

Question: As we enter a new year, the economic outlook has improved. But what are some lessons Jesus would want us to learn from our recent economic recession?

Christian who lived by faith in Jesus should always have a positive and hopeful outlook on life. However, assuming good times will continue, too many people fail to prepare for the always uncertain future in this world. The recent recession should serve as a wake-up call for all of us. The Bible warns: “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:13-14).

The economic ups and downs of our world demonstrate that both prosperity and adversity can serve as tests of character and of faith in God. In times of prosperity, we may tend to depend upon our material wealth instead of trusting in the Lord; but when prosperity is taken away, we feel that the Lord has abandoned us. Neither of these is an appropriate response. Jesus stressed that life does not consist of the abundance of one’s possessions (Luke 12:15). We can add that neither does life consist of the lack of possessions. Jesus also warned that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Mark 10:24-25). Thus, the wise man of the biblical proverbs prayed: “. . . give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God” (Proverbs 30:8-9).

There is one and only one on whom we can always depend. The Lord’s apostle said: “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matthew 6:19-20). An eternal relationship with God through Jesus Christ is our only real source of security in life.

I believe Jesus would suggest these practical principles in view of our always uncertain futures. Always give “thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). When at work, “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men” (Ephesians 6:7). Exercise wise management of whatever possessions you may have, using them to the glory of God (Luke 16). In all of these things, follow the example of our Lord’s servant who said: “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12-13).

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