

Prayer of the Week:

O Lord, our heavenly Father, keep your household the Church continually in your true religion, that we who trust in the hope of your heavenly grace may always be defended by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Christian's Relationship

To Money

James 1:9-11

February 7th

Intro

Money. Whether you have a lot or a little, it's easy to obsess over money.

The Bible has some important wisdom to teach us about money. Here is just a short sampling:

-Prov. 22:7 says, "The borrower is slave to the lender..."

-Malachi 3:10 tells us to "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse."

-Mark 12:41-44 calls us to generosity through the story of a widow who gave two small coins, which was nearly all she had.

These are important things we need to learn about money, but there is a deeper, more foundational thing to consider. What is the Christian's relationship to money supposed to be?

James shares harsh words for those who are rich in 1:9-11, but who are these words for? What does it mean to be rich?

Wealth Can (And Does) Fade

James uses the metaphor of flowers that bloom beautifully, but quickly wither and fall. This word picture is an echo of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah.

"The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever." -Isaiah 40:8 (NLT)

Money, like flowers in a field, can be beautiful, attractive, and attention-grabbing. If we aren't careful, though, we'll come to believe that the flowers are all that matter! We'll think that the most important thing is having a field of flowers. We'll work hard to keep the flowers continually blooming.

That's great. But, when is someone considered rich? At what point do you cross from being poor to rich? Is there is safe middle-class? How is that defined? Who decides? Wealth appears to be relative (with exception to the multi-billionaires that we can safely say are rich and the ultra poor who we can safely say don't have enough). However, a huge portion of the population doesn't live in those extremes. This makes it difficult to discern who falls into the category of the biblically rich.

The Rich Mindset

Think about rich less in terms of an account balance and more in terms of a mindset. Rich is a mindset of self-dependence.

Here's the thing. The more money you have, the easier it is to adopt a rich mindset. In a very real sense, our mindset is connected to the balance of our accounts.

We who are rich by global standards must fight like crazy to make sure our primary pursuit is not for more riches, but for the treasure of a transformed life and character.

A self-dependent mindset is antithetical to the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is about our connection to others, creation, and God. This is why James (and the other biblical authors) have such harsh words for the rich. Be totally self-dependent and your life will fade as quickly as the bloom of a flower.

Generosity is a good antidote to richness. You can have plenty, but when you are connected to the fact that you have plenty and are generous with what you have, it can help keep you from a rich mindset.

Christians in the USA, it isn't inherently wrong or sinful to have plenty, but it is imperative that you fight and mindset of richness.

So, what should the Christian's relationship be toward money? Recognize money is part of life, but not the source of life.