

# JAMES 1:9-11

## The Rich-Poor and The Poor-Rich

God describes four types of people living in our world: rich/poor, rich/rich, poor/rich and poor/poor.

Jesus Christ was born in poverty.

He was born in a lowly stable, to poor parents, overlooked by the world.

Jesus was born in a borrowed manger, he grew up in a poor village, the despised Nazareth.

Jesus never owned any property that we know of, he never had a home of his own. Jesus stayed with friends all through his entire ministry. He lived by the support of his friends who followed him and cared for his every need.

By every estimation Jesus Christ would have been considered in poverty by our generation. He was not one who had any financial security. He did not spend time investing in a retirement program. He was not even living with retirement in mind. His sights were always set at a far more distant goal, the heavenly goal of his Father and his will.

Remember, Jesus became poor for us. II Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

One of the most striking contrasts in the Scriptures is that of the Rich/Poor (outside/inside) and the Poor/Rich. This morning may I introduce you to such a sobering contrast?

The contrast between the poverty of Jesus Christ and the riches of the man I will introduce you to is staggering. Although Maugham was outwardly tremendously successful socially, financially, and personally -- in all actuality, he was desperately poor.

In 1930<sup>1</sup> one of the most famous of living authors was William Somerset Maugham. He was known as a novelist, a playwright, and a master of the short story. His novel, *Of*

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Behold the Lamb*, p. 129-30.

*Human Bondage*, was established as a classic, and his play, *The Constant Wife*, had been staged thousands of times.

By 1965, Somerset Maugham was ninety-one years old and fabulously wealthy. Royalties continued to pour in, despite the fact that he had not written a word in years. Shortly before Maugham's death, he was visited by his nephew, Robin Maugham, who later wrote an article describing the time they had together in his uncle's villa:

On the 1<sup>st</sup> day I looked round the drawing room at the immensely valuable furniture and pictures and objects that Uncle Willie's success had enabled him to acquire. I remembered that the villa itself and the wonderful garden I could see through the windows—a fabulous setting on the edge of the Mediterranean—were worth \$1.2 million. (It cost him \$14,000).

Uncle Willie had eleven servants, including his cook, Annette, who was the envy of all the other millionaires on the Riviera. He dined on silver plates, waited on by Marius, his butler, and Henri, his footman. But it no *longer meant anything* to him.

The following afternoon, I found Uncle Willie reclining on a sofa, peering through his spectacles at a Bible, which had very large print. He looked horribly wizened, and his face was grim. "I've been reading the Bible you gave me. . . and I've come across the quotation: 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' I must tell you, my dear Robin, that the text used to hang opposite my bed when I was a child.... Of course, it's all a lot of bunk. But the thought is quite interesting all the same."

That evening, in the drawing room after dinner, Uncle Willie flung himself down onto the sofa. "O, Robin, I'm so tired...." He gave a gulp and buried his head in his hands. "I've been a failure the whole way through my life," he said. "I've made mistake after mistake. I've made a hash of everything." I tried to comfort him. "You're the most famous writer alive. Surely that means something. " "I wish I'd never written a single word," he answered. "It's brought me nothing but misery. Everyone who's got to know me well has ended up hating me. My whole life has been a failure.... And now it's too late to change. It's too late...."

Uncle Willie looked up, and his grip tightened on my hands. He was staring toward the floor. His face was contorted with fear, and he was trembling violently.

Willie's face was ashen as he stared in horror ahead of him. Suddenly, he began to shriek. "Go away" he cried. "I'm not ready... I'm not dead yet... I'm not dead yet, I tell you!" His high-pitched, terror-struck voice seemed to echo from wall to wall. I looked round, but the room was empty as before. "There's no one there, Willie." Willie began to gasp hysterically (*London Times*, April 9, 1978).

Though Maugham was one of the *most* famous and feted men of his generation, when it was time for the reckoning, he found his life empty and worthless. He found that he was afraid to die.

He had not found what God intends life to be.  
Jesus wants to rescue us from empty lives and to give us freedom.  
Jesus saw the desperate need of His creatures.  
Jesus came to save us.

Sodom destroyed for violence, arrogance, indifference idleness and indulgence Ezk.  
28:16;

The book of James confronted the 1<sup>st</sup> church of Jerusalem's members with a call to measuring life differently. It was all about how having Christ was all they really needed!

Note James 1:9-11 as I read:

The **BENEFITS** of Poverty

The **DANGERS** of Wealth

The **FALSE PROMISES** of Possessions

Remember The **BENEFITS** of Poverty from last week?

- The poor heard Christ gladly all through His earthly ministry. It was only the rich who were offended and plotting against Him.
- The poor looked for a better world as Hebrews 11:16 says, Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.
- The poor need God's help and are quick to cry out to Him first.
- The poor like Christ as a man on earth, have no enduring city. The writer of Hebrews (13:14) said, For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

## **GOD WAS A PROTECTOR OF THE POOR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

1. **RICH & POOR WERE ALWAYS EQUAL IN REDEMPTION Exodus 30:15** "The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the Lord, to make atonement for yourselves.
2. **ISRAELITES WERE TO LEAVE THE CORNERS OF THEIR FIELDS FOR THE POOR. Leviticus 19:10** 'And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God.
3. **IN HIS SOCIAL BLUEPRINT FOR THE NEW NATION OF ISRAEL, GOD'S GOAL TO HAVE NO POVERTY. Deuteronomy 15:4-11** "except when there may be no poor among you; for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance—7 "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother,<sup>8</sup> "but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need,

whatever he needs.<sup>9</sup> "Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,' and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the Lord against you, and it become sin among you.<sup>10</sup> "You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.<sup>11</sup> "For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'

4. **GOD SAID NO OPPRESSION POOR Deuteronomy 24:14** "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates.
5. **GOD MAKES RICH & POOR 1 Samuel 2:7** The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.
6. **WHEN THE ISRAELITES CELEBRATED THEY GIVE GIFTS TO POOR Esther 9:21** to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar,
7. **GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO HELP THE POOR Psalm 41:1** Blessed is he who considers the poor; The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.
8. **GOD WARNED THAT RICHES ARE FLEETING Psalm 49:6-20** Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, 7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him— 8 For the redemption of their souls is costly, And it shall cease forever—9 That he should continue to live eternally, And not see the Pit. 10 For he sees wise men die; Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, And leave their wealth to others. 11 Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever, Their dwelling places to all generations; They call their lands after their own names. 16 Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, When the glory of his house is increased; 17 For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him.
9. **GOD SAYS PROTECT THE POOR Psalm 82:1-8** God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods. 2 How long will you judge unjustly, And show partiality to the wicked? Selah 3 Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4 Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked.
10. **MOCKING POOR EQUALS MOCKING GOD Proverbs 17:5** He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.
11. **LENDING TO POOR EQUALS LENDING TO GOD Proverbs 19:17** He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, And He will pay back what he has given.

#### **JESUS DEMONSTRATED HIS LOVE FOR THE POOR.**

1. **CHRIST MINISTERED TO POOR Matthew 11:5** "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.
2. **CHRIST SAID RICHES ARE AN OBSTACLE TO SALVATION. Matthew 19:23** Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to

enter the kingdom of heaven. **Luke 18:24-25** And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

3. **JESUS WAS CALLED TO PREACH TO THE POOR. Luke 4:18** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
4. **INVITE THE POOR TO PARTIES & FEASTS Luke 14:13-14, 21** "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.14 "And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." 21 "So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'
5. **GIVING TO THE POOR WAS A PROOF OF CONVERSION Luke 19:8** Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

#### **EVEN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH WAS AWARE OF MINISTRY TO THE POOR.**

1. **GRACE GIVING INVOLVES GIVING TO THE POOR. 2 Corinthians 9:8-15** And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.9 As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." 10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
2. **THE EARLY CHURCH HAD A HEART FOR THE POOR. Galatians 2:10** They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

## **The Dangers of Wealth**

### **THE RICH MAY HARDLY ENTER THE KINGDOM**

Matthew 19:23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

### **THE RICH MAY NOT BE RICH TOWARD GOD**

Luke 12:21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

**THE RICH MAY MISS SALVATION Luke 18:24-25** And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

**THE RICH MAY TRUST UNCERTAIN RICHES**

1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

**THE RICH MAY BE HARDHEARTED AS THEY MAY HEAP AND HOARD RUSTING TREASURES**

**James 5:1-5** Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

**THE RICH MAY THINK THEY NEED NOTHING**

Revelation 3:21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

## What are the False Promises of Possessions?

**FALSE PROMISE #1: Happiness comes in having more possessions.** We think that. We believe that. No society has as much *stuff* as we do. We've all got lots of stuff and we fill our homes with stuff. Technology has produced more and more products and advertising comes along and tells us we've got to have it to really live! The average high school student, by the time they graduate, has seen 350,000 commercials and they are all saying, "Buy my stuff!" What is the basic message of advertising? You can buy happiness! We think having more things will make me more happy.

Eccl. 5:10- 11 *"He who loves money shall never have enough. The foolishness of thinking that wealth brings happiness! The more you have, the more you spend"*

Eccl. 6:9 *"It is better to be satisfied with what you have than to be always wanting something else."* Less expensive too! Use it up, Wear it out, Make it do, or Do without!

### A. We find our true self-worth in knowing God.

1. **GOD SAYS WE ARE PRECIOUS TO HIM.** Isaiah 43:4 *"God says, `You are precious in my sight!'"* Circle "precious" -- that's what God thinks about you. That's the basis for real self worth. What does God think of you? You are uniquely created by God. When I am insecure and don't feel good about me, when I'm feeling inferior, I have to have status symbols to prop me up. I have to wear a certain kind of clothes. I have to drive a certain kind of car. I have to have the names of products on my shoes and shirt because I think that if these products are OK then I must be OK. I've got to have certain symbols that I can depend on to make me feel good because inside I don't feel good. When you really understand how much God loves you, that you matter to God, that you are

significant to Him, that you're not here on this earth by accident, that He put you here for a purpose, then all of a sudden you are released and don't have to prove yourself with products -- status symbols that make me feel good. Your self worth is based on what God says about you, not about what you say about yourself or what other people or some product name I have on my shirt in order to make me feel cool.

2. **GOD SAYS HE WILL CARE FOR US.** Matthew 6:26 *"Your heavenly Father feeds the birds. Are you not more valuable than they?"* Of course you're more valuable than they are! You matter to God. If God takes care of the birds, He's going to take care of you. So you don't have to sweat it!

#### **B. We find our true security in trusting God.**

1. **GOD SAYS WE CAN NEVER LOSE HIS PRESENCE.** Hebrews 13:5 (Good News) *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'I will never leave you nor abandon you.'"* This says keep your lives from the love of money. God says, "I'm with you and I have everything so I'm all you need." Which would give you a greater sense of security? Knowing that you had \$200,000 in the bank or knowing that God has promised to provide for every one of your needs?

- (1) Which of those two do you think are more dependable?
  - (2) Which of those two do you think can never be taken away from you?
  - (3) Which of those two is going to be lasting even 100 years from now?
- Nothing can separate you from God's love. If you're going to be secure, you've got to put your security, not in your bank account, but you put your security in something that cannot ever be lost. Whether the bank account is lost or not, whether America goes into a gigantic depression or not or the place is bombed -- whatever. Your security is in God.

## The False Promises of Possessions

Why are we rarely satisfied with what we have and we spend ourselves into debt? It's because of three common misconceptions. If we know the truth, the truth sets you free.

### **FALSE PROMISE: Happiness comes in having more possessions.**

Eccl. 5:10-11 *"He who loves money shall never have enough. The foolishness of thinking that wealth brings happiness! The more you have, the more you spend"*  
Eccl. 6:9 *"It is better to be satisfied with what you have than to be always wanting something else."* Less expensive too! Use it up, Wear it out, Make it do, or Do without!

### **FALSE PROMISE: Importance comes in having more possessions.**

Luke 12:15 *"Be on your guard against greed in any shape or form. For a man's real life in no way depends on the number of his possessions."* Don't confuse your net worth with your self worth. Your value is not based on your valuables. *"Be on your guard"* -- continually ask yourself tough questions. Am I expecting things to make me happy? Am I expecting things to make me feel important?

## **FALSE PROMISE: Security comes in having more possessions.**

If I get more things then I'll be more secure. Then I'll secure that ultimate goal of financial independence. I've noticed that the more possessions I have the more I have to worry about.

Proverbs 11:28 *"Those who depend on their wealth will fall like the leaves of autumn."*

Proverbs 11:28 He who trusts in his riches will fall, But the righteous will flourish like foliage.

Proverbs 18:18 (Living Bible) *"The rich man thinks of his wealth as an impregnable defense, a high wall of safety. What a dreamer!"*

We become possessed by our possessions. If you own something that God told you to give away right now and you don't give it away, you don't own it -- it owns you. You are a slave to your own possessions. The problem is with things that the more you get the more they have to be maintained. You've got to polish them and repair them, paint them, prune them, redecorate. People will sacrifice all kinds of things, even relationships, for things.

We have three misconceptions: having more things will make me more happy; having more things will make me more important; having more things will make me more secure. None of that is true. It just isn't true.

## The True Promises of God

Matthew 6:19, 21 *"Don't store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moths and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in Heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

He's saying you establish a nest egg for eternity. That's real security. Lay up treasure in heaven, not on earth where moths and rust corrupt. Today, if Jesus were telling this in modern day language he's say, where depreciation and inflation corrupt -- things that can eat away at your savings.

Notice this verse does not say "Don't save". You ought to save. Jesus commended investment. The Bible commands it. Proverbs 21:20 In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has. (NIV), *"The wise man saves for the future, the foolish man spends whatever he gets."* You ought to save. This verse is not prohibiting savings. Circle the phrase "for yourselves". *"Don't store up for yourselves treasure on earth."* Don't hoard for personal indulgence. Don't keep on saving just so you can brag about how much you've got and so you can blow it on every little whim. At the end of life the ultimate question that God asks you is not "How much have you got?" but "How much have you given?"

How do you store up treasure in Heaven? By investing in people who are going there. You cannot take it with you. When Alexander the Great died, he commanded that he be



buried with his hands sticking out of the coffin openhanded so people could see that you can't take it with you. But you can send it on ahead.

Are you storing up any treasure in heaven? When you get there how much is going to be stored up? You're going to spend a lot more time on that side of eternity than you do on this side. Invest in people.

Giving is the antidote to materialism. That's it. It's the only antidote to materialism. It teaches me to give away. The acid test of "Am I materialistic?" is "How easy can I give away?" How generous am I? -- When people start talking about giving, do you get irritated? Some of you are irritated right now! Do you get nervous when people ask you for money? That is a symptom for what is really important in my life. Store up treasure in heaven.

The most sensitive nerve in our body is the nerve that goes from the brain to the pocketbook. Yet that is the acid test of "Am I materialistic or not?" is look at my giving. How much do I hold on to and how much do I give away? When I am generous, when I hold everything I have with an open hand, then that is saying, "I trust you, God. I don't have to hoard anything. If I give it all away today, God will provide it back tomorrow."

<b>I PETER 1:4</b>	<b>TRUE WEALTH</b>
<b>GOD'S</b>	<b>MAN'S</b>
<b>INCORRUPTIBLE</b>	<b>ROTTING</b>
<b>UNDEFILED</b>	<b>SPOTTED</b>
<b>UNFADING</b>	<b>FADED</b>
<b>RESERVED</b>	<b>LOST</b>