

# From Riches to Burning Poverty

Luke 18:18

## Introduction:

1. Jesus spoke a great deal about money.
  - a. 16 of 38 parables were concerned with money and possessions
  - b. In the Gospels, an amazing one out of 10 verses (288 in all) deals directly with the subject of money.
2. There is nothing wrong with riches
  - a. Being wealthy is not sinful
  - b. Money is not the root of all evil
3. In the gospels we see three instances in which Jesus either deals with or speaks about rich men
4. Covetousness and greed are all around us
  - a. When John D. Rockefeller was the richest man in the world, someone asked him how much money was enough. -- "Just a little bit more."
  - b. All he ever really wanted in life was more. He wanted more money, so he parlayed inherited wealth into a billion-dollar pile of assets. He wanted more fame, so he broke into the Hollywood scene and soon became a filmmaker and star. He wanted more sensual pleasures, so he paid handsome sums to indulge his every sexual urge. He wanted more thrills, so he designed, built, and piloted the fastest aircraft in the world. He wanted more power, so he secretly dealt political favors so skillfully that two U. S. presidents became his pawns. All he ever wanted was more. He was absolutely convinced that more would bring him true satisfaction. Unfortunately, history shows otherwise. [He] concluded his life ... emaciated; colorless; sunken chest; fingernails in grotesque, inches-long corkscrews; rotting, black teeth; tumors, innumerable needle marks from drug addiction. Howard Hughes died,... believing the myth of more. He died a billionaire junkie, insane by all reasonable standards

## **I. The Rich Young Ruler – Lu 18:18-23**

### **A. The Concern of the Rich Man – vs 18**

1. **The area of the concern** - "eternal life" – vs 18
  - a) This rich man had a concern about eternal life.
  - b) Most people are not very interested in eternal life.
2. **The attitude in the concern** - "What shall I do" – vs 18
  - a) He was confident that he could do something to earn his salvation
  - b) He did not realize his great sinfulness; a sinfulness that is so great, one cannot do anything to save himself.

### **B. The Commandments for the Rich Man – vs 20**

1. To expose the insincerity of the man and his self-righteousness, Christ speaks to the rich man about the commandments
2. These commandments are all in the second table of the Ten Commandments
3. They all have to do with our relationship to our fellow man.
4. He had not been careful about his relationships in gaining riches
5. Note that Jesus did not mention the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment
6. This claim exposed the fact that he was unaware of his sinfulness

### **C. The Charge for the Rich Man**

1. Christ gave the rich man a charge which revealed that the rich man thought more of his riches than of Christ.
2. There was a deficiency – “one thing thou lackest” – vs 22
  - a) *The rich man lacked love for Christ.*
  - b) *This man loved his wealth more than he loved the things of God.*
3. There was a distribution - “*Sell all...* ” – vs 22
  - a) *Christ touched the weak point in the man's character.*
  - b) *It was his passion for wealth.*
4. There was a compensation - “*Treasure in heaven*” – vs 22
  - a) *The charge was not without great compensation.*
  - b) *But the compensation was heavenly and the man's affections were earthly, so this dividend did not appeal to the man.*
  - c) *Heaven and eternal rewards do not appeal to this crowd.*
5. The discipleship in the charge - “*Come, follow me*” – vs 22

### **D. The Choice By the Rich Man**

1. Christ forced the rich man to make a choice.
2. Either Christ and heavenly riches or the world and its temporal riches
3. The man made a terribly wrong choice.
4. There was pain in the choice – “sorrowful” – vs 23

## **II. The Rich Fool – Lu 12:16-21**

### **A. Prosperity of the Farmer**

1. The farmer in the parable is very wealthy.
2. There was past prosperity - “*Rich man*” – vs 16
3. There was present prosperity – vs 16 “plentifully”

### **B. Perplexity of the Farmer**

1. The added wealth of the farmer caused perplexity for him.
2. Wealth caused some burdens for this farmer
3. The problem in the perplexity - “*no room*” – vs 17
4. No thought of helping the poor or giving some of the wealth away

### **C. Planning of the Farmer – vs 18-19**

- The farmer came up with a twofold plan to solve his problem
  1. He would build – vs 18 - no mention of giving or helping the poor
  2. He would banquet - *"eat, drink, and be merry"* – vs 19

### **D. Prospects of the Farmer – vs 20**

1. There was denunciation – “thou fool” – vs 20
  - a) *What the farmer was planning was grossly foolish.*
  - b) *Covetousness caused the farmer to forget eternity*
2. There was a destiny – “thy soul shall be required” – vs 20
  - a) *His future was not on this earth.*
  - b) *He would die that very night, and not go to a heavenly place*
3. There was a dispersing – vs 21
  - a) *The selfish farmer had intended to keep everything for himself, but God stepped in, and the farmer did not get to enjoy any of it.*
  - b) *The greatest poverty is not material lack, but spiritual lack.*

## **III. The Rich Man and Lazarus – Lu 16:19-23**

### **A. The Two Persons**

1. The Prosperous Man – vs 19
  - a) *As far as the world was concerned, this man had it all.*
  - b) *He had wealth - "Rich." (only in the material world)*
  - c) *He had a wardrobe - "Clothed in purple and fine linen."*
2. The Poor Man – vs 20
  - a) *His Poverty – “beggar”*
  - b) *His Position – “laid at his gate” – vs 20*
  - c) *His plight - "Full of sores." – vs 20*
  - d) *His plate - "Desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table" – vs 21*

### **B. The Two Passings**

- Both men eventually died – rich or poor – you will eventually die
  1. Passing of the Poor Man – vs 22
    - a) *This is not surprising since he was in such bad shape*
    - b) *There is no mention of a burial*
    - c) *Those who died in poverty were thrown on the dung hill*
    - d) *Lazarus was carried by angels into Abraham' bosom*
  2. Passing of the Prosperous Man – vs 22
    - a) *Death is a great equalizer*
    - b) *Death is no respecter of person*
    - c) *The rich man was buried*
    - d) *I wonder if there was a great funeral procession with many dignitaries*

### **C. The Two Places**

1. Hell – vs 23
  - a) This is hades – the place of the dead
  - b) This is the abode of the unredeemed until the GWT judgment when they will be cast into the lake of fire
  - c) This was a place of torment – vs 23
2. Abraham’s Bosom – vs 22
  - a) *This was a name given to the place where the righteous went after they died.*
  - b) *It was a place of rest and delight but nothing like the glories of heaven.*
  - c) *This was a place of tranquility – vs 25*
  - d) *Jesus died and led captivity captive*
3. Money did not determine the places they went

#### Conclusion:

1. We have seen three rich men this morning
  - a. Could it be that they are the same man in different stages of his life?
  - b. The Bible does not say that, but it could very well be true
2. We saw the rich “young” ruler
  - a. In his youth, this man had problems with covetousness
  - b. He chose his riches rather than following the Lord
3. Later we see him as a prosperous farmer
  - a. His time as ruler of the temple completed, this man turns to farming
  - b. He works hard and smart and is prosperous
  - c. But again we see that there is a problem with covetousness
4. Finally, we see him in hell
  - a. He has gone from riches to burning poverty
  - b. He wouldn’t help the beggar, but he turned out to be the beggar
5. Beware of covetousness – dear lost person
  - a. Possessions will not provide worldly happiness
  - b. The absence of poverty will not provide earthly contentment
  - c. Abundance of prosperity will not provide heavenly favor
  - d. The issue one of priority
    1. We worship what we consider to be most important
    2. We cannot serve God and money

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The idea for this sermon and the title are from Pastor Moody Roberts – Rupert Missionary Baptist Church at [www.rmbaptist.com](http://www.rmbaptist.com)

Paul Harvey once told how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The grisly account offers insight into the destructive, devouring, nature of desire without discipline:

The Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. He then adds layer upon layer of blood, until the frozen blood completely conceals the blade. The hunter next fixes the knife in the ground with the blade up. A wolf smells the blood and when he discovers the bait he licks it, tasting the fresh-frozen blood. He licks faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder, the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. In his mad craving for blood he does not notice the razor sharp sting of the naked blade on his tongue, nor does he recognize the moment when his insatiable thirst begins to be satisfied by his own warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more—until the dawn finds him dead in the snow. This is what covetousness does to people.

The idea for this sermon and the title were gleaned from Pastor Moody Roberts  
– Rupert Missionary Baptist Church, Rupert, WV

18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. 20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall **I** do, because **I** have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will **I** do: **I** will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will **I** bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And **I** will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.