

The Psalmist wrote so many years ago, ***Psalms 62:10 (NKJV)*** *If riches increase, Do not set your heart on them.*

And again, he said, ***Psalms 49:6-7 (NKJV)*** *Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, None of them can by any means redeem his brother,*

If riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

Someone once gave me this advice, "If things are really good, don't be too glad and when things are going poorly, don't be too sad, for the really good and the really bad days never last too long."

I think we all saw a good example of this in the past week when the stock markets here and overseas plunged. Millions of dollars of wealth were wiped out. The New York Stock Exchange dropped over 500 points, the Toronto Exchange over 400 points, the Asian and European Markets tanking.

I was talking with someone recently about how small our salaries were back when we were young guys and we both had had the same thought in those days, "If I could just make Ten Thousand dollars a year that would be all the money I would ever need."

If I remember correctly, when I finally made ten thousand, you needed twenty thousand just to get by.

Let me tell you a story, a true story.

In 1923 at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, eight of the most powerful money managers in the world gathered for a meeting. These eight, if they combined all their resources and their assets, controlled more money than the U. S. Treasury. In that group were such men as Charles Schwab. He was president of a steel company. Richard Whitney was the president of the New York Stock Exchange, and Arthur Cutton was a wheat speculator. Albert Fall was a presidential cabinet member, personally a very wealthy man. Jesse Livermore was the greatest bear on Wall Street in his generation. Leon Fraser was the president of the International Bank of Settlements. Ivan Krueger headed the largest monopoly. Quite an impressive group of people.

Let's look at the same group later in life. Charles Schwab died penniless. Richard Whitney spent the rest of his life serving a sentence in Sing Sing Prison. Arthur Cutton that great wheat speculator, became insolvent. Albert Fall was pardoned from a Federal Prison so he might die at home. Leon Fraser, the president of the big international bank? He committed suicide. Jesse Livermore? He committed suicide. Ivan Kueger? He committed suicide. Seven of those eight great big money magnates had lives that were disasters before they left this planet Earth.

What mistake did they make? Thinking that what they had and what they controlled belonged to them.¹

In today's Gospel we heard Mark's account of Jesus feeding the multitude; feeding the four thousand, with seven loaves of bread and a few fishes. Jesus can and will provide. God can and will provide for our needs, whatever they may be; food, clothing, whatever.

Jesus told us in **Matthew 6:24 (NKJV)** *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

¹ Illustratons Unlimited, James S. Hewett, Editor, Tyndal House Publishers, Wheatin IL 1988

We cannot serve our riches and God at the same time. We heard the results of that in the story of the five rich tycoons.

We can also look at the story of Lazarus the beggar and the rich man to see what happens when we do not share what we have. **Luke 16:22-24 (NKJV)** *So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'*

Proverbs warns us, **Proverbs 22:16 (NKJV)** *He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, And he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty.*

Jesus also told what would happen if we hoarded our wealth and did not care for others.

Matthew 25:41-46 (NKJV) *"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

Being rich or poor has no bearing on our relationship with God. But putting our possessions, or our professions, or in fact anything else in this world ahead of God violates the very first Commandment. We are making a god out of what we have, no more or no less than the Hebrew children that made the Golden Calf.

Wealth is fleeting. We cannot take it with us. So if we cannot take it with us why do we try to accumulate so much?

Paul wrote to Timothy these words of advice that are just as pertinent for us today.

1 Timothy 6:7-11 (KJV) *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*

Rich or poor, we all will be penniless in these world's goods when we depart.

Think about it.

Amen.