

Giving Richly

part 16 of Serving Jesus Together

February 4, 2018

One summer evening, many years ago, my wife and I drove to Sarah's house on Fort Meade to pick up some children and bring them to our church's Vacation Bible School. We had forgotten something at home and so, after picking up the children, had gone back to our house in Chapelgate. We lived in a two story duplex. One little boy looked at the front of our house in wonder and said, "Is all of that yours?" I explained that only half of it was ours, but in that little boy's eyes we were rich.

Rich is a non-specific term. Ask a thousand people for a definition of rich and you will get a thousand different answers. "Rich" to a homeless person and "rich to a millionaire" would be two different things. Surveys of people in the same income level receive answers of what rich is anywhere from double their annual income to 30 times their annual income.

The Bible does not define "rich" either. But since the word appears in our Bible passage this morning, I'm going to give the word a specific meaning. And by that meaning, most of us are rich. You may disagree already, but hear me out. Let's look at some figures.

- One in ten people (closer to 15%) in the world survive on less than \$2 per day.
- If you make \$45,000 per year, you live on \$123 per day.
- If you make \$74,000 per year, you live on \$203 per day.
- An income of \$32,400 a year puts you in the top 1% worldwide.
- \$770,000 in net worth, which includes home equity, bank accounts, investments, jewelry, etc., puts you in the top 1% of wealth worldwide.

Are You in the Top One Percent of the World? | Investopedia
<https://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/050615/are-you-top-one-percent-world.asp#ixzz5645usLOm>

An annual income of \$30,000 is better off than 28% of Americans.
\$45,000 is better off than 41% of Americans.
\$60,000 is better off than 53% of Americans.
\$74,000 is better off than 63% of Americans.
\$100,000 is better off than 76% of Americans.

<http://money.cnn.com/calculator/pf/income-rank/>

Admittedly your dollars don't buy you as much in Maryland as they would in some other states and in most countries of the world. But we are not poor either.

I know of no one in our church who is poor. Poor is another non-specific term. For example, you can have a large income and be house poor. This is where you bought so much house that you have little money at the end of each month.

We all have more food than we need each day, more clothes than we need each week, more possessions than we use regularly, and plenty to keep us busy in our free time. We have adequate shelter with all the heat, cooling, water, and electricity we want.

Rich = We have more than we need for our basic needs. I think that is a good definition of rich. You may not be able to fulfill all your wants, but you do not struggle to meet all your needs.

For example, how many of you have a refrigerator or freezer with leftovers in it? Many of the people in our world never have leftovers. They don't have enough food or money for leftovers.

It is estimated that over 40,000 people in Anne Arundel County are food-insecure. That means they have limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

As far as I know, everyone here is doing okay. Most of us are doing much better than okay. We have much more than we need. In much of the world, that is considered rich.

That is good for us, but also bad for us. **There is spiritual danger in consistently having more than we need.** God warns us of this in the Bible.

Deuteronomy 8:10-14 (NIV) When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 (NIV) You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...

Note the **Dangers of Riches in this passage:**

- 1. Take your riches for granted.** You give no thought to much of your comforts and blessings. When is the last time you thanked God for your refrigerator? When is the last time you thanked God for running water, or your washer and dryer. Some here grew up without any of these things, and may more often remember to thank God for them. Others have always had these and take them for granted even though many people do not have them.
- 2. Fail to remember the source or your riches.** You forget the part God plays in your prosperity.
- 3. Fail to give God praise and thanks.**
- 4. Become proud of your blessings and take credit for them.** You think things like, "I deserve what I have. I earned it. Nobody gave me anything. It was all me."
- 5. Slack off in obedience to God.**

There is great spiritual danger to us in having more than we need. And the more we have above our needs, the greater is the danger. And the longer we have these riches, the greater the danger. It is not a good thing that God have you win the lottery. He is protecting you from yourself.

Well Paul was aware of these dangers when he wrote his letter to Timothy. We are wrapping up this series of sermons on 1 Timothy this morning. In today's passage Paul is instructing Timothy concerning some of what he needs to be teaching the Christians in the church of Ephesus.

1 Timothy 6:17 (NIV) Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

If you fall into all the six dangers mentioned in the Deuteronomy passage, you are likely to become arrogant as well. In arrogance you will think of yourself as more deserving of riches than other people, than the poor. In arrogance you will think you are a better person than the poor. In arrogance you may mistreat those who have less than you do. In arrogance you may brag on what you have. In arrogance you may belittle the little that others have. In arrogance you evaluate people on the basis of money instead of on the basis of spiritual need.

Then Paul gives Timothy some specific steps to guard against arrogance.

1 Timothy 6:18-19 (NIV) Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Paul names three things for each Christian to do in order to guard against arrogance in our prosperity.

1. Be good people. Always be good people. One of the dangers we see in those who are rich, famous, or powerful is that they think they have special privileges to break the rules. I used to be a chaplain with the county police. One sergeant told me the following story. The head of a home owners association for a certain community in our county complained to the police about all the people who ran the stop sign at a central four-way stop intersection in her community. So they started having a car there regularly to give out tickets. The head of the home owners association complained when she got her second ticket that when she demanded the police give more tickets, she meant to other people, not her. She was simply the HOA president, and yet she thought she had the right to run the stop signs.

2. Be rich in good deeds. Be rich in good works. And lest you think this means giving money, he mentions that separately. Good deeds means actually getting personally involved in helping someone. The rich are tempted to give money instead of themselves. He is speaking of personal involvement in being kind. This is hands-on

helping, not just throwing money at a problem. The arrogant write checks. Good people do more. They get their hands dirty in helping others.

3. Generously share your blessings. Whether it is money or something you buy with money, give generously. There is a sad fact in our country that the more money people have the less, proportionately, they give away. That means if you give ten percent of your income to help others now, as you get richer you will likely give less than ten percent of your larger income. It may be more dollars than you give now, but it will be a lower percentage of your greater income.

I would add to these three what we learn in the Deuteronomy passage. To guard against arrogance you can do the opposite of those dangers in Deuteronomy.

4. Give thanks every day for your riches, your comforts, your abundance. Name something specific and different each day. Don't let thanks become a rut for you. But genuinely thank God for the comforts and abundance you enjoy.

5. Acknowledge to God that you know it is He who has given you the health, the strength, the background, the relationships, the education and the opportunities that enabled you to prosper financially. Yes, you put in your time and effort. But it is God who gives you the resources to put in the time and effort. Every good thing is from Him.

He is not unaware of little you amongst all the people in the world. He loves you and is providing for you and your family.

6. Admit that you are but a steward of it all for Him. Since God has provided you with the good you have, you are actually a steward of all you own. You are a caretaker of it for God. You are caring for God's money, God's possessions. And one day He will ask you for an accounting of how you used His blessings for His kingdom.

7. Humbly lay it all at His feet each day. Humility is a choice we must make each day. If you want God on your side, then humble yourself before Him and others. In several places we are warned that God actively resists the proud. You don't want God actively resisting you.

Paul warns that wealth is uncertain. Don't make money your hope. The 2008 recession was a wake up call to many people. Many saw their retirement funds drop precipitously in value. Some were reminded that their faith needed to be in God, not money.

Listen, lots of things can happen to your money. It can be stolen. You can be tricked out if by con artists. The bank can go broke. And though the Federal government is supposedly insuring it, they are going broke too. Inflation can reduce the value of your money. The government can tax your money away. The banks and investment managers can keep adding fees. Your health needs may take a bunch. If you need long term care, it can eat up your savings. Money is uncertain.

It can also become a false god to us. God is supposed to be our security and significance. But many things compete with God to be number one in our lives. Money is the chief competitor to God.

There is ample reason not trust in money, no matter how much you have saved, no matter how much you are earning. Don't trust in your money. Don't look to money to make you secure.

It is not a sin to enjoy some of the prosperity God has enabled you to have. But God expects us who have more than we need to help those who have less than they need. There is a great deal in the Bible about God's concern for the poor, the handicapped, the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and the foreigner.

So live sufficiently and help others richly!

Jesus is our example in sharing. Jesus gave His life for us. He died in our place, for our sins. Today you can have a right relationship with God by receiving Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

As Savior we trust Him for eternity, but also our daily needs. As Lord, we recognize that all we have is His and needs to be used appropriately. He has blessed us so we can bless others.