

Untouchable Wealth

Luke 12:13-34

Introduction

Surprising Emphasis: If I were to ask you, what topics did Jesus talk about the most during his earthly ministry, what would you say? Love, prayer, judgment, heaven and hell, forgiveness, discipleship, or even faith?¹ What if I said, more than any of these, Jesus talks about money, possessions, and wealth. Or, as I like to call it, our “stuff.”

- **Why?** The human heart is in as much or more danger of being distracted by material things than false doctrine. Spiritual rebellion often follows the temptation of comfort.²

Scenario: A young family dreams of the Instagrammable life. The single-family home with a spacious backyard, a trampoline, and a fire pit. Pictures set in a Pottery Barn furnished living room. They want to pull up to the family gathering in a luxury vehicle. Hawaiian vacations, seasonal décor swaps, and Disney-level birthday parties.

- Given the right income and disciplined budgeting, maybe you could justify it. But for them, this was all financed. \$800-a-month car payments,³ \$3,000-a-month house payments,⁴ \$300-a-month costs for nails, hair, and other things to keep up appearances.
- For this particular family, these practical problems had spiritual consequences. As the bills piled up, they each took on second jobs. They were less present with their kids and with each other. They no longer had time for each other, much less for personal worship, daily prayer, and Bible reading. And it was logistically impossible to fit in a weekly Bible study with friends at church. Soon enough, the extra hours cut into weekly worship. The stress mounted, the frustration grew, and divorce was on the horizon, accompanied by doubt and anger toward God.
- What seemed like a dream ended up hollowing out their soul. What looked like success on the outside became spiritual collapse on the inside.
- This is why Jesus talks so much about money: Jesus doesn't want your money; he wants to keep your money from getting you. “God isn't after your wallet, he's after your heart” (Stanley).

You'll never grasp the meaning of true wealth until Jesus becomes your greatest treasure.

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵ And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” ¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich

¹ The ten most common subjects in Jesus' teaching are generally recognized as: (1) the Kingdom of God, (2) money and possessions, (3) faith and belief, (4) love of God and neighbor, (5) hypocrisy and religious corruption, (6) prayer, (7) judgment and eternal life, (8) forgiveness, (9) discipleship and the cost of following, and (10) care for the poor and marginalized.

² Why do you think the harlot of Revelation is dressed wealthy?

³ <https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/loans/auto-loans/average-monthly-car-payment>

⁴ <https://www.bankrate.com/mortgages/average-monthly-mortgage-payment/#what-is>

man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.' ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." ²² And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on." ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ³² "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

1. The Foolishness of False Wealth (vv. 13-21)

Set the Scene: ¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher,⁵ tell my brother to divide the inheritance⁶ with me." ¹⁴ But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

- I've done enough marriage counseling and enough funerals to know that one of the top causes of family strife is money! Among divorced couples, money was the second leading cause of divorce (behind infidelity).⁷ I heard one man complain that his wife got half of his money in the divorce. His friend replied, "Half! My wife has all my money now".
- I've personally witnessed disputes over inheritances destroy families. People will throw away their families for money.

Speck and Plank: tell my brother Isn't that how we approach God sometimes? God, I'm just fine, but have you seen what that person is doing?! 😊. Jesus, I don't want your wisdom; I want you to take my side.

⁵ Διδάσκαλε

⁶ "Inheritance" (τὴν κληρονομίαν) in Lk 12:13 contrasts temporal possessions with God's promised eternal inheritance. Cf. the tenants' misguided attempt to gain inheritance by killing the son (Matt 21:38; Mark 12:7; Luke 20:14); Abraham's deferred inheritance (Acts 7:5); and the believer's spiritual inheritance (Acts 20:32; Eph 1:14, 18; 5:5; Col 3:24; Heb 9:15; 11:8; 1 Pet 1:4). Paul contrasts inheritance by faith vs. law (Gal 3:18).

⁷ SunTrust Bank survey (2015)

- This attitude is not showing love for others. The gospel humbles us and always does the work in us before it calls us to speak it into others.
- Jesus doesn't play the game. Even though he is the true judge⁸ and does divide⁹ believers from unbelievers, his statement has a tinge of intentional irony because he hasn't come to be a civil judge in **familial small claims court** but to render a verdict on our hearts in relation to his kingdom.

The Heart of the Matter: ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." The issue isn't wealth *per se*, but the heart of greed¹⁰ that apparently underlies this brother's question, the real danger threatening to distort our desires and enslave our hearts.¹¹

- Greed, at its heart, is a type of **self-interest** that ignores the needs of others. It fuels the unchecked belief that "everything, including other people, exist for my own personal amusement and purpose." That's why this term in the OT is often translated as "selfish, evil, or dishonest gain."¹² We need to take the sin of greed more seriously. The Bible consistently warns about the spiritual danger of greed and its incompatibility with life in the kingdom of God.¹³
- Jesus warns **them** and warns **us** to "take care"¹⁴ and "be on guard."¹⁵ We need to make an intentional effort to see the danger and safeguard our hearts because one of the co-occurring symptoms of this type of money sickness our blindness to it.
 - Greed is like carbon monoxide—invisible but deadly. You don't notice until the damage is done. That's why we install carbon monoxide detectors, because without them, we'd never know we are in danger. That's why we must be on guard and open our eyes. "Money, when left unchecked, can enslave your heart and compete with God for your trust and affection" (Stanley).

Storage Wars: ¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich¹⁶ man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'

- Jesus, as he does, tells a story about a rich man. He's already rich, he presumably already has barns that are full. His crop is so productive, that he runs out of space, so he builds larger barns to store both his crops¹⁷ and his goods¹⁸ (his valuables).

⁸ κριτὴν cf. Heb 12:23, 10:30 ; Jas 4:12, 5:9; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:8

⁹ μεριστήs

¹⁰ πλεονεξίας

¹¹ 1 Tim 6:9-10, Col 3:5

¹² Ps 118:36; Hab 2:9; Jer 22:17; Rom 1:29; Eph 4:19, 5:3; Col 3:5; 1 Tim 2:5

¹³ Eph 5:5, 1 Cor 5:9-13, Col 3:5

¹⁴ Ὁρᾶτε

¹⁵ φυλάσσεσθε

¹⁶ *Dives* is the Latine adjective for this word (i.e., rich, wealth). It comes from the same Proto-Indo-European root as Latin *divus* (i.e., divine), possibly connecting wealth with blessing or favor from the gods. Jerome's Latin Vulgate calls the rich man in Luke 16 (i.e., rich man and Lazarus) simply *dives*, and over time *Dives* came to be treated as his *proper name* in Christian tradition (even though the Bible never names him).

¹⁷ Grain τὸν σῖτον

¹⁸ καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ

- He literally tears down what was already more than enough just to make room for more. He not only has plenty, he has *more* than plenty, he has an abundance of his possessions (v. 15), he has leftovers.
- We might not have barns anymore, but we've got climate-controlled storage units. We have garages we can't park in because they're packed with stuff. We have unusable closets and basements because they're stuffed with things we haven't looked at in years.

Soul Problem: ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."

- Remember the show *Hoarders*? People trapped in houses with so much stuff that it is dangerous. They bring in professional cleaners and organizers and *psychologist*. Why? Because hoarding isn't a storage problem. The man in Jesus' parable didn't need more space. He needed a new **vision** for what his wealth was for.
- The same is true of greed. It's not about what's in your house, it's what's in your heart. It's a spiritual problem. He's lying to himself that he finally has enough to be content. If full barns weren't enough, why would bigger barns be enough. "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer" (Jim Carrey).¹⁹
- How much will ever be enough? The symptoms are everywhere.
 - We see this because we keep trying to buy more! 71% of credit card balances in America have only the minimum monthly payment made. Americans spend, on average, \$1.26 for every dollar earned.
 - If you make \$32,000²⁰ a year, you are in the top 1% in worldwide income.
 - Americans spend more money on eating out than charity and more on our pets than helping the poor. "Americans give less today, percentage-wise, than we did in the Great Depression" (Grear).
 - The average American Christian makes 4x the global average income and spends 98% of their income on themselves.
 - Yet, enough is never enough. We have more than we've ever had yet are less happy and content than we've ever been. "Our addiction to our possessions distorts everything."²¹ And, unfortunately, "the church in America shares in the sins of the wider American society to such an extent it is often indistinguishable from the world" (Anyabwile *paraphrased*).

Problem: ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' His temporal perspective has blinded him to eternal realities. He fears material poverty more than he fears eternal judgment.

¹⁹ "Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what it is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, 'God, it's gotta be more than this.' I mean, this isn't—this can't be—what it's all cracked up to be" (Tom Brady, 60 Minutes, 2005).

²⁰ https://www.youtube.com/shorts/pM0kyft_enA

²¹ "It is important for professing Christians today to ask themselves how many unused surplus goods, property, or investments they accumulate without any thought for the needy of our world. If the parallels become too close, presumably Jesus would say that their professions of faith are vacuous" (Blomberg).

- When you die, will your bank balance matter? Are you building barns for your stuff while failing to cultivate eternal wealth or things that matter? No one, at the end of their life, wishes they had more money or more stuff. We wear ourselves out to get rich or acquire, and before we know it, it's gone. E.g., buyer's remorse: you save up, work for a long time, buy something you thought would satisfy, and then you have that hollow feeling that what you bought cost more than it was worth.
- "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven" (Prov 23:4-5).

True Wealth: ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

- We have lost the ability to see what true wealth really is.²² "You will never know the fullness of Christ until you know the emptiness of everything else" (Spurgeon). The rich fool didn't realize the emptiness of everything else until it was too late. There is no greater poverty than having full barns and an empty soul. You won't know how precious God is until you stop pretending everything else is enough.
- When you anchor your joy in the insufficient things of this world, it will lead to discontentment and despair when they inevitably fail to fill the emptiness of your soul. Only Jesus is sufficient to satisfy.
- It's not *whether* you're rich, but are you rich in the right things—the things of God.

Misplaced treasure almost always leads to anxious hearts. When material wealth becomes your focus, worry follows.

2. The Symptom of Misplaced Wealth (vv. 22-31)

Resultant Worry: ²² And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. He connects his instruction to his disciples to the parable he just shared.²³

- The problem could be stated **negatively** or **positively**:
 - (–) When your contentment is dependent on material things, your life will be full of worry and anxiety.
 - (+) When your contentment is in Christ, you can live with unshakeable peace.

Perspective: Worry distorts your perspective. You begin to think that all there is to life is the temporary, the material. But life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

- Jesus doesn't tell us not to *think* about food and clothes, but not to *worry* about them.
- Food is something, but it's not everything. Clothes are a necessity, but they can't be your identity. But for some, all they think about is their body. "Decorate the body, fix up the body, clothe the body, take care of the body, put it in a nice car, send it off to a nice

²² "If true wisdom is to be rich toward God, then work will have a limited place in our lives. We shall work hard enough to provide the necessities; we shall leave the future in God's hands. We will not make work a means of securing our lives against all possible calamities" (Purdy).

²³ Therefore (Διὰ τοῦτο)

house, stuff it full of nice food, hang a bunch of jewelry all over the thing, take it out on a boat, let it swim, teach it to ski, take it on a cruise. That's the way most people live. Isn't life more than that?" (MacArthur).

- If the body is all there is, what do you tell a person whose body is diseased or disabled? Is your value and joy only found in these external things? Important as food and clothing are, they are not the most important things in life. Worry makes small things big and big things small. Worry overestimates temporary problems.
- True life is knowing Christ.²⁴ True life only comes from God.²⁵ The amount of money you have has no bearing on true life. That's why plenty of people with lots of money are just existing rather than living.

Provision: ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

- **Worry blinds you to the goodness of God and prevents you from wholeheartedly following him.** Money can blind you because you think it will provide for you something that only God can. You start to depend on money rather than God (whether you have it or don't).
- **Worry underestimates God's care.** When Jesus says don't worry about your food or your clothes he isn't telling you to be lazy or not try, he's telling you that God cares for you. We can work hard and rest well because we have a God that cares for us.
- He uses two illustrations: birds and flowers. If God cares for birds, how much more will he care for you?
 - When was the last time you saw a bird grocery shopping or meal planning or farming? Yet God has made a way for them to eat. Do you think he loves the birds more than you?
 - When was the last time you saw a flower working out, putting on makeup, or buying fresh clothes? Yet the flower is adorned in beauty. All your wealth can't make something prettier than a flower (e.g., orchid room at Longwood Gardens). Do you think God loves the flowers more than you?
- If God cares for birds and flowers, how much more will he care for you? ²⁶ Human beings are the pinnacle of creation. Human beings are endowed with the image of God and are made stewards over all of the rest of creation. The lowest human being is still more valuable than the most magnificent animal.²⁷

²⁴ Jn 17:3, Phil 3:8

²⁵ Jn 1:4, 1 Jn 5:11-12, Acts 17:25

²⁶ Why does he use two illustrations? Is he being redundant? No! Anxiety dies hard and some of us need to hear this twice!

²⁷ Testimony: And if I'd stop being so pessimistic and cynical, if I'd take the time to remember, God has always cared for me. God has always provided for me. E.g., (1) Major adoption hangup? Money. Needed \$1200 dollars for the application fee. We signed the paperwork and that day a church called and asked me to speak at a retreat for \$1200.

Provision: ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? **Worry overestimates our power.** Anxiety is not the fuel for our effort. **How many of us fuel our work with worry not joy?**

- We, too often, fuel our work from fear and control rather than purpose and faith.
 - But when you lose your job or lose money, you're not losing control, you're just losing the illusion of control. You were never in control.

Ineffective: Worry is ineffective; it just doesn't work. Worry is more likely to shorten your life than extend it. **Even mild anxiety increased the chance of early death by 20%.** ²⁸

- If you worry for an hour, the only result is that you lose an hour. It is better to work or rest than worry. Even if your problems are as bad as you think, worrying won't fix them.
- The average person's anxiety is focused on:
 - 40% – things that will never happen
 - 30% – the past that can't be changed
 - 12% – criticism by others, mostly untrue
 - 10% – health, which gets worse with stress
 - 8% – about real problems that will be faced

Faith: ²⁹ And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ²⁹ **If God is sovereign, and loves you, why are you worried?** You have a good Father! You're acting like you don't have a good Father. **E.g., surgical cutting and mending; cutting out the bad (i.e., you're not in control), mending up the wound (i.e., the one who is in control is your loving Father).**

- Right worship is the antidote to worry. To seek God's kingdom means we strive for his rule in our lives, we endeavor to accomplish his mission and desires. To seek it means it is our first priority, our driving aim. Being a disciple of Jesus means constantly pursuing the advancement of *his* kingdom rather than our own. **A lot of our worry comes from seeking our little kingdoms first.**
 - The paradox is this: By seeking God first, all of those things we worry about are taken care of. Either God gives us what we seek, or he shows us something better to seek! Focus on God's plan and everything else will fall into place.
 - Your "stuff" should be your servant, not your master. It should be a tool in honoring God, not taking away from following him.

(2) Two of my biggest fears moving to Philly: raising money and Jackson's education. Those have been the two easiest things we've done.

²⁸ British Journal of Medicine. Cf. "Jealousy and anger shorten life, and anxiety brings on premature old age" (Sirach 30:24).

²⁹ Two executives met for lunch. The first, Tom, asks "How's your health?" The second, Ed said, "I feel great! My ulcers are gone. And I don't have a care in the world!" Tom said, "How did that happen?" Ed said, "Well, you know my doctor told me my ulcers were caused from worrying. So I hired myself a professional worrier. Whenever something worrisome comes up, I turn it over to him, and he does all my worrying for me!" Tom responded, "Wow, I'd like to hire someone like that! How much does he charge?" Ed says "One hundred thousand dollars!" Gene asked, "How in the world can you afford \$100,000?" Ed says, "I don't know. I let him worry about that!" Wouldn't it be great if you knew someone who could handle all of your worries? All of your anxieties? All of your stresses? But we do.

After diagnosing the soul sickness of worry, Jesus doesn't leave us there—he points us to the cure: freedom found in trusting the Father's generous heart.

3. The Freedom of True Wealth (vv. 32-34)

³² “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Good Father: ³² “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

- The Bible teaches us to fear God³⁰ and *not* anything else. When we fear God, the one with ultimate authority and power, who created everything that is, then *we don't have to fear anything else*. The only person you *should* fear (God) loves you and his good pleasure is toward you. The one who rightfully should cause us to fear tells us to “fear not.”
- He is a loving father who delights in caring for you. This is the thing I’ve learned by being a dad that has helped this truth go deep into my soul. I love giving my kids gifts (e.g., Christmas is about them, not me). And if I, who am an evil, sinful, selfish dad, gives good gifts to my children, how much more will your perfect Father in heaven give us good things (Matt 7:11).
- We have a claim on God’s provision that other creatures do not. We can go to God as our heavenly father, knowing he loves us. “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8:15-16).
 - This truth has to go down deep in our souls. It steadies us in the midst of turmoil (e.g., sailboat weight must be below the waterline in the hull as ballast. No matter the turmoil on the surface, the ship is steady. In fact, the wind only makes the sailboat go faster).

Give Away: ³³ Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Radical generosity is evidence of eternal wealth. Stinginess is a sign of temporal idolatry and fear. Generosity is the antithesis of greed.

- When you are free from fear and slavery to stuff, you are free to be radically generous.
- When you see others in need, you see yourself, you see opportunities to love them as God has loved you.

³⁰ Deut 6:13; 10:12; 10:20; 31:12–13; Ps 33:8; 34:9; 111:10; Prov 1:7; 8:13; 9:10; 19:23; Eccl 12:13; Isa 8:13; Jer 32:40; Matt 10:28; Acts 9:31; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Pet 2:17; Rev 14:7

- In the section about the **rich fool**, in two short verses,³¹ there are 11 first-person references (“I”—6x, “my”—5x) and references to God or others. The gospel calls us and empowers us to serve God and others, not ourselves.
- In fact, if God allows you to accumulate wealth, its purpose should not be self-indulgence, but the glory of God and the good of others.
- The gospel frees you from living for yourself, so you can give like someone who already has everything in Christ.

Eternal Investment: Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

- Jesus invites us to invest in a kind of wealth that can’t be stolen, spent, or lost—a treasure in heaven that does not fail. Unlike money, which fades, rusts, or disappears in court battles and market crashes, kingdom treasure is eternal, secure, and faith-shaping.³²
 - What do you spend your life building—comfort or the kingdom?
 - What are you storing up—stuff or souls?
- **Your treasure doesn’t just reveal your heart, it directs it.** “Your heart moves toward what you cherish” (Piper).³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
 - When you invest in a stock, you check it daily, and you find your mood fluctuates with its performance. Cf. car ding at the grocery store, and it puts you in a bad mood.
 - Jesus doesn’t need your money, he wants your heart. And he knows your heart is going to get attached to your money, so he wants you to invest in his kingdom, not yours.³³
 - What you treasure (both figuratively and literally) is a reflection of your heart, but it’s also a rudder for your heart, directing it where to go.
- What does it look like to maximize your treasure in heaven, rather than on earth? What have you invested your time, your money, and your heart into?

Conclusion: What Should We Do?

1. Be on guard: Watch your heart. Greed is subtle and deadly. You may not see it until it has already taken root. Ask God to expose where your treasure has become your trust.

2. Be content: Don’t let worry drive your life. Trust that your Father knows what you need and delights to care for you. Rest in his provision.

³¹ Lk 12:17-19

³² When money is on the line, people lose their minds: Not long ago, a man named J. Howard Marshall, a Texas oil tycoon worth over \$1.6 billion, married 26-year-old model and reality star Anna Nicole Smith — he was 89 at the time. The visual was shocking, as she was almost a cartoonish example of a blonde bombshell and he looked like he’d already seen the afterlife and taken notes. It was like Make-a-Wish for billionaires. When Marshall died what followed was a legal battle so bitter, public, and drawn-out that it reached the U.S. Supreme Court twice. Both Anna Nicole Smith (d. 2006) and Marshall’s son, E. Pierce Marshall (d. 2007) died before it was fully resolved. Their final years were spent not enjoying wealth, but fighting for control of it. A fortune big enough to change lives, but instead, it outlived the people fighting for it and outlasted their peace. After 19 years of courtroom battles, not a dime of the \$1.6 billion went to Anna Nicole or her estate.

³³ We should cultivate “an impulse toward simplicity rather than accumulation” (Piper).

3. Be generous: If you've received the kingdom, then hold your stuff loosely and love people deeply. Use your resources not to build bigger barns, but to bless others and glorify God.

4. Be rich toward God: Seek first his kingdom. Let your time, money, energy, and affections point to the worth of Christ. That's true wealth—untouchable, eternal, and deeply satisfying.

A Prayer:

I trust you, God, as my happy, generous Father, so I will not be afraid when I have less money for myself in supplying the needs of others. I will resist the incredible pressure in our culture to accumulate more. I will cultivate an impulse toward simplicity for the sake of loving others. I seek to lay up treasure in heaven and not on earth, so that my joy in God will be maximized forever. Since my treasure is in heaven, my heart goes after God. Help me hold possessions loosely so I can hold Christ firmly. Change my desires to align with your kingdom priorities. Help me, by your Spirit, to live this prayer with joy, discipline, and faith, today and every day. Amen.³⁴

³⁴ Piper *heavily adapted*