

The Damnation of Riches

by Ian Goligher

A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, but rather in his relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 31:45

Scripture: Luke 12:15, Luke 12:22

Topics: "Materialism", "Eternal Values"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not being consumed by material possessions. He uses the analogy of a person from a primitive island being introduced to the luxuries of city life and then returning to their simple existence. Similarly, he describes the experience of someone being taken to heaven and witnessing the glory and worship of God. The preacher highlights the truth spoken by the Lord that a person's life does not consist of the things they possess. He also references the parable of the rich fool, who faced a decision when he had more harvest than he had storage space. The sermon concludes with the reminder that our earthly possessions hold no significance when we face our final appointment with God.

Transcript

Turning back to Luke 12, and our text is the verse 15. These are the words of our Lord Jesus to the man who wanted some assistance about an ill-divided inheritance. The Lord said in verse 15, Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

By way of introduction tonight, I want you to imagine someone who is born and raised in a very lonely island, who grows up with no introduction of Western or any civilization in the world except primitive, primitive self-existence on a very lonely and far-flung corner of the world. That person is suddenly dropped off in Times Square in New York. There in the midst of the skyscrapers, the honking horns, he is slowly introduced to city life, to revolving doors, escalators, elevators, busboys, restaurants, and yellow taxis, thousands of them creeping along the streets of Manhattan.

He branches out, visits Washington City, sees the life of a president and the first lady, and he is introduced to more of the sophistication of life, electricity, a computer, satellite, telecommunication, and all of the power struggles of American politics. Then he's dropped back onto the island again, just as quickly as he was dropped off at first in the city. There he discovers people fighting over shells, fish bones, over rocks,

and he sees people in their pride squabbling over those things which in normal civilization have next to no meaning whatsoever.

Now I want you to imagine someone who is taken right into heaven, right into the glories with the Lord, to walk the streets of gold, to see the myriads of angels and saints bowing down, worshipping the king of kings, glorifying him, and they taste the wonders of heaven. Then just as quickly as they experience that, they are removed again back to earth, and they hear people talking about cars, money, bank accounts, investments, and maybe the plan for a new home. What meaning is there? And yet the mind of the Lord Jesus had that perspective.

As he came into this world, he heard people squabbling over puny, petty, material things. And in this account that we read in Luke chapter 12, were two brothers arguing over this inheritance. And one pleaded with the Lord to intervene and to help him to acquire that portion which belonged to him.

Now you will notice that the Lord had no interest in getting into this petty affair, but rather he gave to them in this verse 15, these tremendous words, A man's life consisteth not in the thing which he possesseth. How many people have exposed the nature of their hearts by taking out lawsuits against family members, domestic squabbles against an inheritance? This is to this day a common affair. It keeps lawyers busy.

It keeps the courtrooms busy sorting out the affairs of men about rights and possessions. And yet the Lord, he comes in his wisdom from his heavenly mind. A man's life consisteth not in the things which he possesseth.

I want to take up those well-spoken words, that truth of the Lord, and set it before you tonight. This is right because the need of the soul is not a material thing. The Lord Jesus told this parable of the rich fool he is known as.

He spoke about the farmer who was faced with a big decision. He had more harvest fruits than he had barns to put them in. And so he had to face what is he going to do? And the farmer was forced to do something.

He began with talking to himself. And the Bible says that he talked to his soul and decided to build greater barns and make plans for easy retirement and live with ease for many years. And he considered that with his larger barns filled to capacity that he could retire and take it easy for many years.

And of course, this is how men think. That is the scheming and the planning of the vast majority of men in the world to this very day. The business world and their enterprises of men is all about gathering stuff and things for many years to come.

That's what economists are about. Investments are about storing up for many years to come. But the gospel is not about storing up for the body.

The gospel is about storing up for the soul. This farmer's soul was required that very night. The Lord said to him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

And then whose shall those riches be? None of these riches would be of any value as he would at this appointment with God. All these earthly things were valueless in heaven. In fact, they're only a hindrance.

Because this world is under the curse. Everything is cursed. There is nothing that you can present to God of a material, physical nature that will appease God between you and your soul.

He entered it. He sought to worship God by the very best that he could offer to God of the fruits of the ground, of the labor of his hands. And God had no respect to him because the ground is cursed.

And we are told in 2 Peter 3 that this world is going to burn up and everything will be tested by fire. Now, what are you trusting in and will it stand the test of fire? If it is material of whatever type or stripe, it will burn. It will perish under the very destruction of this world at the return of our Lord.

And when we stand before God, the issues will not be our stuff, but our sin. Are they gone or are they still a great mountain before us? No man can claim to be rich toward God who is still under the guilt of sin. It doesn't matter what he has in earth's goods or earth's riches.

They are a curse to you unless you have, firstly, your sins forgiven. Peace with God will not be found in your earthly status or money, but your relationship with God through Christ. That's how you find peace.

That's how you know that you are right with God. And the real riches in the hour of death when we meet God will be gospel riches. It will be faith, repentance, the cross, the blood of redemption, pardon, mercy, eternal life.

They will be the real riches. They will be those things that have real value. When this world is burning up and you're standing before God, a man's life consisteth not in the things which he possesseth.

Now, this is true also, and we move to our second point here, that a man's life consisteth not in the things which he possesseth, because no man knows the hour of his death when his soul is required. This farmer, and the Lord Jesus, by the way, told this parable because of the question, come to our aid, sort out this issue of my inheritance. And the Lord told this parable in response to that question and began to point out how meaningless earthly riches really are on that day when our soul is required.

To hoard an abundance of riches would make sense if we had a long period of time to enjoy them, if it was even a half eternity to possess them. This farmer, we're told, counted for many years. He boasted a long life to enjoy his plenty.

But to his horror, he would not see the harvest finished. He would not see the new barns built. He would not enjoy any of these possessions that he was loading over, because that night his soul was required.

He had an appointment, God, and he was going to keep it, no matter what his earthly plan. No one knows the day nor hour of their death. Death is a divine appointment.

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. And while the average may be three score years and ten, seventy years or thereabouts, thereafter in labor and sorrow, there is no telling the day or hour that you will go into eternity and meet with God. Death is a secret appointment.

Only God knows the time and the circumstances. This is his prerogative. He created you.

He has given you life. He has put breath into your body. He has given you time and opportunity.

But he has every right to call you out of this earth and require your soul at an instant. This farmer, his soul was required. And therefore there is an urgency to the matter.

And down in verse 31, you'll notice the advice of the Lord what to do about this. A man's life consisteth not in the things that he possesseth, or the abundance of the things that he possesseth. What are we to do then? Seek first the kingdom of God.

Oh, that was good advice. Good advice. In Matthew, the Lord Jesus, it is recorded there that he says, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God. And so the Lord is not saying to you, go and blow your money, give it away to the poor. Don't own a home.

Don't own any possession in this world. But your priority, your first priority must be, seek ye first kingdom of God. Make sure that you are in that spiritual kingdom.

Make sure that you are in the family of God, in the community of grace. Otherwise, to die is a terrible thing. Now, what is this but soul insurance? People in material things take out insurance for all manner of things.

You insure your car. You have to. It's the law.

You insure your home against fire, theft, flood, earthquake. You can insure your home on almost anything. You are willing to pay the premium.

There are people that insure their lives. And life insurance, that strict insuring of your life, is usually to leave money for someone else, for your spouse or for your family. But you cannot insure yourself against death.

It's not death insurance. It is to make some supply and provision for those that you may leave behind. But there's not an insurance company in the world that can say, I'll guarantee that you will live to a certain date.

Not even one will take on that risk. The risk is too great. The payout would bankrupt them in a short time, because no man knows the hour of your death.

Your heartbeat beats at a rate of 80 times per minute, 4,800 times per hour, 115,000 times per day, 420 million times per year. Multiply that by 70 years, and you get 29 billion times in an average lifetime, and that's only half the amount of the federal debt in Canada. The number of heartbeats you have is finite, very limited.

One day it's going to stop, and our soul will be required, and we will stand before God. And simply put, there's no getting out of it. And material things won't make a button of difference on that day when our heart beats for the last time, and we have that appointment with God.

Death's appointment has been written in God's diary. It's certain and sure. There is an Arabic fable about the merchant of Baghdad who sent his servant to the market.

And while he was in the Baghdad market, he saw a lady who was a ghost. And the lady who jostled him in the market gasped at the surprise of seeing him. The woman turned out to be death who said, I have an appointment with you.

The servant raced home, entered into his master's house, pale and white and afraid. And he said, Master, can I have your horse? I must get out of this city. He said, I met with a woman in the market who said I

was in great danger.

He lent of his horse and he went to a neighboring town called Samarra. The merchant man went down to the marketplace himself that day. And as he jostled with the crowd, he met the woman whose name was death.

And he asked her, why was my servant so startled today? She replied, I did not mean to startle him. I was only surprised to see him in Baghdad because I have an appointment with him in Samarra tonight. There is no way of escaping death.

And that's why the Bible says to prepare to meet thy God. You need to be ready. You need to know that you have peace with God.

And in the Bible, these things are written that ye might know that ye have eternal life. These things, the things of the gospel, the things of grace, the things of peace with God, not earthly, tangible, material riches. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things he possesseth.

But your life is only saved and valuable to God when you are united to the Lord Jesus by faith. Are you saved? Are you in the Lord Jesus? Thirdly, as we look at this parable, our Lord Jesus told, a man's life consisteth not in the things that he possesseth, because those who trust in earthly things will lose all. Verse 20, the question is asked, whose shall those things be? Now, he's called a fool.

Thou fool! He lost all reason because he died a fool. Now, the word fool is the opposite to discretion and good judgment. And here is this man, he threw all wisdom and good judgment away because he was wrapped up in his earthly things.

And this is what riches do to people. It makes them crazy. They throw out wisdom.

They throw out good judgment. The love of money will make people do the craziest things. People's eyes get blinded with the dollar signs dangling in front of them.

And how many we know that just did the dumbest, stupidest thing because they were tantalized by a little bit of money. And the history of this world is full of all manner of stupid things because of gain. Just this year, I was listening to a documentary on the building of the Panama Canal, built in the 1920s.

Early 30s it was completed. It was a project taken on by the French government. There was a businessman in particular who promoted it and sold it and raised money in France from all manner of people to make this canal from the Pacific Ocean right through to the Atlantic.

It was a huge, huge undertaking. It nearly bankrupt France. In fact, the stock market just crashed because they spent and spent and spent and the project was impossible by the approach that they went about it.

Then the Americans took over the project and they spent millions and millions and millions of dollars. But do you know how many lives it cost? Well over 20,000 people's lives were lost in the building of the Suez Canal. Now this is not Egypt 3,000 years ago building some pyramid.

This is within the last century in what we would call a modern day project and over 20,000 people died in the doing of it. Many of them died due to the mosquito. They didn't understand what it was to bring other workers into that area, put them to work and the unhealthy condition.

And until there was a medical American doctor who studied the mosquito, discovered that it was the real root cause of the sicknesses that were killing off the workers and then they came with nets and they brought in 4,000 workers to spray the swamps to defeat the mosquito in the area. Eventually they beat the odds. They had to build a dam as well because they discovered that the levels of oceans were not exactly the same.

So there were all manners of hurdles and difficulties to overcome. But in the interest of gain, what an undertaking, a huge expense. Then there's the Alaska Gold Rush.

When there was news of gold to be had in Alaska, the Yukon, there were men who abandoned farms, abandoned families, went out with very little except their horse or cart they were riding in. And in a mad attempt to get to the place of gold digging, almost drove themselves to despair. And many did.

Many either never made it there or could not sustain themselves when they arrived there. In the freezing temperatures, in the demands of setting up tent life and living there and receiving supplies, it was for many a suicidal mission. And it broke up farms, homes and families.

Money makes people crazy. The Apostle Paul said to Timothy, the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some covet it after, have erred from the faith. It makes people turn away from common sense, wise judgment, that follow after the riches of this world.

And the fool in this meeting this evening is the one who rejects the Lord Jesus because of earthly riches. You think that you can get ahead better if you are not a Christian, that you could do more with the liberties without making a Christian profession. What a fool, what a fool to put earthly material things ahead of the grace and the riches of the Lord Jesus.

Now this man, he lost all reason. He lost all his earthly riches in one night. Everything that he decided for and he made set his heart upon, he lost everything in one night.

He was taken from it. Every root of the ground that he had labored for, every barn that he dreamed of, he lost everything. And how many life stories this depicts.

There are seniors who rarely enjoy, really enjoy riches of life. They worry over them. They fear that they will not have enough to see them through.

And there are some who live in million-dollar homes, who are afraid even to put the heat on. They may not be able to pay the B.C. hydro bill. They sit on riches, but in every way they lose them.

Then this man also, he lost all of heaven because he was not ready for the kingdom of God. In verse 21, it says that he was not rich toward God. That's really the issue, to be rich toward God.

He lost all, all his work, all his earthly riches, all his hopes, all of heaven. He was not rich toward God. And note how the Lord makes this the application of the parable.

So, so. There's the application. There is the punchline.

There's the meat of the message. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God? Now, this applies to all men, all men who are not saved and who stumble over the riches of this world. It is a great hurdle to so many people when it comes to the gospel, when it comes to being a Christian.

And some fear that they will lose opportunity of work or even their job. Some think that to get ahead that they couldn't be a Christian, that they have to make shady business deals here and there along the way to get ahead, to amass earthly riches. Those very shady decisions that are dishonest and deceitful are the very sins that take men to hell.

They think that the honest man cannot get ahead in society. If you're that type of person tonight, God's terms you're a fool. Placing earthly riches before the riches of the gospel.

What if you do get earthly riches by these carnal means? What if you do get rich? What if you do amass great amounts of wealth in earthly terms? Will you be better off at the hour of death? Will you be richer when you stand before God in the nakedness of your shame as a sinner? And so the real question is, will you be rich toward God? The Christian is the only one who is rich toward God, who has entered into the kingdom. The Christian is the one who has said, I renounce the world where I need to because I must have a Savior. I must have His righteousness and I must know that I'm right with God.

And then I can die in peace and stand before God in the certainties of the gospel. Oh, if only men could see a little side of heaven, they would not be as impressed with earthly riches. Just like that islander who experienced city life and then back on the island, what is it? Let me tell you, if you were to be in heaven five minutes, one minute, one second, and come back to earth, it would resolve every argument, every opposition you raise against accepting the riches of the Lord Jesus.

You cleave to earthly things because you have no appreciation of the riches, the riches of the Lord Jesus. You see, only what is done by Jesus and for Jesus will be of any value in that glory land. And the only man-made things, material things if you wish, that will be in heaven will be the wounds of the Lord Jesus.

There's no other material thing that will ever enter heaven. Everything else in this world is the curse. Now, our Lord Jesus no doubt became a curse on that cross, a curse that is everyone that hangeth on a tree.

And he who suffered wounds and bled and died in your place, but there will be no earthly riches, jewels, gold, silver, whatever is mine, whatever is accumulated, it will burn up on that eternal day. And so tonight, make sure that you're rich toward God. And if perchance, as a Christian, you are saying, I don't have very much of this world's good.

I've never made it in business. I've never accumulated anything worth talking about. Don't let that oppress you.

The Lord Jesus used this chapter and he goes on to talk about, consider the ravens, consider the lilies. If then God so clothed the grass, which is today in the field and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? The Lord was speaking primarily and ultimately to others as well, but to those disciples who had left everything, follow Christ. They'd given up their boats, their nets, their family business and interests and taken up the cross, follow the Lord Jesus.

And here he is promising to them that they will be taken care of. And if you are in the least concern, how will I be provided for? Old age, emergencies, how will I get through even this month? Your heavenly Father who counts the very hairs on your head. For some that's a bigger task than others, but he knows every one of them.

Does he not care when you get on your knees and bring your needs to your heavenly Father? And we don't go like these two brothers cuddling over a miss, ill-divided inheritance. We get on our knees

depending on the provisions, the grace of the Lord Jesus. But firstly, be rich toward God.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God. Then what happens? All these things shall be added up. That's the life of trust.

That's the life of faith. That's the confidence of God's children. And you can have that peace and confidence tonight.

One day everything that man calls material riches will be burned. We as God's children will be welcomed into the glory of that eternal city. A thousand, thousand welcomes.

We'll join that crowd for all time, worshiping and praising the Lord our King. And when we see Jesus, just one look at Him, it will be worth it all. Anything that we ever had to give up for Jesus' sake, He has nothing.

A man's life consisteth not in the things that he possesseth. If your neighbor gets a brand new car, and it might even be a BMW or a Mercedes, well, in the dust someday, just write that text on the side of it. A man's life consisteth not in the things that he possesseth.

A proud man is humbled by a text like that. That's why we need a Savior.

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