

"Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."
Luke 12:21

"It's no longer a sin to be rich", proclaimed the bumper sticker. "It's a miracle!" Not that it was ever a sin to be rich, of course, but it's well worth thinking about what God's word does actually say about wealth and what we do with it. As we advance His Kingdom and serve His purposes at work, there will be times when He blesses us so that we are given more than we need for just ourselves. And we understand from our teachings at Harvest that the economic system of God's Kingdom is based on generosity, above all else.

It's pretty clear that the systems of the world are not based on generosity. Do you know that, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, we could end world hunger? Not world poverty, but malnourishment, so that no one need ever go hungry? It would cost \$260 billion dollars a year for 15 years. That seems like a lot, but on a global scale every year we spend \$1.57 trillion on defence, \$2 trillion on entertainment, \$550 billion on fast food and \$1.21 trillion on luxury goods. People could end world hunger by spending less than 5% of what they do on those things. Shouldn't we have a different set of priorities from the world?

Scripture doesn't admonish people for *being* wealthy – indeed, material prosperity was part of the blessings promised by God to Israel if they obeyed Him, and they were reminded that it was God who gave them the power to make wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18). Rather, scripture is concerned with *how* people make their wealth (they are not to exploit labourers, for example, or use dishonest scales) and what they *do* with it – think of the parable in Luke 12 of the man who chose to spend his money building barns and storing up earthly wealth rather than being rich towards God. Paul, in 2 Corinthians, encourages the church to give generously as an expression of their love for God and fellow Christians. Their generous giving would enable the advance of the Kingdom, both in terms of spreading the Good News and helping those who were in need.

For so many in the working world, there is an unspoken belief that working directly in ministry is somehow worthier than being in business. As we've pointed out many times in these articles, though, that's just not so. For those whose work is prospering financially because of their God-given talents, perhaps the right perspective is not that God will soon ask you to give up everything, but rather that He is constantly asking you simply to give more *of* everything.

Our country has many people in need and this is even truer in our province the Eastern Cape, with the highest unemployment rate and poverty levels in the country. Just as with the early church, conditions are ripe for spreading the Good News and making a material difference in lives. For those of us whom God has blessed, let's heed the call to use our resources not just for our own personal gain, but to advance His Kingdom. And then we will be *"rich toward God"*.