

Wealth

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[0 : 0 0] little bit. Very good, very good. How's everyone doing today? All right, and for those who are getting this online later on in the week, just know that we miss you, we love you, and probably a lot of people are like getting hurricanes, prepare for the hurricane coming or the tropical storm. We don't know which way it's going to go. Maybe even somebody have already, some of us have already gotten out of Dodge, so if you guys are catching this later on in the week, thanks for tuning in again and again. Hope to see you soon. We're going to jump into Proverbs, and Proverbs is a book about God's wisdom. We're looking at God's wisdom for how we live in this crazy world, and if you weren't convinced that this world is crazy, I'm sure 2020 has just, yeah, pushed you over the edge to have you embrace that full-fledged. So today I'm going to teach on God's wisdom with regards to wealth. So some of us think wealth is a sure sign that we are in God's good books, right? Others believe, contrary to that, that wealth is this danger at best, and it's evil at worst. Like, nobody should be wealthy. And people in that camp kind of often misquote the Bible by saying money is the root of all kinds of evil, which is actually just the butchering of a verse from 1 Timothy 6.10, which doesn't say the money is the root of all kinds of evil. It says the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Big difference there, right? See, the Bible's clear about what God cares about when it comes to us. He doesn't care about what you have. He cares about what has you. See, wealth isn't a highway to hell. Wealth can be a gift from God. Genesis 26, 12 to 14, it says about Isaac, who was Abraham's son. Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. What does it say? It says the Lord blessed him, and the man became rich and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants so that the Philistines envied him.

Now, we read that. My first thought, maybe yours too, is like, man, Lord, give me some of that Isaac blessing. Could have some of that hundredfold coming this way. But what we don't see that is the part of the context of this verse is that Isaac sowed in that land during a time when it actually didn't make sense to you, right? His first inclination was that he was going to run down to Egypt during a time of severe famine because Egypt could help him out. It was a place of safety for him. And God said, no, no, no, don't go anywhere. You're staying right here. And that's what he did. Isaac obeyed and God delivered on his promise. Now, we read that and kind of the temptation might be to connect some dots. Let's say Isaac was, you know, he had faith in God. He obeyed what God told him to do. And that, you know, turned out in wealth for him. So is that like some formula that we can create? Faith plus obedience equals wealth? Well, not always. I mean, that's up to God. Faith plus obedience could lead to a lot of things. Consider the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a great man of God who was in Germany, a pastor in

Germany during the time of the Nazis and his faith, landed him in prison and ultimately killed for the sake of God and obeying him. So our motivation for obedience shouldn't be to get wealth. It should be because God is who he is. God is God. We are not. He is good, not us. And he is wise.

Now, if God does choose to bless us and make us wealthy, we have to realize that he also has a plan for that wealth. And this means that wealth is a responsibility, not a right.

[4 : 0 1] When you read the Bible cover to cover and you consider the prospect or this topic of wealth, what you come away with, the conclusion you walk away with is that, you know what, at the end of the day, this is true for wealth, but this is true for all of who we are. We are responsible to God with what we do with the wealth he's given to us, with the life that he's given to us, with all that he's given to us. That's one of the central tenets of Christianity when it comes to God, wealth, our responsibility. It's this, use your wealth to bless others more than yourself.

Proverbs 11, 24 to 25 says, See, when we understand that God can use wealth for his glory, it really changes our motivation.

Wealth isn't there and we're not receiving it to then go and gratify our own desires and cravings. You know, what the Bible says is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Rather, what we do is we see it as a tool, as a vehicle to honor and worship God. It's a means to that end. Wisdom puts wealth in that context, right? God blesses us to be a blessing. When God called Abraham out of his country, out of his nation, out of his father's house, and he says, you know what?

Go to this nation. You're going to go on this faith journey. You don't know where you're going to go, but trust me. He says this, I will bless you. In Genesis 12, 2, I will bless you so that you will be a blessing, right? He didn't say, I will bless you so that you can bless yourself. No, I'm going to bless you to be a blessing. And the false gospel of individual rights and the false gospel of prosperity have one thing in common. It makes you the most important person in the world. You have the right to do whatever you want with whatever belongs to you. Now, this can be a good ideology of all the bad options the world can put forward, but as far as the kingdom of God goes, that dog doesn't hunt.

[6 : 30] The true gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached was that everything you have, everything I have, everything that we are belongs to God. Galatians 2.20 says, I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Again, 2 Corinthians 5.14 picks us up. For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died. And he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised. See, the gospel recognizes that the life we live, as Christians, the life we live is from God, by God, and it's lived to God. Which means that if I end up wealthy, if God blesses me, I am a steward of God's wealth. I don't get to stop and say, this is mine now. I get total claim. So we hold it with open hands. And we say, man, God, put it to work. Put it to work for your kingdom. Put it to work for your glory. Not my kingdom, not my glory. And so this has implications on how we deal with the wealth that God sends our way. I love how John Wesley kind of brought in some very simple, good stewardship principles for us to follow when it comes to money and wealth and possessions. And this was all informed by scripture. And let me just say, for the sake of time, I can't unpackage these things to the full, but there's some great online things that you can search as far as Wesley and the teachings of money. But here's his three principles. Earn all you can, save all you can, to give all you can. Okay? Earn all you can, save all you can, to give all you can. Earn all you can. Man, use the talents God gave you to make money, right?

It is not bad to get promotions and make more money. It's okay to do that. God gave you those talents. He gave you abilities that like, as you use them and care for them and steward them well and sharpen them and add education and all that to the gift of your mind and the gift of your abilities that God's already given you. Man, you have the opportunity to make more money. That is okay. You don't have to feel guilty about that. God says, hey, go for it. But don't do it just for yourself, right? When I was in my teens and early 20s, man, I wanted to make as much money as possible because these were my goals.

I wanted to have the biggest house and the nicest cars and the most lavish lifestyle. That was it. But there's better purposes. There's higher purposes than that. And so he goes on to say, save all you should. Inheritance, man, inheritance saving, something to pass on to your kids. Man, that's godly wisdom. That's good. Saving for a rainy day, if you're able to do that and try to do that, it's godly wisdom. But these two things are motivated in blessing others. Think about it. It's blessing your family. Why do we save for inheritance? Man, we want to bless our kids. We want to be able to hand something down to them. That's not greedy. Man, that's good. And with our financial stability, we're poised to be a huge blessing. Earn as much as possible. Save according to wisdom in order to give all you can. Give all you can. Bless others. And what I like about these principles, it doesn't make wealth an evil thing. But it also doesn't make it ultimate. See, remember, wealth is given by God to be used by God, which means we don't have to take vows of poverty. Being poor doesn't make you more pious. The poor can be just as sinful as the wealthy. Remember, it's not what you have, it's what has you. So then as stewards of God, we have to realize this. We have to guard our hearts.

We have to guard our hearts, especially when it becomes things of wealth. Instead of using what God has given us as a means to glorify him, this is what our hearts can do. This is where they could go bad.

[11:00] We can turn anything that God gives us into the object of our worship. That's what we can do. We do that all the time. Instead of worshiping the creator, we worship creation, which God gave us to enjoy and use. Instead of worshiping the giver, we worship the gifts that he's given us. And as much as we should reject the sentiment that wealth is the highway to hell, we should also reject the notion that wealth is the pathway to peace. See guys, wealth can't replace God as our savior and our security. Proverbs 11, 4 points this out. Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

Proverbs 18, 10 to 11 says, the name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous runs into it and is safe. A rich man's wealth is his strong city and like a high wall in his imagination.

See what we have to realize guys, as you look at life and you look at history, we have to realize that wealth is shift. It's impossible to hold onto. And that's why it can never be your source of peace. The rich spend a lot of time, a lot of their energy trying to hold onto what they have. You know what? The wealthy don't sleep better than everyone else. You guys know Mr. Wonderful on that show, Shark Tank? Y'all, if you watch that show anyways, it's this rich, wealthy investor. He's got this hilarious personality. He says some funny things about his money and they just, yeah, he just makes me laugh. I enjoy his candor. But he'll say things like this when he's considering investing in somebody and their idea. He's like, you know, when I invest my money, it gets really nervous because it wants to know that it's going to come back to daddy at some point, right? So, but let's be honest. It's not his money that's being nervous, right? It's him being nervous about his money. But his anxiety represents the anxiety around money that everyone feels, even the wealthy. And it is this fear that's deep in our soul. And it's this, what if I lose it? Why do we fight and worry about it so much? Because we're actually worried about losing it. It's because we're putting too much faith in it. We're putting too much hope in it. And we shouldn't. Money and possessions don't have the capacity for faithfulness to you or me, right? Like our money and our wealth and our possessions don't look at us and say, you know what? I'm going to stick around because this guy has a great personality, right? It doesn't do that. It doesn't do that, which is why it's foolish for us to put our hope in it. It can never be our savior. It can never be our security because wealth is impossible to hold onto forever. Proverbs 23, 4 to 5 says, do not toil to acquire wealth. Be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone. For suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.

One thing about life, you cannot predict the future. You have no idea what's coming. A lot of rich people lose their wealth. Now, I also recognize that a lot of people, rich people don't lose their wealth. They die rich. But again, that's the point. They die rich, but then they can't take it with them, right? The Egyptians tried to do that and all their tombs are raided. At death, every wealthy person is permanently parted from their wealth. And you know what? That goes for all of us, all of us. At death, we are permanently parted from everything we tried to amass materially in this lifetime.

[14:54] James 1 to 9 to 11 gives it to us honest. It says, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers of the grass, its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. The Bible's telling us, rich man, let your mortality humble you. In fact, the Bible says to the rich man, go beyond just realizing that boast in that humiliation, which is an odd thing, you know? Boasting in that humiliation that you are mortal.

But when we do that, this recognition that realize, you know what? Tomorrow's not guaranteed. It doesn't matter who I am. I am going, my riches, my wealth can be gone tomorrow. My life, it's going to wither away like the grass. It's good. The Bible says it's good to count our days and realize that we're not going to live in this life forever. But when we contemplate those things, when we realize that, some wisdom begins to hit our hearts and our minds, that there's a higher pursuit to life than accumulating wealth. It is a call to live for God. It is a call to pursue righteousness. Why? Because righteousness is more valuable than wealth. Proverbs 11, 18 says this, the wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward. Proverbs 11, 28, whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf. See, it's not the wealthy who are wise. The wise are those who pursue righteousness. And Proverbs talks about wisdom being more valuable than gold and silver and possessions. It also says the essence of wisdom. To begin to

know wisdom is the fear of the Lord. And the idea, this concept of fear of the Lord can be summed up in this way. It's faith and following.

Faith in God that he is who he says he is and following him. It's believing and obeying. And we look at the person who did it perfectly, Jesus, that is how he lived. And it's funny, you know what? Right on, when Jesus was about to start his ministry, he went into the desert and was tempted by Satan in various ways. And one of the temptations was wealth and power, right? Satan offered him the wealth of nations. He's like, I'll give this to you right now. But what did Jesus have to do in order to get that? He had to bow down and worship Satan. He had to break a commandment of God. He had to commit an act of disobedience to his Father in heaven. And of course, Jesus declined. He declined all the wealth this world could offer because, you know what? Righteousness was better. Jesus lived for the more valuable treasure. Righteousness. And why is his righteousness more valuable than wealth and all the riches of the world? Well, let's consider what makes something valuable. It's scarcity, right? You think of gold and diamonds. Why are they so valuable? Because they're pretty scarce. There's not a lot of it.

gold and diamonds. They're hidden. They're not in plain sight. You have to dig in the earth and spend a lot of time and effort to find them. And then the other, the last thing that adds to something's value is its permanence. How long will it last? Right? Good marketers of diamonds, they say diamonds are forever, you know? This is why righteousness is more valuable than wealth. This is why it's more valuable than anything that you can find on this earth or get on this earth.

[19:25] It's all these things. It's scarce. It's impossible to obtain. And it is eternal. It is indestructible. And let's consider this a little further in all of history. The righteousness that Proverbs is talking about was found perfectly and completely in only one person. Jesus. You want to talk about scarcity?

You want to talk about something that is invaluable and beyond measure? And it's funny, when we look at the law of God as it was handed down through Moses, it pointed at this idea of righteousness. And it showed us, it gave us a roadmap of how we could possibly obtain it. But you know what?

Every person throughout history failed. Nobody was able to meet that standard. Nobody was able to possess the righteousness of God for themselves. They couldn't earn it for themselves. And so Jesus came.

And he did what no one else could do. And that is why the greatest wealth we can possess is Jesus's righteousness. And this brings us back to where we started in the sermon on wealth. The ability to make wealth is a gift from God. The wealth that you and I can receive in this life is a gift from God. It comes from him. It doesn't belong to us. We're stewards of God's wealth. And so it is with the righteousness of God. It is not our own. God doesn't give us a righteousness and say, hey, this belongs to you.

It's not our own. It's not an imparted righteousness. It's an imputed righteousness, which means that we have to be in Christ. We have to be robed in his righteousness. We have to be hidden in Christ.

[21:19] We can't earn it. And by faith, Jesus gives it to us as a gift. And you know what? By faith, Jesus shares everything that is his with us. And that includes his righteousness, the most rare, the most scarce, the most impossible to obtain for yourself permanent gift. And you know what, guys? This gift of righteousness was costly.

Jesus had to die. He had to die so we could receive it. And you know what? It was costly for him. And it's costly for us too. We have to die to ourselves. We have to give up our life. We have to give up our rights. But Jesus promises to those who do that, all who lose their life for his sake will find it. So it doesn't matter whether you are wealthy or poor according to the world's standards. It doesn't matter if you're wealthy or poor according to material metrics. If you have Jesus's righteousness, you have everything. Jeff Bezos has nothing on you. And Jesus's righteousness can't be lost. And this makes us eternally wealthy, which means we can live generously toward God others in this temporary world. And when you realize that, all you need is Jesus. When you realize all you need is Jesus, you begin to live with open hands and an open heart. Let's pray.

Okay. Lord, I pray for us right here that our confession would be all the wealth belongs to you. all of it. And you give us some wealth in this life in various measures according to your choice as you deem fit because you're wiser than us. And Lord God, help us to understand that we are stewards of this life that you have given to us. We don't want, I pray our confession is, Lord, I don't,

I don't want to live for myself. I pray our confession is, man, the life I live, I live to you, Jesus, by faith in the Son of God. It is yours. I was bought with a price. I am not my own.

[24 : 14] I don't want to live for you. I don't want to live for you. I don't want to live for you. step into my rights and say, Lord, I have the right to do this.

I have the right to do that. I realize everything comes from you. And as a steward, I am responsible and accountable to you. I pray our confession would be, Lord, your will be done.

With whatever I have in my hand, your will be done. Your kingdom come. How can I use what you have given me to glorify you, to be rich toward you, to bless you and others?

Lord, I pray that our hearts would be disentangled from the love of money, from the lust of our eyes, from the lust of our flesh, our nature, our bias, from the pride of life, that we would live in freedom from those things, to live in freedom for you, to you and for you.

I thank you, God. I pray for those who do, who have never surrendered to you, who do not know the beautiful gift of your righteousness.

[25 : 41] And I pray, Lord God, today you have opened their eyes to see that nothing in this world compares to your righteousness, Jesus Christ. And if that's you, I want to invite you to pray, Jesus, be my Lord and be my Savior.

Be my righteousness. Lord, I pray as we respond with worship, we would truly just be in awe of how good and amazing and unsurpassing you are.

Amen.