



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however: 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!')* for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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HG96: Listening To Jesus On ...
Riches

Matthew 19:16-30 & Luke 12: 13-34

Home Group Study Notes

22nd June 2014 - Revd Paul Gambling



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

No-one will be able to escape the fact that the Football World Cup is taking place in Brazil! What is your favourite sport (to watch or play) and why?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Some Christians believe wealth is a sign of God's blessing and poverty a curse, a sign of unbelief or sin. Some Christians on the other hand believe poverty is mandatory, intrinsic to the gospel and that therefore wealth is a sign of moral corruption and compromise with the world. Starting from the premise that the Bible is God's word and that He has made his will plain on this matter, discuss the above:

2: How can we possibly indulge in the good things in life when we live in a world that is full of suffering and starvation?

3: Does a prosperity gospel turn God into a capitalist? Does a poverty gospel turn God into a Marxist? What might be weaknesses of both positions? Do both positions tend to measure people and their spirituality by their lifestyle or possessions.

Rich in Thankfulness (Luke 12:22-24 & Matt 6 25-26)

"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes... consider the ravens... God feeds them"

The fundamental error is to think our possessions are our own, that our exceptional achievements are the result of our own hard work and all that mattered. If we would have a proper attitude to possessions then we must first acknowledge like the birds that all things come from God. We are grateful stewards of God's good creation.

Rich in Simplicity (Luke 12:27-28 & Matt 6:28-30)

"Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith.." The world's motive is "more is better". Jesus says learn to live simply so that others can simply live. Forget this year's 'must haves'. They cannot match the beauty of God's creation and that includes YOU. Rich in thankfulness, Rich in simplicity.

Rich in Generosity (Luke 12:31-34 & Matt 6:33-34)

"But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well... Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Wealth can be *enjoyed* and *employed* at the same time if our priority is to seek His kingdom above all else and our purpose is to honour God (1 Tim. 6:10.....). Yes, but how generous? I can't tell you, but.....

Remember that the poorest unemployed person living on State benefits in most areas of Essex is hopelessly and utterly rich by much the world's standards. Remember there is an irreducible minimum beyond which it is impossible to live in our community of Billericay. Both wealth and generosity is relative, depending on where you draw the base line. At one level it's all too easy to give away our possessions, for with them go our responsibility. It's much harder to hold some of them in trust as good stewards, awaiting our Master's orders as to how he would have us invest them in his service.

Rich in thankfulness, Rich in simplicity, Rich in generosity.

Here was a man who had a problem with too much wealth! You may be thinking - I wish I had that kind of problem. If you inherited a fortune this week, you would no doubt ask the same question as this man, "What shall I do?" It was a good question to ask. What made him a fool was the way he answered it. There are perils to prosperity (Prov. 30:7-9). Wealth can choke the Word of God as we saw in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:22). (1 Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19). It can give you a false sense of security. *"And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy;"* People say that money does not satisfy, but it does satisfy *if you want to live on that level.* People who are satisfied only with the things that money can buy are in great danger of losing the things that money cannot buy. The Fool's Dilemma.

The Fool's Decision (12:18-19)

"This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."

Are you saying, "Now that is shrewd business! Save and have it ready for the future!" But Jesus saw selfishness in all that this man did. The world's philosophy is "Take care of Number One!" But Jesus does not endorse that philosophy. There is certainly nothing wrong with following good business principles, or even with saving for the future (1 Tim. 5:8). Jesus does not encourage waste (John 6:12). But neither does He encourage selfishness motivated by covetousness. The Fool's Dilemma, the Fool's Decision.

The Fool's Destiny (12:20-21)

But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

We are prone to say, "Too bad this person died just when they had everything going for them! How tragic that they could not finish their great plans." But the greatest tragedy is not what the man left behind but what lay *before* him: eternity without God! The man lived without God and died without God, and his wealth was but an incident in his life. God is not impressed with our money. We cannot buy our way into heaven like the Olympics. Wealth cannot keep us alive when our time comes to die, nor can it buy back the opportunities we missed while we were thinking of ourselves and ignoring God and others. What then is the right approach to wealth and possessions? *Jesus said, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."*

Finally: Areas of Learning and reflection and application.

4: Do we risk employing our own material or cultural norms to exclude others who don't fit our theology or lifestyle? Is there an alternative to a Prosperity gospel and a Poverty gospel? What do you think about whether wealth is neither intrinsic nor incongruous to the gospel?

5: How do you respond to the *decisions* of the rich man?

6: How do you respond to the *death* of the boastful farmer?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG96: Listening To Jesus On ... *Riches*

Matthew 19:16-30 & Luke 12: 13-34

Home Group Sermon Notes

22nd June 2014 - Revd Paul Gambling

A PROSPERITY GOSPEL

Those who believe it is God's will that we be prosperous subscribe to one or more versions of the Prosperity Gospel. There are plenty of examples in the Old Testament of individuals who were blessed by God and prospered materially. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job - these are just a few examples. The Lord promises Joshua for example, "Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you... then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:7-8).

Denis Haack in "The Success Factor" describes a TV preacher declare as he pointed to his diamond rings and new Cadillac, that the difference between him and us is that "I have Cadillac faith and you have Volkswagen faith." Haack continues, "By the end of his message I was led to believe that to own anything less than the most expensive was not only an indication of anaemic faith, but a slap at the dignity and generosity of the God of Abraham. And Abraham happened to be, by the way, a very wealthy man." So what's so wrong with all this? Prosperity teaching undermines the cross of Jesus in three ways:

It subverts the demand of the cross for self denial. Jesus commands, "Who ever is not willing to take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27) And by the way Jesus wasn't taking about a Calvin Klein gold cross with diamond studded nail heads!

It reduces God to a means to an end. God becomes the means whereby the end of prosperity is attained. He becomes the source from which prosperity flows, rather than the sovereign to whom prosperity in this life is sacrificed. Faith becomes a technique or key that unlocks guaranteed wealth. Belief in Jesus Christ is irrelevant.

Prosperity teaching is focussed on the things of this world. Material possessions are seen as a sign of God's approval and the means of God's blessing. The demand of Jesus to leave this world behind and take up the cross is blunted if not

silenced. The prosperity gospel has accommodated itself to the affluent western world and since poverty must be a curse or due to lack of faith, it is deaf to the cries of the poor.

A POVERTY GOSPEL

The poverty gospel also appears to have a biblical basis. "Looking at his disciples, Jesus said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.'" (Luke 6:20) "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:33-34). If we are still wealthy it means we are not sharing equitably the earth's dwindling resources.

On the face of it living a simple lifestyle, joining a monastic order or commune and taking the vow of poverty has its attractions. No worries about fitting locks or taking out insurance policies. Give up the car and walk. Its much healthier. It has its attractions. If it is not wrong, is it necessarily intrinsic to the Gospel that we should live this way? Jesus did say "How hard for the rich man to enter the kingdom" (Matthew 19:23) but did he really say it was impossible?

Did not the disciples aspire to the poverty gospel when the woman poured expensive ointment on Jesus feet? "When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." (Matthew 26:8-9).

THE LORD'S GOSPEL: A study in Luke 12:13-34

The context for this story about a rich fool is prompted by a man in the crowd who interrupted Jesus and asked Him to solve a family problem. Jesus refused to get involved. Why? Because He knew that no answer He gave would solve the real problem, which was covetousness in the hearts of the two brothers. (The "you" in Luke 12:14 is plural.) As long as both men were greedy, no settlement would be satisfactory. Their greatest need was to have their hearts changed. Like too many people today, they wanted Jesus to serve them but not to save them. Jesus told this parable to reveal the dangers that lurk in a covetous heart. As you read the passage, test your own responses to this farmer's various experiences.

The Fool's Dilemma (12:16-17)

"The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' How do you respond to the wealthy farmer's dilemma?