

THE CHRISTIAN AND MATERIALISM

Intro: We living in a society that has idolized work and attainment. A person may be considered bad if he/she kills another, cheats on his spouse, or doesn't tell the truth. But if a person gives himself totally to his work or to the enjoyment of that for which he has worked, he is simply a successful American to be praised for his diligence and skill.

That makes covetousness one of the subtlest of sins. Its subtlety is masked in friendly terms like "getting ahead" or "making a living". Jesus, on the other hand, saw it as a grave danger to be avoided at all costs! Luke tells us that the Pharisees, among their other vices, were "lovers of money" (Lk. 16:14). It is appropriate then in a sermon with the theme "except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees" that Jesus deal with that common problem.

Many people subscribe to the well-worn cliché, "God loves the poor and hates the rich". Godly men like Abraham and David explode that one! But, perhaps the Pharisees popularized the opposite myth, "God loves the rich and hates the poor"--that physical prosperity is God's blessings for spiritual correctness.

And that raises a point that is important to remember: One can be just as covetous with little as with much. All of us...all of us need to think seriously about the dangers of covetousness! (Read Mt. 6:24ff)

CHECK YOUR SAVINGS ACCOUNT!

Jesus begins with a warning against misplaced values.

This is not an indictment of retirement programs and savings accounts. It is antithetical teaching designed to show us where our emphasis should be.

It is an appeal to spiritual work and its accomplishment as opposed to physical work and its accomplishment!

Everything that we earn physically cannot be kept. Moths and rust corrupt, thieves break through and steal.

Everything that we do spiritually is invested where it cannot be lost! It is laid up in heaven. Cf. 1 Tim. 6:18

Furthermore, there are good reasons to invest in heaven.

Where we store our treasure is where our heart is! And our hearts are the center of all we do! Prov. 4:33 If we engage in spiritual work for the Lord, then our heart is centered in heaven. If we engage in physical work for ourselves, then our heart is centered in our possessions.

Check your savings account! Where is your heart centered? What investments have you made in your heavenly bank account this week?!

TAKE AN EYE TEST!

The eye, says Jesus, is the lamp of the body. A bad eye produces bad vision which in turn causes us to stumble. This is more than a lesson in optometry. Not everyone who looks really sees!

If we look at the world around us with bad eyes we may be led to the near-sighted conclusion that the essence of life is material, that happiness is attaining. And what deception that is!

It is easy to confuse life with money.

Cf. Lk. 12:15

Seneca: "Money has never yet made anyone rich".

We need to make sure that we see what is really there!

Some folks don't know what they're missing (I got glasses at age 12. I hadn't known how much I'd missed seeing).

Check your vision.

Perhaps you can see the joy of owning a new home on earth. Can you see the joy of a mansion in heaven?

Perhaps you can see the joy of making a new client. Can you see the joy of converting a soul to the Lord?

Perhaps you can see the joy of receiving gifts from others. Can you see the joy of giving rather than receiving? If not, see a doctor quickly!

CHOOSE A MASTER!

Every Palestinian recognized the stark reality of Jesus' metaphor! Every slave knew it was impossible to carry out the orders of two competing masters. One could not serve the interests of one without abandoning the interests of the others. One could not be loved by one master without being mistreated by the other! Therefore, he could only love one and despise the other! So it is with God and riches (mammon).

When we begin to trust money we become its servant rather than it being our servant. God is replaced with material things; and that is according to Paul in Col. 3:5, idolatry! 1 Tim. 6:9-10

Jesus challenges us to defy a world where money is god! We can't keep one foot on earth and the other in heaven. We need to throw ourselves into God's service 100%. It is impossible to do otherwise!

Conclusion: Take moment to do some serious soul-searching...all of us! Who is your master? (Do you have a grip on your possessions, or do they have a grip on you!? Are you serving God or material things?) Upon what is your heart centered? (What do you think about in your free time? What do you talk about to others?) Where are your energies being channeled? (Are you so busy making a living you haven't had time to make a life? Are you so occupied with earthly things that your duties to God are being subtly or obviously shifted to the back burner?)

Make up your mind which is most important. Money can buy medicine; but it can't buy health. A house...but not a home. Companionship...but not friends.

Entertainment...but not happiness. Food... but not an appetite. A bed...but not sleep. A crucifix...but not a Savior! The good life... but not eternal life.

Jim Elliot wrote before his death at the hands of the South American Indians he had gone to teach: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose".

If you want the really important things of life, put God first! If you want to go to heaven, put God first! Start serving him today.

Sermon prepared by Johnny Felker in June, 1991.

"Blessed are the merciful..." ;>)