

S94 The Wealthiest Man in the Valley Dies Today

Filled with self-pride and confidence, a wealthy man was standing in the balcony of his palace looking at his vast properties, for he owned the whole valley. He was saying to himself, "These are my plots of land . . . I am the wealthiest man in the valley."

He started saying what the foolish wealthy man said in the proverb that the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned:

"What shall I do for I have nowhere to store my crops." And he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones and there I will store all my grains and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry' (Luke 12: 17-19).

He said this in a very loud and arrogant voice.

As he was looking, he saw one smiling old worker sitting beneath a tree. He had some dry bread and a small piece of cheese and was starting to eat after a long day of work in the garden of the wealthy man. The wealthy man always felt comfortable when he spoke to the old worker from the balcony.

He shouted, "Did you hear me, Sam?"

"No, Sir, I did not notice you in the balcony, for my eyes have become weak and I have difficulty hearing because of my old age."

"I see that you are happy tonight, Sam."

"I always thank God for His continual gifts to me, Sir."

"What do you thank Him for, only some dry bread and a piece of cheese!"

"Yes, Sir. God my Father granted me food to fill my stomach and helps me in my work; He also gave me clothes to wear, a bed to sleep on, and a ceiling above my head. All these things are much more than what Jesus my Savior had when He was on earth."

"But I am surprised that you are happy with simple food like that!" said the wealthy man.

"My God gives me sweetness in my mouth that I enjoy when using His gifts towards me. This sweetness is a divine gift."

Suddenly, Sam changed the conversation and told the wealthy man of a dream he saw the previous night.

"I want to tell you, Sir, of a dream I had yesterday. I dreamt that I went to heaven and found its gates open. I saw the great city, the heavenly Jerusalem with its inexpressible glory. I am unable to describe the beauty I saw. I decided to stay there.

"To my surprise, I heard a voice from inside saying, 'The wealthiest man in the valley died today.'" Then I heard heavenly trumpet sounds accompanied by singing and praising. I woke up from my sleep although I did not want to."

"Sir, I heard those words very clearly. I was thinking of how I could meet you to tell about what I saw and heard."

The wealthy man became pale. He tried to hide his emotions and fear. He went to his room and sat on a nearby chair and repeated, "The wealthiest man in the valley will die tonight! Is this just the dream of an old worker? Is this a prophesy or divine dream?! Is this how a worker feels towards the wealthiest man in the valley? He is a righteous and respectful old man."

After a few hours, Sam came down with a fever. He tried to hide it because he did not want to trouble anyone. While he was sick, he was praying the psalms and speaking to his God. He was full of joy.

When Sam's condition began to deteriorate, his friends called the doctor. While the doctor was taking care of him, Sam told him about the dream he saw. The doctor laughed and said to him, "Do not worry, for the wealthiest man in the valley is in very good health and will not die tonight."

Late in the evening, the wealthy man heard someone knocking at his door. When he opened, he found a worker who told him, "I am sorry, Sir, but Sam died and we know how much you love him. We came to ask you what to do."

The wealthy man was astonished and said to himself, "The wealthiest man in the valley died tonight?" Yes, he was very poor in my eyes, but in the eyes of God he was the wealthiest man in the world. He was wealthy in faith. He owned the wealth of the heavens and he enjoyed a supreme life."

"I thought that I was the wealthiest man in the valley. But I discovered who was wealthy in actuality. Now go, my soul, to your God and own Him in order to own yourself."

S95 We Do Not Need Him

James Smith son was born in 1765 in France. He was the illegitimate son of a famous British duke who was a descendant of King Henry VII's mother. As an illegitimate son, he was denied British citizenship and the opportunity to enjoy the inheritance of his real father. When James found himself rejected, he did his best to succeed in his life. At the age of 22, he became a leading scientist and a member of the British royal league (He later became president of this league).

In 1829, James died without marrying. He left a great fortune to his nephew. James wrote his will after the death of his nephew. The royal British league thought that James left most of his inheritance to them. However, everyone was shocked when James' will was published. James wrote, "As England refused me, I refuse her." At that time, England was fighting very dangerous battles with its rebellious colonies in America. James wanted to make light of those who mistreated him. Therefore, he offered everything he owned to the American government to establish a scientific institution in this growing country. This institution became famous throughout the world.

England made a severe mistake when it made light of this person because he was an illegitimate son. England thought that it did not need him, but it lost a lot. Let us not make light of any person, no matter what his resources and position are. One of the most wonderful statements made by that late Fr. Bishoy Kamel was, "The Church needs the hands of each child." Father Bishoy appreciated each soul and did not despise any of the youngsters.

As St. John Chrysostom says, "The eyelashes and the eyebrows are worth nothing. However, if pulled out and thrown away, the whole body in general and the eyes in particular will be in great need of hair. The body loses its beauty and the eye is endangered without the eyelashes and eyebrows. If you are an eye, do not despise the eyelid that protects you or the eyebrow that gives you beauty."

S96 Run For Your Life

A strong dog was boastful towards the other dogs because of his ability to run. However, one day while he was running after a rabbit, it ran away from him and he did not catch it. The other dogs mocked him saying, "Where is your excellence in running? A weak rabbit was able to run from you." The dog was silent for a moment and said, "Do not forget! The rabbit ran for his life, but I was running for my dinner."

The rabbit ran to save its life, but the dog was running after the rabbit to eat it. One invests enormous amounts of energy when running for his life so that the enemy of good will not catch and devour him. Running is strength and courage when we realize that sin kills our souls and destroys our eternal life.

S97 Donation of a Table Cloth

This story took place in one of the towns in North England. Several members of the church there emigrated, leaving behind very few families, most of which were elderly people. As a result, repairs and renovations for the church building were neglected.

Before Christmas of 1958, some of the members of the church met and decided to repair the building with their personal contributions in order to celebrate Christmas. They did a tremendous job in the repairs, but a storm came that destroyed everything that they had done. In addition, a great part of the paint on the wall fell down and there appeared a crack and cavity in the wall. The members started working again, cleaning the church and furniture. Yet, they stood helpless with regard to the crack in the wall as a result of the fallen paint.

At noon, the priest of the church came across an auction room, where he saw a beautiful embroidered tablecloth that he felt would be suitable to cover the crack. So, he bought it.

While he was standing at the bus stop, he saw a lady that was crying and he saw that she was in great need. He listened to her story. As she was talking, she suddenly stopped and looked at the white tablecloth. He asked her the reason for her silence and she explained that the tablecloth belonged to her. It was given to her by her husband and that the first three letters of her name were embroidered on it. She also mentioned that she used to live in Vienna with her husband.

During the war, her husband was put in a camp and she later heard that he had died. Therefore, she came to Great Britain to work as a nanny in a town near the church. However, she lost this employment opportunity. The priest was very touched by her story and asked her to take it back as it held a special memory for her, reminding her of her late husband who had died in the war. However, when she learned that it was to be used to cover the crack in the wall for the Christmas celebration, she refused to accept it. She had wanted to give something to someone in need during the Christmas season. Since she had nothing to give, she was going to give this tablecloth to the church. The priest tried to convince her to take it back, but she refused. She felt that she would have been deprived of giving something special to God on Christmas if the minister insisted on her taking it.

The lady left the church and after a few hours, it was filled with people who came to celebrate the feast of Christmas. After everything was over, everyone left except for one man who came to the priest and asked him, "Where did you get that cloth from?"

"I bought it from an auction. Why do you ask?"

"It was my gift to my wife when we were in Vienna."

"Do you live there?"

"No, we were separated because of the war. My wife was sent to a camp, and I've been told that she died. I came to England to repair watches in this town."

The priest was so amazed at the miraculous events that he pinched himself. He told him that his wife was in the church several hours earlier and that she thought that her husband had died. He told him everything about his wife and that she was planning to work as a nanny for one of the families. The husband went to this family and found out his wife's address from a letter that she had sent to his family.

The next morning, the husband met his wife and was very happy that they were back together. This couldn't have happened if the wife hadn't given up the tablecloth to cover the crack in the wall. She realized that God gave her more than she offered for her love.

The couple felt that nothing in their life was haphazard, but God's hidden hand worked for them.

+ + +

Many times we think that events occur haphazardly.

We do not discover God's hidden hand that is working for us,

The hand of the Almighty that who even counts the hairs of our head

Our love deeds to God and people direct our lives and God accepts them as

sweet incense. Because of these deeds God directs events without letting us know it.

Let us throw our bread on the surface of the water and it will definitely come back to us one day.

S98 He Stopped Talking to Me to Talk To the Butcher

The old peasant plowed his land using a bull and mule. A strong friendship developed between the two who were working very hard.

The bull said to the mule, "We are so tired because we have plowed the land for several days now. This peasant isn't giving us enough time to rest. Let us pretend that we are sick so that he'll make us rest."

The mule answered, "No. How can we do that when the plowed season and the days are so short. The peasant cares for us all year round. He gives us all we need. We have to work hard and get our job done to satisfy the peasant."

The bull said, "You're dumb and aren't wise. You can work hard if you want, and the peasant will misuse you. But, I'll pretend to be sick."

While the bull pretended to be sick, the peasant gave him fresh food, cared for him, and left him to rest. After plowing, the mule came back very tired, for he had been working alone. The bull asked him, "How are you doing?"

The mule answered, "It was a day of hard work, but it passed peacefully."

Then the bull asked, "Did the peasant ask about me today?"

The mule replied, "No."

The following morning, the bull did the same thing since he thought his plan worked. He wanted to rest and not work, to eat, to drink, and sleep without work.

At the end of the day, the mule was very tired. The bull asked him how things went. The mule answered, "It was very tiring during the day, but I tried my best to make up for you not sharing the work with me."

The bull asked the mule, "Did the peasant mention anything about me today?"

The mule answered, "No, he was busy talking to the butcher."

The bull then collapsed, for he realized that he was going to be slain the next day because he was not fit to work.

+ + +

We often think that our rest lies in laziness and relaxation

So, we pretend to be sick and make excuses for ourselves.

We do not realize that by doing that we are actually preparing ourselves to be slain.

We are often satisfied with the body's desires, thinking that in this we find rest and profit.

But there will come the moments when we realize that we are slaying ourselves.

Let us work hard from now on so that we may live, conquer and be crowned.

S99 Fire in the Ships

At the beginning of the 1996, a faithful woman passed away. She had suffered from cancer for nearly two months and the illness was spreading quickly in her brain. I asked myself, "Why does God allow his faithful people to suffer from these malignant ailments before we leave this world?" God allows such a thing so that the faithful one would realize that all his hope is from heaven, desiring nothing from his body, but his eternal glory. It is as if a person assures his beloved that he ought to put his hands on the plow, looking at the heavenly glory and not looking back. This reminds me of what Green has mentioned about the Spanish discoverer Cortez who landed in Mexico with his ship "Vera Cruz," to invade it. His soldiers were very few in number (about 700 men). As soon as his men landed on the shore, he burnt the eleven ships that were on shore. He deliberately burned the ships to show his men that there was no other way to go except to enter Mexico and face the situation without retreating to the ships. Likewise, the Lord Jesus Christ permits the destruction of our temporal rest. This is so that we realize that there is no other way but through Him that we can enter into battle with the enemy of good in order to win the heavens. Our hearts need not be occupied with anything except rejoicing in joy in order to obtain the crown. Many times God will allow for the wide way to be shut before us so that we would have no other choice but to accept the narrow path.

+ + +

I thank You, You the wise and marvelous leader. You lead me to the spiritual battle under wise leadership, granting victory.

You burn all the ships around me so that I do not think of going back.

I find my rest and victory in You, not in the ships of the world.

I enter with You into a battle to face the devil.

With You and in You, I am always victorious

For You promised me saying, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!"