

Blog



Materialism

Are we materialistic?

“We live in a materialist world, and materialism appeals strongly to humanity.” (Wole Soyinka) Materialism is a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values. Materialism is about accumulating things. It makes life about amassing wealth and is a subtle striving for more of the world’s ‘stuff’. A higher income, larger home, flashier car, more exotic vacation and prosperous lifestyle. Materialism is a centre piece of our culture and has influenced us all.

Ironically, materialism offers wealth and yet serves up true poverty. It promises much, but delivers little. The problem with materialism is that it is hollow. Empty. When asked, “How much money is enough?” John D. Rockefeller replied, “Just a little bit more.”

Jesus had something to say about materialism and addressed the issue by telling the following story.

Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” ’ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:15-21)

Perhaps we can learn a few things about materialism from Jesus’ words.

Materialism is short-sighted

“Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

Materialism is short-sighted. It makes life all about money and material possessions. But it also makes us discontented and envious of others. Life is about so much more. While busy pursuing the materialistic dream, real life passes us by. Excelling in selfish pursuits produces no long term gain for our soul. A wise person is on their guard against greed and the deceitfulness of riches. One day our soul will be required of us and the futility of our materialism will be plain to see. Materialism is short-sighted.

Materialism is short-lived

“You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.”

Materialism is short-lived. Whatever age we live until, life races by at an alarming speed. Old age sounds a long way off when we are young, but it comes hurtling down the years to meet us. “What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” (James 4:14) One day we will leave all our accumulated possessions behind. “For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.” (1 Timothy 6:7) Figures from ancient history were buried with their treasurers in a vain attempt to carry them into the next life. “For all can see that the wise die, that the foolish and the senseless also perish, leaving their wealth to others.” (Psalms 49:10) One day each of us will discover that materialism is futile. “Only one life, twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.” (C. T. Studd) Materialism is short-sighted.

Materialism leaves us short-changed

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

Materialism leaves us short-changed. In this life our soul shrinks, and in the next life our reward is reduced. While we accumulate wealth on earth we are impoverishing our account in heaven. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Matthew 6:19-20) Materialism is the antithesis of the kingdom of heaven and it robs Christian believers of the blessing of God. “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” (Jim Elliot) Materialism leaves us short-changed.

“It is not to make money that I believe a Christian should live. The noblest thing a man can do is, just humbly to receive, and then go

amongst others and give.” (David Livingstone) There is a life of faith to live, an adventure free from the chains of materialism. Paradoxically, in seeking first the kingdom of God, everything we need materially will be supplied to us anyway. Materialism is short-sighted, short-lived, and leaves us short-changed.