

Week 2

GET RICH TOWARDS GOD

Luke 12:13-21

.....
*But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required
of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they
be?'*

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(Luke 12:20, ESV)
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Introduction

One of the key threats to our spiritual health—especially during the weeks leading up to Christmas—is the materialistic desire to acquire more and more possessions. Advertisers crank up the heat and all sorts of specials remind us how we really “need” so much more than we currently have. The inevitable result of acquiring wealth seems to be forgetting God.

Consider this stark warning given to the people of Israel before they entered the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 8:11-18:

Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

May this Advent season be a time of contentment, enjoying the gifts God has provided, and generous giving that loosens the grip of materialism in your heart!

Investigation

Read Luke 12:13-21.

1. What do you think Jesus means when he says that “one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (12:15)?
2. Jesus says that we should “take care” and “be on guard” (two different words) against all covetousness (12:15). What is covetousness and why do you think Jesus places so much emphasis on protecting yourself from it?
3. In the parable, God calls the rich man a “fool.” What made this man so foolish?
4. What do you think Jesus means when he describes being “rich toward God” (12:21)?

Implication

1. Almost everybody would say that they don't really believe that having lots of wealth is the most important thing in life. Yet, so many people live as though their lives consist in the abundance of their possessions. Why do you think people are prone to that inconsistency?
2. Many people, including Christians, are working hard now with the hopes of an early retirement where they can "relax, eat, drink, [and] be merry." Why is this a foolish way to live, especially for those who follow Jesus?
3. The opposite of hoarding is giving, and the implication of this passage is that getting rich towards God comes from generous giving rather than self-ish hoarding. How would giving more generously be good for your soul, both now and in eternity?
4. What is keeping you from giving more generously? What can you do about it?

Other Issues

Common Questions about Giving

How Much Should I Give?

Though this is the most common question, it is somewhat misguided. A better question would be, "How much of God's money should I keep?" If we remember that it is God's money in the first place, and we realize the freedom we have in the gospel (our identities aren't bound up any longer by a need for material wealth, status in the eyes of others, security in a difficult world, etc.), then we are free to give generously and sacrificially in a way that demonstrates that God himself is our real treasure.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 - The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Should Giving Vary By Income?

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 - Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

Should Somebody in Financial Distress Still Give?

2 Corinthians 8:1-4 - We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints

What Should I do if I Cannot Afford to Tithe?

You may need to begin by reorganizing your spending habits with a wise budget. You should also begin by trying to give *something* that is sacrificial. If you are someone with an unusual need (i.e. traumatic injury, impoverished elderly, struggling single mom) then the church should aid you.

Should Non-Christians Give?

The Bible is clear that non-Christians are welcome in church and are not expected to give any monies.

I'm Married to a Non-Christian. How Should I Handle Giving?

Like all financial decisions for married couples, giving is one that should be made together. You should talk with your spouse, respectfully express your desire to give, and come to a conclusion together. You should not give in a way that is secret or deceitful. Scripture gives principles for interacting with an unbelieving spouse and these principles apply to financial decisions as well:

1 Peter 3:1-7 - Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

If your spouse is unwilling to allow you to give, you may consider whether there are other sacrifices you can joyfully make for the Lord.

Should I Tithe From My Gross or Net Income? Should I Tithe From All My Income or Only My Salary?

Do you want a “gross blessing” or a “net blessing”?

Proverbs 3:9 - Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce;

In our society, the government takes a piece of our income before we even see it (in most cases). The Bible teaches the concept of firstfruits, meaning that of all we are given or earn, we should give the first portion back to God.

Can I Get A Tax Deduction For Giving?

Yes. If you give in a way that we can record (i.e. check or cash in a marked envelope) then our church bookkeeper will keep accurate totals of your giving and send you a receipt at the beginning of the year, certifying the amount of your total contributions that are tax deductible for the previous calendar year.

How Can I Give At Second Mile?

At Second Mile there are a variety of different ways that a person can give. None is better than the others—it is simply a matter of individual conscience or preference. Those methods are:

- Cash or Check During the Sunday Services – If you give regularly in cash we ask members to put the money in a giving envelope with name and address written on it so that we can track your giving and send you a donation letter for your taxes at the end of the year.
- Check Mailed to the Offices – PO Box 1137, Queen Creek, AZ 85142 – Please do not mail cash (it happens more often than you think).
- By Electronic Withdrawal from your bank account (ACH) – many people like this secure tithing method as it safely withdraws an exact amount from your account on either the 5th or the 20th of the month depending on how you want it to be set up.

Does Second Mile have controls for ensuring my contributions are handled safely?

Yes. At each step in the collection and counting of incoming money, we have at least two people (not related) oversee the process. Once the money is counted and recorded on a control sheet (which is signed by those people overseeing the process), checks are recorded in our Contribution Recording system, and the money is deposited in the bank the next business day. Monthly and annual financial reports are produced for review by the leadership and oversight group. These reports are available to church members as well. An external audit of our books and procedures will be performed on a regular basis.

How Much Does Second Mile Tithe?

Our church gives 10% of its income to fund the planting of other churches around the world. This church planting happens through relationships with other churches in the Valley, partnerships through the Acts 29 Network (www.acts29network.org), and through our international efforts in North India.