

Hearts Fit for the Journey

No Pockets in a Shroud

Resisting Materialism's Lure – 1Tim.6:6-10

I. Introduction

A. *Howard Hughes*

1. Shortly before noon on April 5, 1976 a man was carried from his executive suite in Acapulco, Mexico to a waiting ambulance
2. He was covered by a yellow sheet, had an oxygen mask over his face and an intravenous needle in his left arm
3. The ambulance carried him to a nearby airport where he was placed into his own waiting private jet
4. The jet was headed to the US and the world renowned Methodist Hospital in Houston
5. 20 minutes before the plane was to land the man died
6. He died without a relative or friend by his side, only his paid attendants
7. That was the end for Howard Hughes
 - a. At his death, Hughes was one of the 3 richest men in the world
 - b. His estate was valued at over 2.3 billion dollars
 - c. 2,300,000,000—that's a lot of money and was even more so in 1976
 - d. Can you imagine a stack of 1 dollar bills 164 miles high—that's basically from here to Louisville—not laid end to end or side by side, that is stacked

- e. **That amount of money would create over 2,300 millionaires—and his wealth would be considered meager by today’s standards—it would not even qualify for the Forbes list of the 400 wealthiest individuals in the world today**
8. **But here was Hughes, at 70 yrs. Old and one of the wealthiest men in the world, and yet death came for him as it does for all—accept he died alone without family or friend, much as he had chosen to live the last years of his life**

B. Contentment

1. **Last week we discussed the principle of contentment**
2. **While there are a number of things without which we can become discontent, few would argue that the lack of material goods would be at the top of that list**
3. **There just is no way to sustain contentment if we do not learn to resist the lure of materialism**
4. **Far too many people in this world, and we know in the church as well, have been guilty of placing too much trust in materialism**
 - a. **Trust for peace**
 - b. **Trust for happiness**
 - c. **Trust for fulfillment**
 - d. **Trust for sustenance**
 - e. **God never intended for man to place their trust in money for things which He has promised to provide and yet this is exactly what many have done**
5. **Paul writes the most insightful passage concerning the connection between contentment and materialism in 1 Tim.6:6-10**
 - a. **The desire to be rich can lead to many pitfalls in life**
 - b. **Thus, godliness with contentment is truly great gain**
 - c. **I know that I spent 4 weeks recently discussing the plague of materialism on the Lord’s church but I want**

to address the subject today from a slightly different vantage point

C. In our lesson we shall:

1. Consider the failings of materialism—after all, for many in our society the motto is “In Money We Trust”—but does that philosophy lead to anything worthwhile
2. Consider the effects of materialism—what does it cost us to devote so much time and energy to material pursuits
3. Consider some questions that will help us to know whether we have allowed materialist pursuits to encroach upon our loyalty to God

II. The Failings of Materialism

A. No amount of money can sustain life

1. “The rich and the poor have this in common, the Lord is the maker of them all” (Prov.22:2)
2. Whether rich or poor, we have all been made by God and we have all been made mortal by God
3. Thus, regardless of how much money we have it will by no means sustain life—true it may prolong life, but death comes to all regardless of their financial status
4. Howard Hughes
 - a. Was perhaps more famous for being a hypochondriac than any of his many accomplishments
 - b. He did everything he possibly could to sustain his life
 - c. During his latter years he would not pick up a glass of water or touch any doorknob until it had been thoroughly sanitized—and this was in his own home
 - d. He was also afraid to eat for fear that he might eat something that would make him sick
 - e. Thus at 70 years old, the 3rd richest man in the world died being 6’2 and weighing only 90 pounds

5. **How sad indeed to trust in wealth to sustain life when it has no ability to do so**
6. **Now I don't know if God knows the exact moment of our death beforehand—I know He could—but I don't know if He chooses to know**
7. **But if there is a fixed time and day for our death and God knows when that is there is not one thing we can do to sustain our lives one minute longer, no matter how much money we have**
8. **Why do we so often destroy our health to acquire that which we would gladly give away to have our health back?**
9. **In the end, it matters not how much money we had in the bank when we die, it matters how much treasure we have laid up in heaven**

B. No amount of money will sustain happiness

1. **Hughes and Solomon had pretty much the same outlook toward material things**
2. **They both thought that it would bring them lasting happiness and fulfillment—it didn't**
3. **Both abused and wasted life in a similar manner, and when the end came their possessions did neither any good**
4. **The Living Bible has Solomon saying “All this was useless—a chasing after wind”**
5. **It did not sustain life nor happiness**
6. **Robert Gibson**
 - a. **Was the preacher chosen to speak at Hughes' funeral and he closes his sermon with these words**
 - b. **“He brought nothing into the world, and it is certain he will take nothing out. There are no pockets in a shroud”**
 - c. **Shroud, or course, refers to the funeral garment worn in more ancient times and they were pocket less and for good reason**

d. We brought nothing into the world and regardless of what we place in our casket with us, we will take nothing out

7. Money does strange things to people

a. The love of money is the beginning place of all that is evil, it is the root of all evil—1 Tim.6:10

b. Materialism can cause men to forsake the Lord's people, it did when Demas left Paul—2 Tim.4:10

c. Money can determine a man's eternal destiny, it at least played a part in the story of the Rich man and Lazarus—Lk.16:19-31

d. Money causes some to ignore our families, our children and our health

e. Money can come between us and our relationship with God, it did with the Rich Young Ruler—Lk.18:18-23

f. Riches can make it difficult to go to heaven—"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" (Lk.18:25)

g. A greedy disposition for money can disqualify a man from service as an elder or deacon—1 Tim.3:3, 8

C. The challenge of materialism

1. Considering these scriptures and many others we could examine ought to challenge us to consider how we can living pleasing to God in the midst of our day of affluence and prosperity

2. Is it possible that our generation, according to Lk.18:25, might be the most difficult generation in history from which to go to heaven?

3. The more one has, the more accountable they will become to God—and thus our chance for encountering difficulty in serving God increases drastically in proportion to what we have

4. There is no magic amount which is too great to have in order to get to heaven, it is not what we have but rather the attitude we display toward what we have that makes the difference

5. **The average American family possesses more material goods than any people before us**
 - a. **We own more houses**
 - b. **We have better transportation**
 - c. **We have larger bank accounts and more disposable income**
 - d. **We have a greater abundance of food to eat and enjoy**
 - e. **And thus to some extent, our eternal destiny, will depend upon how we act in relation to this material abundance that we enjoy**
6. **Thus, there is a great need to be aware of some of the great dangers associated with materialism**

III. What are Some of the Dangerous Effects of Materialism

A. Materialism robs us of our trust in God

1. **“Without faith it is impossible to please God”**
2. **God has, from the very beginning of time, wanted men to trust Him, rely upon and depend upon Him**
3. **The problem is that too many times we allow our possessions to turn us away from God causing us to trust in material possessions more than we trust in God**
4. **One of the truest tests of our reverence for and trust of God is our attitude toward material things**
 - a. **Money can buy medicine, but not health**
 - b. **Money can buy a house, but not a home**
 - c. **Money can buy companionship, but not friends**
 - d. **Money can buy entertainment, but not happiness**
 - e. **Money can buy a bed, but not sleep**
 - f. **Money can buy pleasure, but not peace**

- f. Materialistic concerns often rob us of that trust; don't let it happen to you—it just makes life more difficult to live**

B. Materialism robs us of our service to God

- 1. Mt.6:24**
- 2. In this verse Jesus uses a very unique Jewish word—Mammon**
- 3. It is a word that is more than:**
 - a. Just a word for money**
 - b. It is a word that includes all material wealth and possessions and the desire to pursue them**
 - c. It is a term which carries with it the idea of making one's possessions his idol**
 - d. It catches the idea behind the old expression, “The things we own often end up owning us”**
 - e. That is mammon and we can't serve God and mammon at the same time—we just don't have that much time, energy and devotion**
- 4. Materialism is a force that pulls us into its clutches and robs us of the time and ability to fully serve the Lord**
- 5. A preacher tells the story of the young man whom he once asked about why he was not at church services**
 - a. The young man said he was not there because he chose to work instead**
 - b. After all, he said. “You had better make your money while you can. One day it will be too late”**
 - c. Sadly the preacher related that the young man and his family were never in worship any more**
 - d. For those with such an attitude, one day it will be too late, but not too late for making money, too late for being saved**
- 6. Jesus says that we have to decide**

- a. **God or mammon**
- b. **One or the other**
- c. **We cannot serve both for they are mutually exclusive**
- d. **Which will it be for you?**
- e. **I can promise you that one way will bring more peace, happiness and fulfillment than the other—not to mention eternal life**

C. Let us consider some simple questions that will help us in evaluating the effect that materialism has had in our lives

1. **Do we find ourselves continuously checking the amount of our accounts—checking, savings or retirement?**
2. **When we are sleepless at 3 in the morning, do we dwell upon the material or the spiritual?**
3. **Do we ever start to think that one day soon we will have enough to self-reliant; are we trusting in our riches?**
4. **Do you envy those who make more money than you, have a bigger house, drive a nicer car etc.?**
5. **Do you measure the quality of life by what you have or by what you have become?**
6. **Do you measure the past by things accumulated or by good accomplished?**
7. **Are we loving people and using things or vice versa?**
8. **Rudyard Kipling**
 - a. **While speaking at a graduation ceremony at McGill University said the following**
 - b. **He told those graduates, “One day you will meet someone for whom money means very little. I suggest that you watch him closely, for he will demonstrate that money dominates everybody except the man who does not want it”**
9. **Those are wise words indeed and they are often echoed in Scripture**

- a. **Prov.23:4-5**
- b. **Lk.12:15**
- c. **What effect has materialism had in your life?**

IV. Conclusion

A. God

- 1. Created us to love Him and other people, not money**
- 2. Thus, to love that which God never intended for us to love simply robs us of our ability to enjoy the journey which lies before us**
- 3. Life is not about making money or accumulating things—not that there is anything wrong with either—as long as we don't allow them to become the focus of our lives which so many have**
- 4. Sad indeed is the fact that so many spend their life in pursuit of that which will just be left to someone else when we die**
- 5. Money did not help Howard Hughes sustain his life and it certainly did not prepare him to meet His God and it won't help us either**
- 6. How about we start enjoying life more y starting to trust in God instead of mammon**

B. Are you more focused on material pursuits than you are on God?

C. Simply question and if the answer we stand ready to help you rectify that error this morning