

Money and Stuff

“And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast many goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry” (Luke 12:19).

As we look at our lives, we cannot but be mindful of the blessings bestowed upon us: beautiful homes, cars, clothes and whatever else may suit our desires.

In an article titled “Investing in Eternity,” John MacArthur Jr. presented some interesting figures in an effort to bring the reader to a visual understanding of how the society had progressed over a forty year period: in 1950, 10% of all income was spent for luxuries: 1980s, 30%, 1990s, 40%: 40% of all income spent on luxuries. What were these “luxuries?” Microwave ovens, cars and light trucks, color TVs, VCRs, cordless phones and answering machines: twenty years later these “luxuries” are so prevalent they are considered essential to a well-balanced life.

In the same era, Money magazine concluded that “Money has become the new sex in this country.” Newsweek said, “Americans have achieved a new plane of consciousness. They call it Transcendental Acquisition.” In short, Americans want the money, and they want the stuff it can buy, regardless of whether or not it has any real value.

The society is attempting to prepare children to go forth and make money. By having money, they can buy whatever it is that will gratify the desire for possessions: these possessions are “a delight to the eyes;” some of them are “good for food,” and some fulfill the “desire to make one wise”? (Genesis 3:6), and thus, as “Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied; and the eyes of man are never satisfied” (Proverbs 27:20), today’s Americans constitute 5% of the world's population but consume 24% of the world's energy, and throw out 200,000 tons of edible food daily.

Solomon said, “There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good labor. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God” (Ecclesiastes 2:24). However, the scriptures also reveal a great deal about wealth that we would just as soon not know: “When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what advantage is there to the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes? The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the fullness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep (Ecclesiastes 5:11-12).

Wealth: is it a blessing or a curse? It depends on who's in control. The Apostle Paul said, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10), and the Lord said, "It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:23). Though we know this, "Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied; and the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Proverbs 27:20), and the wheels on the bus go round and round.

God has provided us with the knowledge as to how to overcome the dilemma. We are to be aware of the true nature of the world: "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). With this knowledge we must "learn the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want," and learn that, "whatsoever state I am, therein to be content" (Philippians 4:11-12).

Remember the sobering words of the Lord to the rich man, saying, "But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:20-21). ret