

Be Rich Towards God!

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- [0 : 00] Good morning. At Chinese New Year, the standard greeting to friends and family always has a ring of, may you have prosperity.
- It's a good wish, isn't it? And in some homes they have auspicious words written on big sheets of red paper and hung in prominent places.
- All meaning well, always never missing, prosperity to you and your family. And prosperity always associated with abundance, plenty, material comfort, free from want, success.
- That's now the season that we hear. Even yesterday, I saw a huge poster from Perdua. And it wished car buyers prosperity even as they emptied their pockets to buy a Myvi.
- Now I don't know how you become prosperous by emptying your pockets, but never mind. But the idea of prosperity is an appealing idea.
- [1 : 22] And it's been appealing from time immemorial. I never heard anybody say to me, I'd rather be poor.
- I don't want to be prosperous. Not yet. And lying in the lap of luxury without having to lift a finger is a dream.
- Sometimes we all have. Not bad. Nothing wrong with having dreams. But this idea was also there when Jesus walked this earth 2,000 years ago.
- Surprised? The Bible passage that I will be preaching from this morning is Luke chapter 12 beginning at verse 13 till verse 21.
- And I would like our brother Kenny to come and read Luke chapter 12 verse 13 to 21.
- [2 : 32] If you have your Bibles, please follow. Today's reading is from Luke chapter 12 verses 13 to 21.
- Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. Jesus replied, Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?
- Then he said to them, Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. And he told them this parable.
- 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'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. And there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, We have plenty of grain laid up for many years.
- [3 : 39] Take life easy. Eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from 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.
- This is the word of the Lord. Let us pray. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, as we celebrate your continued goodness and blessing upon us as individuals, as a nation, we pray that we will seek you first and to appreciate and enjoy and employ your blessings in ways that are pleasing to you and that are in accordance with your word.

Teach us the correct attitude to material wealth so that we may be assigned to the nations and example to our children and to give a good account to you over all that you have blessed us with.

Move our hearts to deal with our wealth with eternity in mind so that we please you with our lives as we walk it.

[5 : 28] we pray this in Jesus name. Amen. The passage that our brother Kenny just read I just lost it.

Please give me a minute. Just read. It's sometimes titled or subtitled in your Bibles as the parable of the rich fool and the most famous line from that parable that you probably remember is you fool tonight I want your life.

That sounds like a dramatic line from a movie scene but that's the reality of the of the matter. that call can be on any one of us tonight tomorrow and we really have to be prepared.

So the idea that the more wealth the better it is begins to show even in this passage. It starts off at verse 13.

Now earlier we are told that Jesus had been preaching to thousands so much that some were stepping over other people so there must have been a bit of a stampede down there.

[7 : 08] Jesus was well known obviously he is seen as an authority figure someone who is wise in the midst of the crowd somebody says to him teacher tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me obviously there was a family dispute.

The questioner recognized who Jesus was. He was a rabbi or a teacher and the questioner must have been a Jew.

It was intended to ask Jesus to become sort of a problem solver or an empire of family disputes.

But see what Jesus answered at verse 14. Jesus replied man who appointed me a judge or arbiter between you.

And in verse 15 Jesus quickly moved into a warning. Then he said to them watch out be on guard against all kinds of greed.

[8 : 38] Life consists life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. You see there's an Old Testament rule that when you divide the family inheritance the older son gets a double share.

So obviously the questioner was a younger son. He wasn't happy.

the older son may well have been in the crowd hoping that Jesus would exert his authority and say no no no you must follow the old adat the elder son gets a double portion.

But Jesus in his divine wisdom saw through the question and he firmly refused to interfere in secular matters.

Jesus came with a mission and solving family disputes is not on that to-do list. His work was of another and higher kind.

[10 : 01] But for a questioner to ask a question of this type to Jesus reflects the questioner also did not have been here is a man being listened to by thousands following him and you come to him with your petty family disputes little bit out of place although the question is an ordinary question the questioner's self interest contrasts very sharply with what Jesus had been teaching earlier.

You remember if you look at the early part of chapter 12 Jesus had been giving warnings about hypocrisy telling the crowd not to fear those who can harm them but to fear those who could cast them into hell.

He encouraged them to confess the son of God before men. He told the crowd you're going to face opposition. This is all in the early part of chapter 12.

So in the midst of all these serious concerns that Jesus has been talking about this insignificant as it appears question appears out of place.

Look with me to verses 14 and 15. Jesus responds with a warning.

[12 : 02] Watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. He could see what was the question behind the question of this man.

Sometimes we need to listen to the unspoken question. Quite helpful actually. So Jesus uses that opportunity quickly to launch into a parable about possessions.

Jesus tells them, but a man who had a farm.

Notice he was a rich man, not a man who became rich because of the farm. He was a rich man man who had an abundant harvest that year.

It simply increased his existing wealth. Now, there's no indication that that year he had made more effort on the farm or he had planted larger acreage.

[13 : 30] truly that abundant harvest was a gift of God. And an abundant harvest raises the question of stewardship.

How do we deal with an abundant harvest? It raises the question of responsibility. Look at what he did.

As soon as he got this abundant harvest, verse 17, the man did not go and seek good counsel. He spoke to himself.

He had a conversation with himself. Verse 17 says, he thought to himself, what shall I do? I have no place talking to himself.

himself. He certainly didn't ask God for guidance. Now, if you ran a farm, your big concern is the yield, no doubt about that.

[14 : 43] And the moment you have a big yield, you've got a new problem. Now, if you were in Malaysia and you were planting oil palm, you would just go down to the mill with an extra truckload of palm oil fruits.

Here it is grain. You and I would be very happy to have a farm that was abundantly supplying.

Notice, the man doesn't make any mention of family, friends, community. charity. In fact, he doesn't think about making a donation of part of the crop to charity.

In short, he's a rich man, rich in money, but poor in attitude. Isn't it?

Isn't that what happens? Look around you. Wealth arouses a sense of independence, even from God.

[16 : 02] And this sense of independence feeds on the wealth. As the wealth grows, the sense of independence from God also grows.

You've seen it around you. Eventually, it grows so big that God is placed at the corner of the room.

It's a subtle progression leading to wholesale rejection so that God, your God, will be made to sit in the corner of the room quietly while the rich man gets on with the business of handling his wealth himself.

This is a common phenomenon if you see it around us. And it goes on, I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones and I will store all my surplus grains.

Nothing wrong with having a lot of extra harvest. There's no evidence here that he had underpaid his workers or overworked his farm staff.

[17 : 31] Nothing of the stock. But the first hint of trouble comes in verses 18 and 19. Let's look at verses 18 and 19.

Read it carefully together with me. 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 grain laid up for many years.

Take life easy, eat, drink, and be merry. Did you notice the I and the my occurred so many times in his thoughts?

It was certainly an eye centered man. What is there left to do? Plenty of grain, or in today's language, it would be plenty of money.

[18 : 46] Nothing left to do except to lay back and enjoy the abundance. abundance. But Jesus presents his sense of self sufficiency very clearly.

Do you notice? In the choice of the I and the my, Jesus was driving home a point. And sorry, okay.

Okay. then come the famous words of verse 20, that dramatic anticlimax.

When God comes to him, to this rich man, and calls him a fool, verse 20 reads, God said to him, you fool, this very night, your life will be demanded from you.

Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? God's plans for your life are quite different from your plans for your life.

[20 : 37] life. In management, we're often reminded that only you can look after your own interest.

But the Bible says different. God looks after your interests. God called this man a fool.

First of all, there is very little wisdom in your planning for your life. Because God has a plan for your life.

The man was a fool in taking into consideration, in failing to take into consideration his mortality. I was reading an article a few days ago and I was reminded of Steve Jobs.

Those of you who know me a little better know that I love chocolates. And one of my boasts to my son is to say when I die, the best part of me is the pancreas.

[22 : 01] My pancreas works very well considering the, oh no, I'm not supposed to confess. Yeah, it's true, I do eat a 200 gram bar at one time, never mind.

But my pancreas is very good. And I said to Devraj, they can have my pancreas for a transplant. And then I read about Steve Jobs.

Apparently he had something seriously wrong with his pancreas. But this 40 billion dollar, let me say that again, 40 billion ringgit estate couldn't get him a pancreas transplant when he died at 55.

Steve Jobs, in case some of you are not as technically advanced as me, is the man behind the Apple brand and technology.

40 billion ringgit couldn't get a pancreas transplant. And he wasn't a Christian either.

[23 : 21] I don't mind. It is particularly difficult for clever, successful, skilled people to feel dependent.

Particularly guys. We are raised to be independent, tough, believe we are self-made.

So when we come into a lot of wealth, we are inclined to believe that it is all our own doing, our own two hands.

Believe me, first of all, I haven't come into a lot of money, not yet, but that attitude has haunted my thoughts at one time.

It's a poisonous thought. The thought that you are independent, self-made, and able to go it alone is a poisonous thought.

[24 : 42] It will kill you. more. Tragically, it has killed a lot of people. My brothers and sisters, there is a warning in this passage verse 21.

This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves, but is not rich toward God.

What does it mean to be rich toward God? it must include being thankful, it must mean stewardship that returns to God the portion that is due, and the glory that is due, and generosity towards our neighbor.

Love your neighbor as yourself, Luke 10, 27. You see, there is a world of difference between making provision for the future and securing the future.

Making provision for the future is a prudent and wise thing. We all do that. We have children, we have family, we have spouses, we even make provision when we travel.

[26 : 27] We ensure the house is stocked up with all the needed things. But making security for the future, ah, that's not in your hand.

There is only security in an eternal God that created you. in the abundance and comfort that you have, are you still anxious?

Are you still fearful for the future? Are you still afraid that one day scarcity will knock on your front door? Isaiah says, do not fear, I am with you, do not be dismayed, I am your God and I will strengthen you.

So if you are a child of God and your sins have been blotted out by a gracious God, God, why are you living a life that is distant from the God who blotted out your sins?

A distance that you have created by distrust and neglect of the word of God. A distance created by the distrust and neglect of the word of God.

[28 : 12] Brothers and sisters, do you think you can go it alone and go better? As a pardoned sinner, why are you still anxious for tomorrow?

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go and I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

Psalms 32. Have we forfeited these promises? Are you making your future secure by recognizing that it is only God who can surely secure your future in eternity?

You see, the true opposite of anxiety and worry is trust.

I'll repeat that. The true opposite of anxiety and worry is trust. Trust in a living God.

[29 : 34] So this morning, are you just making provision for the future with the abundance of your goods or are you trying to secure a future?

Set yourself free from that burden. When you free up that energy from anxiety, you'll have the time and the strength and the inclination to smell flowers along the way.

You'll have a quality of life. You'll have the time and the strength and the inclination to serve in ministries in the church.

church. You see, one of the frequent reasons that are given for not serving in church is no time lah.

But all your time is spent on work, work, and work. you don't have trust, you don't have comfort.

[30 : 52] If you are a visitor to this church this morning and you are unsure whether you have trusted in the Jesus of the Bible for your eternal salvation, if you wish to be sure that you can have your sins forgiven through the death of this Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago, please feel free after this service to come and speak with me and I can bring you to somebody who will be able to answer your questions.

Christmas. You see, one of the nicest Christmases I ever had was last Christmas.

It was not the size of the presents I received or the number. You see, in the week before Christmas, I had finished all my work.

My desk was clear and I was able to slide into the Christmas week with no anxiety for the week that followed.

No fear that when I came back, my table would be stacked up with files. It's a wonderful sensation to just slide forward with no anxiety.

[32 : 29] How would you like to slide forward for the rest of your life? with no anxiety. Because the way ahead to eternity has been cleared.

Your burden of sin has been cleared. And you have the distant big picture goal of life eternal in Jesus Christ.

Christ. You will have Christmas from now until the day you die. It will be truly, truly wonderful. You see, the opposite of anxiety is not big plans or grand plans or preparation.

It is trust. Trust invested in the God of the Bible. But what do you do with the word of God apart from hearing it?

Hearing the word of God is only part of the story. Because inside your heart is a perpetual debate.

[33 : 47] temporary joy and comfort versus eternal joy and comfort. Temporary joy and comfort versus eternal joy and comfort.

And the choice is yours. The pursuit of eternal joy under God leads to eternal satisfaction. The returns are greater.

So, brothers and sisters, what are you doing this morning with the abundance in your life?

Do you want to have a place in eternity or do you want to be like the rich fool?

Let us pray. Our heavenly father, we are mindful that we are unable to see your wisdom with our own eyes unless you speak to us and throw light into our hearts.

[35 : 18] We will remain foolish and we will be stuck in our old ways. This morning, father, if there be any in our midst who have a desire to deal afresh and rightly with the abundance that you have blessed them.

We pray that you will move them to a new understanding. Father, we pray that you will hold them and lead them by the hand, that they will never again have to be called foolish men.

We ask you this in Jesus' name. Amen. For things may be an hermani or a woman and have turned into a bar of bee had made