

How Much?

Amos 6^{1a,4-7}; Psalm 146; 1 Timothy 6⁶⁻¹⁹; Luke 16^{19-end}

We brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it. [1 Timothy 6⁷]

Can you tell me who the poorest person in the world is? We can find out who the richest in the world are:

Bill Gates - \$75 billion

Amancio Ortega - \$67 billion

Warren Buffett - \$60.8 billion

Or in the UK:

Sir Richard Branson - £4.1 billion

Sir James Dyson - £3.5 billion

The late Duke of Westminster had £8.56 billion - but he doesn't need it now!

The Queen has a meagre £330 million!

Isn't it interesting that in the parable for today the rich man has no name and that it is the poor man, Lazarus that is made known to us.

Perhaps that tells us something about Jesus priorities.

Amos paints a picture of the rich and then tells us that they are first for exile!

- ✦ Following on the prophets' message that Israel is in danger of experiencing God's wrath because they have ignored him.
- ✦ Specifically in this passage, **those at ease in Zion** and who think themselves **secure on Mount Samaria**; who are self-indulgent an example of which is **beds of ivory**; they are well fed and can afford to eat meat young - **lambs** and **calves**; they have time to make music; they can afford **wine** and smell good with **the finest oils**; they are not worried about their spiritual heritage - the **ruin of Joseph** refers to the separation of Judah from Israel and so the separation of the 12 brothers.
- ✦ Their punishment is that their life of ease will end and they will be **the first to go into exile**.

It is this sort of self-interest and a lack of concern for the wellbeing of others that gets Jesus to tell the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

- ✦ The different situations in life - **the rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day** as opposed to the man who **lay at the gate, covered with sores** covetous of the crumbs and comforted by the **dogs who would come and lick his sores** - are contrasted with the diametrically opposed fates in the after-life - **the poor man died and was carried away with the angels to be with Abraham** and the **rich man also died and was buried** while the story goes on with a graphic description of life in **Hades**.
- ✦ The rich man doesn't like it and thinks that even in the afterlife he can still dominate Lazarus, but is disappointed to know that he isn't even allowed a drink. He then, perhaps for the first time in his life, thinks of others and **begs** that Lazarus be **sent** to the man's brothers - probably also rich, greedy and indulgent **that he may warn them**.
- ✦ The irony at the end, from the lips of Jesus, is challenging: **neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead**.

Paul then follows up on Jesus' teaching with the bold statements:

We brought nothing into the world so that we can take nothing out of it.
The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

And then there is an alternative: **teach** the rich **not to be haughty** (a wonderful word) because, as he has said, **those who want to be rich fall into temptation** the end of which is **ruin and destruction**. Two things follow:

- ✦ All of us have to get our priorities straight, as Paul addresses Timothy directly with the great title **man of God: pursue righteousness** giving both God and man their due; **godliness** that awareness that we owe everything to God and God is part of everything we are and do; **faith** loyalty to God; **love** selfless love; **endurance** conquering all the negative experiences in life; **gentleness** true Christian spirit that is never self-indulgent but knows how to wage war on things that are unjust; knows the humility of our own shortcomings but has pride in the calling of God.
- ✦ If we can we **are to do good** and show our reliance on God by becoming **rich in good works, generous and ready to share**.

There are very few (if any) on the Rich List who **take hold of life as it really is** for that is a life of dependence, faith and sharing.