



ARE YOU RICH TOWARD GOD?

When the Game Is Over It All Goes Back in the Box

The Parable of the Rich Fool: The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be required of you. Then who will get what you have prepared for

yourself?' This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God--. *Luke 12:13-21*

The object of life is breathtakingly simple: Be rich toward God. When the game of life is over, all that will matter will be God's assessment of our lives. Venture capitalists and Hollywood stars and school janitors and Somalian tribesmen will stand in line before Him on level ground.

Being rich toward God means getting to know Him and develop a deep relationship with Him; growing a soul that is increasingly healthy and good. It means loving and enjoying the people around you as well as doing good work to help improve the world. Being rich toward God means becoming generous with your stuff and *making that which is temporary become the servant of that which is eternal.*

It is expressed in two great commandments, each built around a single word: *Love*. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. ... No one can do this and be poor in God's eyes. No one failing to do this can be rich in God's eyes.

Many people today are busy investing their time, money, and energy in activities and pastimes that aren't going to be of any value in the next world. One of these days, it will all be gone. In the blink of an eye, poof!

This is why the Lord says, "Do not work for food that perishes but for food that lasts for eternal life." And "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal." *Let's invest in our heavenly future and work for things with eternal value.*

As a Christian, Jimmy Carter, former president of the United States, would go, every year, for a week of mission in which he would reach out to unbelievers. Once he noted down that in 14 years, he had managed to visit over 140 homes in his local community, and he felt quite proud of his achievement. Then he realized that in his 1966 campaign for governor of Georgia, he had met at least 300 000 people in an attempt to convince them to vote for him. The comparison struck him: 300 000 visits for himself in 3 months, and 140 visits for God in 14 years!

We all know the age-old saying that when you die “you can’t take it with you.” That’s absolutely true. The material things of this life, which have such value today, have no value in the life to come.

It reminds me of this story: A wealthy man who was dying was visited by an angel, and he asked the angel if he could take some of his riches to heaven with him. The angel responded that it wasn’t normal practice, but that he’d go and ask. Upon his return, he said permission was given for the man to take one suitcase full of his riches. When the man died, he arrived at the gates of heaven with his suitcase, and the angel, curious as to what riches he had brought with him, asked if he could look inside the suitcase. The man opened the case, which was full of gold bars. The angel looked at him and said, “You brought *pavement*?”

While as Christians we are each saved and have eternal life, we will give account for our life, for whether or how we followed God and His Word, and will receive reward according to what we have done or not done in our earthly life. “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”¹

Being rich toward God means remembering that God is the ultimate source of the time, abilities, and financial or material means that have been placed at our disposal in this life, and using those gifts not purely for our own ease or pleasure (as the fool in the parable planned to do), but also to express our thanks to God for His grace and generosity toward us by benefiting those who have not been as materially blessed as we have.

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." (Luke 12:15) Having lots of possessions does not make a life better, which is why some of the happiest people on Earth are also not among the "most wealthy."

Only knowing God is truly valuable. The rich man is considered to be a fool because he had become wealthy in all that he found valuable and he had failed to become wealthy in the one area that actually mattered.

Time is closing in on each of us. Let’s spend what we have on things that will have value where we are going.

¹ Revelation 22:12 NIV.