

Who Is Really Rich?

Christchurch became a house of prayer eighteen years ago this coming Friday, August nineteenth. That's when our youngest child, Sean was born. Out of the crisis of his life and death struggle was born a praying church. Most all of God's people in our church were people of prayer, but in that crisis, I renewed the simple hour of personal prayer that became shared by many a person, especially the men of Christchurch. As I prepared for bed this past Wednesday, Sean asked me to get him up at 4:30 for the "Alive at Five" encounter with some of the prayer warriors at the church. I thought how appropriate that the youngster God used to prime us for the prayer experience of our lives would want to be at prayer just before he "emptied our nest" by going off to college.

After prayer Todd Montgomery invited us to join him for refreshment at Starbucks. Much to my protest he treated. On the way home Sean expressed he was sure hungry. He said this while we were in proximity of our favorite bakery. What else could I do? We got in line at the busy bakery and while in line a distinguished looking businessman filed in behind me. Close on his heels was my next door neighbor. In a loud voice our neighbor said, "Well, you never know when you're going to run into a preacher!" So we began to dialogue with "Mr. Businessman" in between. The wait in line that morning seemed much longer than usual. And the longer we waited the more animated my neighbor and I became. It appeared the longer the wait, the more irritated "Mr. Businessman" in the middle became - understandably so, with two rather obnoxious and loud people on either side. I did not have the cash on hand for our small morning breakfast, but I had used my ATM card there on numerous other occasions, so I pulled it out after the lady behind the counter tabulated the total at two dollars and fifty-six cents. Then she looked at me and in her inimitable and kind Asian accent explained, the machine was down and I would have to pay cash. A slight panic took hold, as I was going to tell the lady, "I'll leave our package there and be back with some cash shortly." But before I could even get a word out of my mouth, "Mr. Businessman" flopped the money on the glass counter and said, "I've got it!" I quickly protested and he looked at me with very kind eyes and said, "No, allow me...please." By the time the second protest was out, my new friend was receiving change from my just under three dollar charge.

I thought to myself, I'll pay him back one way or another, so I said, "May I please have your card?" Seeing through what I was about to do, he said, "I don't have one, but anyway, forget it...it is my pleasure." By now I was noticing how happy he was getting. The words of our Lord came to mind, "*...It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35). Sean was laughing and having a good time with all that transpired. On the way out my neighbor said, "I wish I had thought of that!" I was feeling rather low because I was embarrassed. Then it occurred to me, the tables really shifted. He did not appear to be having a good time in line. I was having a ball as I wished our neighbor a happy birthday that morning. Giving accolades to someone else is fun. Buying donuts for a stranger is even more fun. The receiving end is not nearly as fun as the giving end. "Mr. Businessman" came in frowning but left grinning!

I loved the story that our visiting Sunday School teacher, Keith Lay gave us. As many of you know, Keith was and still is a very successful man, even in the world's terms. He was in town to visit our services and also to have a visit with his long lost cousin, Ken Lay, former CEO of Enron. Keith and Ken had been in contact for quite some time even before the eruption at Enron. Ken asked that Keith come by if he ever came through Houston because he wanted to know more about his family.

This story that Keith tells really illustrates the principle of "more blessed to give than to receive." When Keith surprisingly learned that he was to speak for our Sunday School, he called his neighbor back home in Tennessee. He asked her to de-activate the alarm, enter into his study, find a certain file, and fax a copy of the story he read to us Sunday morning. For those of us that were in attendance, it was worth the trouble! Without going into details, he told of a church that was going to receive an offering for a poor family in the church. A certain very special, loving family met in conference with one another and said, "What can we do to help in the offering?" So they did more than talk; they sacrificed, scraped and saved,

then a few days later, they sat on their church pew beaming with joy knowing they had given to help the poor family. After the service, the pastor presented them with an envelope. It was the special offering. The dad was very embarrassed to explain to the family that they were the recipients of the charity. They were the “poor” family! And they gave a goodly portion of the offering. What had started out as a wonderful day, a day they were so happy to help somebody else, and they were now wounded in their spirit, knowing they were ending up on the receiving end. They did not spend the money; Dad just carried it around, not knowing what they were going to do with it. The family “moped” along through the remainder of the week with a sad feeling, knowing that they were known as the “poor family.” The next service a missionary was visiting with a very dire, urgent need. The pastor told the people of the need to give to this worthy missionary. As the plate was passed around, the dad got the “thumbs up” from the rest of the family to drop it in the plate for the needy missionary. With joy Dad did exactly that!

At the next service the pastor told the church how much was given. The pastor then related something the missionary had told him, “Our missionary said, you must have some well-to-do people in your congregation, because I have never received such an offering.” The “poor family” of the church when hearing the total, knew they had given most of the gift. On the way home from church that day, they were able to rejoice because they were the “well-to-do” or rich family of the church. *“He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor”* (Proverbs 22:9).

My question to Christchurch today is, who is really rich in this life. I was thinking about the people at Enron who had lost their retirements. Keith informed me about the homes that his cousin had lost and stood in line to lose more. Who is really rich? What constitutes value? Jesus said it all, when He said, *“...It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35).

I love you!

- Pastor Pope -

[Back to Pastor's Word](http://christchurchbaptist.org/Pastors%20Word/Who%20Is%20Really%20Rich.htm)