

The Life That is Truly Life

We in our society have a difficult time understanding what it means to be rich. Most of us measure wealth by the amount of worldly goods that we have, but Jesus taught that nothing could be farther from the truth. He spent a great deal of time talking about the worldly “rich” in a negative way—his impression of them was that many of them had allowed their love of wealth and the power it brought to separate them from God.

In **Luke 6:24**, Jesus said of them:

“...woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.”

We all remember the story of the “rich man and Lazarus” and the “rich young ruler” -- their “comfort” was truly on this earth and they didn’t recognize true riches and wealth when offered to them. In **Luke 12:13-21**, Jesus tells the story of the “rich fool,” a farmer who had just produced a bumper crop. Before telling the parable, Jesus warns his hearers:

“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

He then goes on to tell of the farmer who placed his trust in his wealth, only to lose his life before being able to enjoy that wealth. The parable ends with these words from Jesus Christ:

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

Paul was one who recognized true riches and the greatness of the gifts God has given us. The writing that best shows this is his letter to the **Ephesians**. In it, Paul uses hyperbole to not overstate God’s gifts, but to try to best describe in weak human terms what God has done for us.

1:8 – “Lavished” GRACE

1:18 – “Glorious” INHERITANCE

1:19 – “Incomparably great” POWER

1:19 – “Mighty” GOD’S STRENGTH

2:4 – “Great” GOD’S LOVE

2:4 – “Rich” GOD’S MERCY

2:7 – “Incomparable riches” GRACE

3:8 – “Unsearchable riches” IN CHRIST

3:16 – “Glorious riches” FROM GOD

3:18 – “Wide...long...high...deep” LOVE OF CHRIST

3:19 – “Surpasses knowledge” LOVE

3:19 – “Filled to the measure of all the fullness” OF GOD

3:20 – “Immeasurably more” WHAT GOD CAN DO FOR US ABOVE WHAT WE ASK OR IMAGINE

4:13 – “Whole measure of the fullness” OF CHRIST

All point to what Paul told Timothy in **I Timothy 6:17-18**:

“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. 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.”

May we be constantly reminded that God never promised us worldly riches, but did promise spiritual riches that are invaluable. We need to look to God to continually bless us richly, and not to ourselves for temporary wealth.

---Johnny Stephens