

## WISDOM AND WEALTH pt 3

### Selected Proverbs

JULY 07, 2019 | DAVID ANDERSON

We are captivated by the rich, strong, good looking and powerful. Most of our personal fantasies involve us getting rich, stronger, better looking and more powerful. Our eyes are constantly scanning for these characteristics; our flesh craves these traits.

As all the eyes of the world are on the wealthy and influential and the powerful, where are God's eyes?

The gods of Solomon's day, the gods of Jesus day, were defined by power. Powerful gods that control the rain and storms and the soil of land and the oceans. Baal, Ashtoreth, Molech, Dagon and later, Zeus, Poseidon and Hades were strong and clever gods that only associated themselves with strong and clever mortals. Strong gods, the types of gods you want to worship, don't associate themselves with the weak and powerless.

Solomon and later Jesus proclaims this shocking revelation, the one true God, the One who has total power and authority, He associates Himself with the poor and powerless. God desires the undesirables and so should you. God approaches the poor, weak and powerless with compassion, not condemnation as so should you.

Solomon says wisdom is calling out in Proverbs 1; she is raising her voice in the open squares. How long will you simple ones love your simplicity? How long will you scorners delight in scorning? How long will your fools hate knowledge? Solomon says, the fear of the Lord is going to move you towards a particular demographic in our society. It's not the wealthy, it's not the powerful, it's not the important people; God's most treasured people are the poor and the afflicted. As wisdom calls out, Solomon describes an intimate connection that the God of the universe has with the poor and afflicted and He invites us into that intimacy with Him.

- Proverbs 14:31--He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors God has mercy on the needy.
- Proverbs 17:5--He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.
- Proverbs 19:17-- The one who is gracious to the poor lends to the LORD, and the LORD will repay him for his good deed.

Why do the poor and needy have such an exalted status in God's eyes?

Their value and honor is inseparably connected with God's workmanship and their image bearing (Proverbs 17:5, 22:2, 29:13, Job 31:15, Matt 25:40, James 3:9, 1 John 3:17-18). When you and I see the poor we assign a story to them; we assume a series of horrible, sinful decisions that have landed that person in that place.

Behind their torn clothes and burnt skin and disheveled hair and their grocery cart of recyclables, CS Lewis says, if you were to see them in their final, glorified state they would be so beautiful, you would be tempted to worship. They possess God's divine image and to the degree that you care for the poor, God says, whatever you do to them, you do to Him.

Proverbs gets even more explicit:

- Proverbs 21:13--The one who shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and will not be answered.
- Proverbs 28:27--The one who gives to the poor will not lack, but whoever shuts his eyes to them will receive many curses.
- Proverbs 31:9--Open your mouth, judge in righteousness, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

- When Proverbs describes the ideal/ultimate mother and wife, it highlights that she extends her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hand to the needy (Prov. 31:20).

In one of the greatest sermons ever preached, Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God" (Matt. 5:3). This means happy are those who are desperate. Why in the world would desperation be blessed? Strength, good looks and connections bring people success in our society but dependence, sorrow, and brokenness and repentance these are the doors to the kingdom of God. We do not readily admit desperation but when we do, when anyone does, God draws near.

Proverbs 18:23--<sup>23</sup> A poor person makes supplications, but a rich man answers harshly. The poor are in a constant state of asking for help. There is not a day that goes by where they aren't asking someone for something. The wealthy respond with strength roughly or callously.

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**Don't miss relationship with God who always identifies with the poor and desperate.**

The problem isn't that we aren't getting to the poor but the poor aren't getting to our hearts. Our wealth creates a bubble where we can select who we associate with. God wants us to find ways to associate with the least of these.

Poor people find themselves in a posture that invites the grace of God.

Poor people rest their security not on things but on people.

Poor have no exaggerated sense of their own importance and no exaggerated need for privacy. What you see is usually what you get.

The poor can wait because they have been doing it all of their lives.

Jesus says, blessed is anyone who is fully aware, keenly aware of their inadequacies and failure and helplessness and their unworthiness. Blessed are those who don't hide under a sweater of self-sufficiency. Blessed are those who are honest and driven to the throne of grace.

When you study the life of Jesus, who did Jesus get excited to see? Really messy people with messy circumstances.

- A widow who placed her last two cents in the offering.
- Blind beggars who could only cry out for help.
- Adulterous women who were rejected by their worlds.
- Men riddled with leprosy.

None of his interactions with these people were scheduled. Each interaction was a surprise in a sense. Jesus had margin in his life so that he could change the trajectory of souls.

The powerful God of the universe has descended and the demographic He is perpetually pursuing are the poor and desperate. His invitation is for us to join Him in this intimacy.