

to Be Rich Most Likely... I Week 3

Bottom Line: The person who is truly wealthy is blessed whether or not he has much money.

Scripture Used: Proverbs 10:22; Matthew 5:3-12 (sec.); 1 Tim. 6:17-19 (sec.)

How much money would you need to make per year to be rich?

RESEARCH DONE LAST YEAR

Last year, there was some research done on this question. People were asked how much they would need to make per year in order to feel as if they were rich. The results were rather interesting. Of all the Americans who took part in the research, there was a pattern that the researchers found.

They found that the more money a person made, the more they believed they needed to be in the 'rich' category.

What It Takes to Be 'Rich'

The more you have, the more you need. As income goes up, so does the amount of money people think it would take to consider themselves rich.

Annual Income



Source: YouGov, Inc.

This is kind of a problem because I'm supposed to tell you who is most likely to be rich and none of us can agree on what it takes to be rich in the first place. Like, where's the line? Where do we pass the threshold of the rich? How do we know that we have arrived into this exclusive club?

Perception has a lot to do with how we understand wealth and how we understand what it means to be rich.

JUST THINK ABOUT THIS FOR A MINUTE

The median household income in Clermont county is around \$60k per year. If we were to put that up against the rest of the world, not just America, that would make the middle of the road household here to be in the top 1/5 of 1% of the richest people in the world (.19%).

So, in 1 hour, the middle of the road household here makes \$31.25. And just to give us some perspective, workers in Indonesia average \$.39 per hour.

It takes just over a minute to earn enough money to buy a can of coke, yet it takes someone in Zimbabwe over an hour to earn enough to buy a can of coke.

This'll blow your mind: the median household in Clermont County earns enough money in a month to pay the monthly income of 268 doctors in Pakistan!

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS, & BETTER NEWS (BEST NEWS)

So, I've got some good news, some bad news, and some better than good news - we'll call it the 'best news.'

The good news: when the mass-majority of people all over the world think about who is rich, they don't think of the person who is making six-figures and living it up. They think of you... They think of me...

They've got a car. Even more, some of them have an extra car. And they even have houses for their cars - they call them garages. They have this thing called air conditioning where it keeps them cool when it's hot. They have plumbing that works! Their kids know how to read. They have their own books. They have these giant buildings full of food where they get all they need and more. They even have buildings that are for the sole purpose of making food and letting them eat there. They call them restaurants. A lot of their kids have their own bedrooms. Wow, they're rich!

The good news is that the person who is most likely to be rich is you and me because we already are.

And since we are rich, we have opportunities that much of the world doesn't. We have opportunities like packing 24,000 meals to be sent across the world - that took money. We have opportunities to sponsor children in places like the Dominican Republic - that takes money. We have opportunities to support missionaries - that takes money. We have opportunities to get an education so that we can improve people's way of life - that takes money. We have an abundance of opportunities because we have an abundance of resources.

The bad news: we don't know how to be rich. We fail to realize that we *are* rich and that turns into us living as if we are in *need* of more. Our wealth becomes our stumbling block. It's the last thing we are willing to part ways with, because it is something we have earned.

Our wealth distracts us from living the life God has called us to live - we become busy chasing money while neglecting ministry. With wealth comes great responsibility and with responsibility comes time.

Jesus had some frightening things to say to a rich man - the man came up to Jesus wanting to know what he should do in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him, *you know the commandments*, then he listed some. The rich man confirmed that he had kept those commands. In response, Jesus said, *there is one thing you lack, go and sell all your possessions and follow me*. The man wasn't ready to do that. His wealth was more important to him than leaving it all behind and following Jesus. His wealth was his stumbling block - it was his god. That man turned and walked away, for he had more than he needed and he didn't want to do what Jesus was telling him to do.

Jesus then looks to his disciples and tells them that it's hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. He then says that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich person to get into the kingdom of heaven. Realizing that this is impossible for a camel to accomplish this feat, the disciples ask Jesus, *then who can be saved?* Jesus responds, *with people it is impossible, but with God all things are possible*.

Being rich is difficult. You can easily fall into trusting in that which you have rather than trusting in the one who gave it to you. It should be no surprise to us, then, that Paul told the young pastor, Timothy, these words:

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19

You see, wealth can make us arrogant and prideful and we must guard ourselves from becoming so. We must learn how to be rich and honor God.

But I have some **better news** to share with you this morning. You can call it the **best news**.

Here's the better news:

The person who is truly wealthy is blessed whether or not he has much money.

I believe there's another way of looking at being wealthy and being rich.

This series is all about taking characteristics and identifying outcomes that come from those characteristics. At the same time, it's about thinking about things in light of the kingdom of God.

Week 1 we talked about the first step to succeeding in life and found that moving toward success doesn't mean stepping up the ladder, but it means kneeling before the Father, acknowledging that He is God and we are not, that He is Lord, and we are not.

Last week we talked about changing the world and surprisingly found that the key to changing the world isn't in amassing HUGE amounts of influence and power, but in sharing God's love in small ways every single day.

This week I want to give you a better way to think about wealth. A better way to think about being rich. And, ultimately, I want to show you who is most likely to truly be rich.

In order to do this, we're going to open up the book of Proverbs and see what Solomon has to say about wealth.

In Proverbs 10, Solomon is comparing the righteous man with the wicked man. He talks a lot about money, wealth, and riches. He talks about the person who is filled with wisdom, integrity, and blessing. He talks about the person who is foolish, who gains riches in wicked ways, who works with a negligent hand. He talks about the result of being righteous and the result of being wicked.

This chapter, just like the rest of Proverbs is filled with short truths that pack a big punch.

The verse we'll be looking at today is packed with insight that is going to be vital for us to understand who is most likely to be rich.

So let's jump in.

Read Proverbs 10:22

It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich... In other words, God is the one who provides. He is the one who makes rich.

But I see a problem here. Because all throughout Proverbs 10, Solomon is making a distinction between the righteous man and the wicked man. He even acknowledges that treasure gained by wickedness isn't profitable, but treasure is gained, nonetheless. So does God also bless the wicked with riches?

What does being rich really mean? Is he talking only about material wealth? That is one way to take his words. You could certainly go there. You could certainly also go the route of the prosperity preachers who: *name it and claim it, if you have enough faith, God will bless you with riches*. That is something that is actually taught.

I think Solomon is talking about something different here, though. I believe Solomon is talking about a specific kind of wealth. A specific way of being rich.

Let's look at this closer.

Read Proverbs 10:22

So, God's blessing is what makes someone rich. In other words, those who are blessed by God are rich. And *he adds no sorrow to it*.

This is the biggest reason why I believe Solomon is talking about a different kind of wealth than the way we typically think about wealth.

Dr. Miki Kashtan, in an article on Psychology Today talked about the plight of the rich.

She identified these as things that cause problems for those who have material wealth:

Isolation. When someone is wealthy, they tend to become more isolated. Their house is bigger, they have more land, they have less of a need to have interdependent relationships.

They ask themselves if the person they are dating or engaged to really love them for them and not for the things they have.

They suffer from anxiety because they don't feel they can trust people. They are approached and befriended by people who simply want to have access to their resources.

People don't believe they have struggles and they don't feel comfortable sharing their struggles with others because the value of wealth in today's society is so great that people look at them as having all they need.

They struggle with shame and guilt because they have so much more than others. To cope with this, they justify other's poverty or lack of wealth with laziness.

Beyond all this, there is significant pressure on those who have an abundance of resources.

Consider these words of some of the world's most wealthy people:

I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness. - John Rockefeller.

The care of \$200,000,000 is enough to kill anyone. There is no pleasure in it. - William H. Vanderbilt.

I am the most miserable man on earth. - John Jacob Astor.

I was happier when doing a mechanic's job. - Henry Ford.

Millionaires seldom smile. - Andrew Carnegie.

THE BLESSING OF THE LORD

I believe Solomon is speaking of a better way to be rich. I believe he is talking about being rich in the blessings of God. For the blessings of God do not have sorrow with them. They will not pass away like the wealth we acquire here on earth. And as people who are already materially wealthy, I believe it is time for us to think a different way about being truly rich.

This is my proposal:

The person who is truly wealthy is blessed whether or not he has much money.

In order to see what it means to be blessed, I thought it would be good for us to see what Jesus says about being blessed.

Jesus is on a mountainside speaking to his disciples with the crowds in the background:

Read Matthew 5

v.3

I love when Jesus says things like this: you're blessed when you are poor. And taking Solomon's words we could say: you're rich when you're poor. What?!

When you are poor in spirit, when you depend on God, when you acknowledge your need for him, you are blessed, and you will be a part of the kingdom of heaven.

v.4

There's something amazing that happens when someone is mourning and they are comforted by others. When you are more concerned about your status and your pride, you'll mourn in private, but when you mourn in the context of relationships, you'll be comforted.

v.5

The truly rich person is gentle, is meek. They are blessed because they will inherit the earth. When everything around us tells us that the way to gain is to take, Jesus is telling us the way to gain is to give. To be gentle toward others. To adopt a state of meekness.

v.6

The truly rich person is hungry and thirsty... for the right things. For righteousness. So many people who make it big talk about how empty the acquisition of money can be. They talk about how they always know that something is missing. The key to truly be satisfied, to being content, is to hunger and thirst after the right things. The things of God.

v.7

The truly rich person is merciful - they aren't brash and controlling. They extend mercy and mercy is extended to them.

v.8

The truly rich person doesn't do bad business deals, they don't take advantage of others. They maintain a pure heart, and they get to see God. How cool is that?!

v.9

The truly rich person seeks out places of strife and they make peace. They actively pursue reconciliation for relationships and situations. And as a result, they are called sons of God.

v.10

The truly rich person is... persecuted for the sake of the right things. Blessed are you when you are wronged, when you are persecuted, because you will be a part of the kingdom of heaven.

v.11

The truly rich person is insulted and persecuted because of Jesus. Yay!

v.12

The truly rich person has his reward not here on earth, but in heaven.

WE HAVE A CHOICE

We have a choice. Will we look at wealth and riches as material things or will we begin to see that we can be wealthy whether or not we have money. Will we begin to see that it is one thing to be rich in this world, but it is a whole other thing to be rich in the things of God?

NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU ACQUIRE, YOU'LL BE EMPTY

We can continue to focus on achieving more, making more, acquiring more, or we can begin to focus on what it means to truly be rich.

Your investments will eventually run out.

Your house will eventually fall down.

Your car will eventually stop working.

Your phone will need to be replaced.

All the things you have strived to acquire will fail to satisfy your heart.

To be blessed by God is what it means to truly be rich.

HOW MUCH BETTER IT WOULD BE:

to know that you have your residence in the kingdom of Heaven rather than only at your current address?

to be comforted when you mourn rather than deal with your pain on your own?

to have an inheritance of the new heavens and the new earth that will come where there is no more pain and no more tears?

to be truly satisfied rather than always striving for the next things, the next accomplishment, the next rung on the ladder?

to be called a son/daughter of God rather than a son/daughter of your parents?

to have a great reward in heaven rather than having a reward that will pass away here on earth?

WAYNE HUIZENGA JR.

Growing up, Wayne observed his father's life and wanted to be like him. His father is Wayne Huizenga Sr., he has founded 3 fortune 500 companies and owns 3 professional sports teams. One of those 3 companies is Waste Management Inc.

Wayne Jr. wanted the exciting life of his father. He made an incredible amount of money working with his father at Waste Management. He talked about his big house, his nice cars, his sport fishing yacht, his 3 sports teams that he owned.

He talked about his lavish drinking and his dead focus on achieving. He eventually grew to realize that he was very happy, but something was missing.

One day his friends invited him to go on a nuclear submarine for a 3 day trip. He said, *done, we'll take our plane and see you there.*

On that submarine he was introduced to Captain Brad Fleetwood McDonald who he became really good friends with. He would ask him questions about leadership. And he talked about every time he would ask him about leadership, he would have his Bible with him.

Eventually Wayne Jr. asked Captain McDonald why they were so different. And McDonald plainly told him, *Jr. you have a huge hole in your heart and you can't fill it with anything outside of a relationship with God.*

Jr., a man who had more material wealth than any of us could ever imagine having, yet he wasn't satisfied. He wasn't truly rich. He was rich in the things of this world, but poor in the things that really matter. He was poor in the blessings of God.

Jr. became a follower of Jesus because he found out that no matter how much money he could acquire, he would have a huge void in his heart without a relationship with God.

He found out that:

The person who is truly wealthy is blessed whether or not he has much money.

That to be truly rich is to be blessed by God.

That to be truly rich is to have an abundant relationship with Jesus.

A TRIP TO THE FUTURE

One of my favorite movie trilogies is Back to the Future. Yeah, don't judge me. Those movies are awesome!

I'd like to take you on a trip to the future.

You're all dressed up, for someone close to you has died. You have been asked to share some words about their life. It's a nice day out, the birds are chirping, the sun is out, if it weren't for this moment, your day would be filled with a trip to the lake.

You walk into a church building, the building where the funeral is set to take place. It's an open casket and you walk up to the front of the room to pay your respects, to hug the family who is sitting in the front row, and when you look into the casket, you see... Yourself.

You are the one who has died. My question for you is twofold:

What do you want to say about your life to the people who will be at your funeral?

Would what you want to say be the truth about the way you actually lived?

I think too often, we don't live with the end in mind. We live in the here and now, focusing on the wrong things.

We spend our days focused on the things that will pass away rather than the things that are eternal.

AS PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY RICH

As people who are already rich, don't put your hope in the things you have, but put your hope in the one who provides all things. Material wealth will pass away, but there's a better thing to be rich in: The blessings of God.

Use your wealth for doing good.

But above all, set your mind on the things God values. Set your eyes on the things that truly matter in life.

The blessings of God will make you rich and the riches you will have will be accompanied with no sorrow. You won't have to deal with the trouble that comes from losing that which you have, for the blessings of God will never leave you.

A GREAT PLACE TO START

To get started in living a life of being blessed by God, take each morning this week and begin your day reading a chapter of Proverbs. As we've said before, there are 31 chapters in Proverbs, so choose the chapter that corresponds with the day of the month. So tomorrow morning, start your day off with reading Proverbs 15.

As you read God's word, your mind will be oriented toward living out the life God is calling you to live.

The person who is most likely to be rich is the person who is rich in the blessings of God. Now let's go and be blessed. Let's value the things that truly matter. Let's prioritize the things of God. Let's approach each day with the end in mind. That we think about what we want people to say about us when we are laid to rest. Let's begin to be rich in the things that have eternal value.

And when we do, we'll find that the person who is most likely to be rich is the person who is rich in the blessings of God. And maybe, just maybe, you'll find that the person who is most likely to be rich... is you.