our lives, investing our lives in God's gifts, and aligning our lives fundamentally toward God and our neighbor.

Duration: 34:10

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 5:15, Matthew 6:19, Luke 12:20-21, Luke 12:34

Topics: "Material Wealth", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being rich towards God rather than solely focusing on worldly possessions. It highlights the story of the rich farmer who stored up treasures for himself but neglected his spiritual growth, leading to God calling him a fool. The message warns against being consumed by material wealth and stresses the need to prioritize a relationship with God above all else, as our lives ultimately belong to Him.

Transcript

And this man was called a fool because he wasn't rich concerning the things of God. Last night, I had a service in Durham. If I'm not mistaken, that service was arranged by Muslims.

But in spite of that, they asked me to be the main preacher. So it was a great privilege for me to greet them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that it was a great joy for me to preach to them.

It's always a great privilege and joy to speak about Jesus to people who don't know him. And then I spoke to them about the late Harry Oppenheimer. He was once addressing a meeting about his financial progress of his companies.

And he told the people it had been a very prosperous and a good successful year financially. But then he said something that shook me to the core. I never expected to hear such words from such a man, being the richest man in South Africa.

He said financially it went very well. But then he carried on and said he wonders whether he has made as much spiritual progress in the same year as he did financially. Whether his soul had prospered as much as his companies.

That was amazing to me. I never expected it from a man like Oppenheimer, the richest man in South Africa. That this man had this spiritual insight.

This is a rare quality indeed. The Bible speaks about a man who had prospered with his crops to such an extent that he said to himself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take it easy.

Eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, you fool. This very night your soul will be required of you.

The Lord used harsh words concerning this man. He said tonight, you fool, your soul will be required of you. Then who will own what you have accumulated? Then he said, it will be the same for everyone who stores a treasure for himself that is not rich toward God.

Jesus ended by saying, and this is applicable to all of us. So is the one who lays up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God. Jesus said to him, you fool, your soul will be required of you.

The Lord said to him, you fool, your soul will be required of you. The Lord said to him, you fool, your soul will be required of you. This parable is eternally true, even for us right here, right now.

I wonder whether we are busy with the things of the world only. Busy with the things of this world and not with spiritual things. That we are spiritually poor in God's eyes.

We are paupers. And he said, do you think that that could have actually been a UFO? A UFO. One could easily argue that the rich man is a wise and responsible person.

He was a thriving farmer. Thriving in his farming business. His land had produced so abundantly that he does not have enough storage space in his barns.

So he plans to pull down his barns and build bigger ones. To store all his grain and his goods. Then he will have ample savings set aside for the future and will be all set to enjoy his golden years.

Isn't this what we are encouraged to strive for? Isn't it wise and responsible to save for the future? The rich farmer would probably be a good financial advisor. He seems to have things figured out. He has worked hard and saved wisely.

Now he can sit back, relax, enjoy the fruits of his labour. Isn't this the right thing to do? Friends, not exactly. There is one very important thing the rich man has not planned for.

And it is this, his reckoning with God. What a tragedy if we are just busy with the things of this world but God is not the first and the main thing in our lives. We should reckon with God before we think about anything else.

If we don't do that, we are called fools. We are fools in God's eyes. God said to him, you fool, this very night your life is being demanded of you.

And the things you have prepared, whose will they be? The rich farmer is a fool because he is wealthy or because he saves for the future but because he appears to live only for himself. And because he believes that he can secure his life with his abundant possessions. When the rich man talks in this parable, he talks only to himself.

And the only person he refers to is himself. Listen to what he says. What should I do? For I have no place to store my crops.

And then he carries on and says, I will do this. I will pull down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods.

Yet he expresses no sense of gratitude to God or to the workers who have helped him plant and harvest this bumper crop. He had more grain and goods in storage than he could ever hope to use. There was no thought what God might require of him.

He is blind to the fact that his life is not his own, to secure that his life belongs to God. And that God can demand it back at any time. Are you conscious of the fact, are we all who are present today, conscious of the fact that our life doesn't belong to us? Not one day of our lives belongs to us, not one hour.

The rich man learns the hard way. What the writer of Ecclesiastes realised, quite simply, that you can't take it with you. You can't take it with you.

Who knows what it will be like at the end? And who knows when the end will be? Who knows whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of all for what I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This all is vanity. No amount of wealth can secure our lives with God.

In fact, Jesus repeatedly warns that wealth can get in the way of our relationship with God. He says, take care, be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. It is not that God doesn't want us to save for retirement or future needs.

It is all about priorities. It is about who is truly God in our lives. It is about how we invest our lives in the gifts that God has given us.

It is about how our lives are fundamentally aligned toward ourselves and our passing desires or toward God and our neighbour.

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