

# Jesus and material wealth



**1st observation:** *Jesus and the Apostles have a lot to say about worldly wealth.*

**2nd observation:** *Much of what they say is a warning of its dangers for those who have it.*

**Bottom line:**

***Worldly wealth is a very dangerous blessing.***

*Ecclesiastes 10:2*

“A wise man’s heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man’s heart directs him toward the left.”

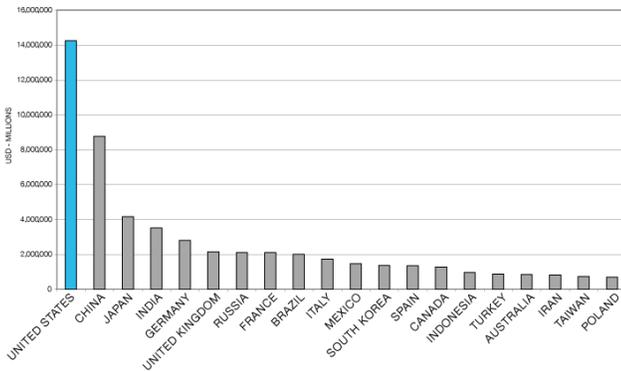
**Princes Diana**

“They say it is better to be poor and happy than rich and miserable, but how about a compromise like moderately rich and just moody?”

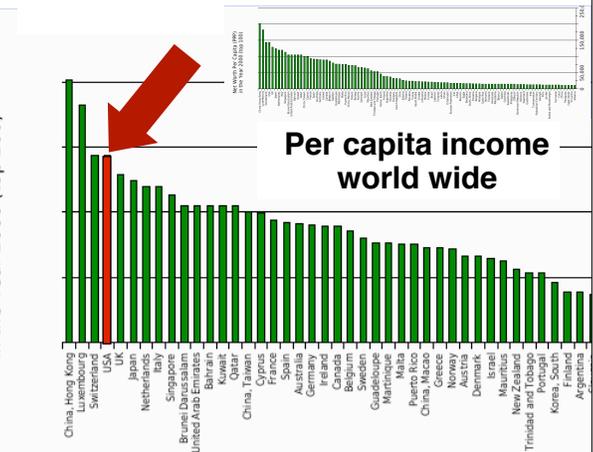
**Confucius**

“In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.”

FIGURE 1  
TOP TWENTY COUNTRIES GDP (PPP) IN USD

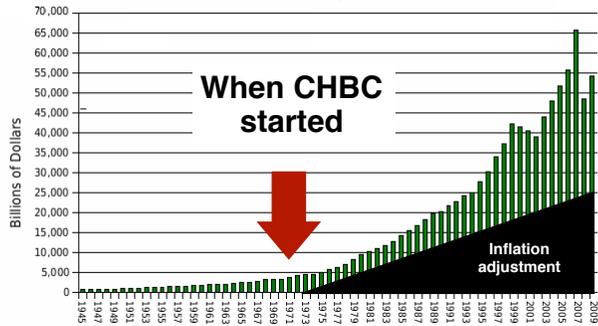


Net Worth Per Capita  
in the Year 2000 (top 100)



Per capita income  
world wide

Total Net Worth of U.S. Households and Nonprofit Organizations 1945-2009



**The growth of wealth in America**

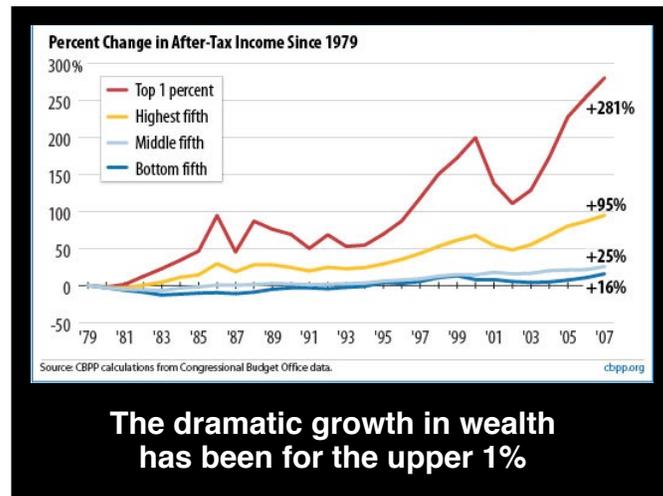
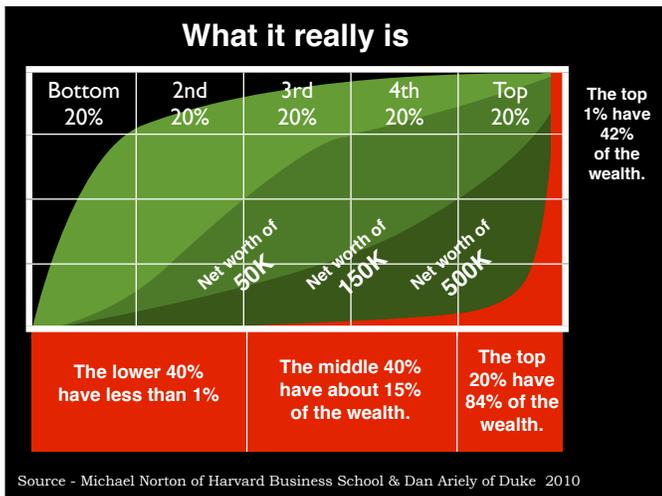
As a blessing from God be thankful for it.

As an opportunity for ministry be responsible with it.



As a dangerous deception don't let it define you.

As a desensitizer to God, people, & your spiritual need don't let it blind you.



## A contrast to what will follow.

*Mark 10*

“<sup>13</sup> And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup> Truly I say to you, **whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.**” <sup>16</sup> And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands upon them.”

### What is God looking for in a disciple?

Childlikeness

- ✓ **Vulnerable heart**
- ✓ **Teachable mind**
- ✓ **Undeveloped ego**
- ✓ **Meritless record**

*Matthew 5:3*

“Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

## The resume of a good man.

“<sup>17</sup> And as He was setting out on a journey, a man (**rich, young, ruler**) ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and began asking Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>18</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments, ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” <sup>20</sup> And he said to Him, “Teacher, **I have kept all these things from my youth up.**”

### Why is this a good man?

*In Jewish culture he had all the signs of God’s providential blessing.*

- ✓ He was **morally** disciplined.
- ✓ He was **materially** successful.
- ✓ He was **socially** powerful.
- ✓ He was **spiritually** sensitive.

“Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.”

**What is the point of this exchange of words?**

*Matthew 19:17*

“Why are you asking me about what is good?”

- ✓ **The young man wants to know what HE HAS LEFT TO DO that will render him worthy of eternal life.**
- ✓ **Jesus is going to remind him that GOD IS THE STANDARD OF GOODNESS and that he must reassess his confidence in his goodness.**

## Bad news for a good man.

“21 And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” 22 But at these words his face fell, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property. 23 And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!””

**What was Jesus asking of this man?**

***Penitent faith meant letting go of his accomplishments and following Jesus.***

- ✓ Wealth was not evil nor were the wealthy.
- ✓ The problem was MY wealth as a sign of MY merit and MY goodness.
- ✓ The issue was not his response to the poor so much as his recognition of HIS spiritual poverty.
- ✓ Being invested in helping the materially poor might open his eyes to his own spiritual poverty.

*Proverbs 11:28*

“Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.”

## The futility of human merit.

“24 And the disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 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.” 26 And they were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” 27 Looking upon them, Jesus said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

**Why is it hard for a good (rich) man to enter the kingdom?**

***A good resume in this life suggests that we do not need the Cross.***

- ✓ This young man looks a lot like the older brother of the Prodigal Son.
- ✓ Worldly riches blind us to our need, God’s grace, and the needs of others.
- ✓ The easier we have it in this life, the harder it will be to own our spiritual need.

**Example  
of Jesus being IN but not OF  
the world.**

**Disciples find their identity  
and security in Christ not  
in the riches & power of  
this world.**



*Philippians 2*

“<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; <sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, **although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,** <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

*John 1:14*

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

*2 Corinthians 8:9*

“. . . thought he was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

*Mark 2:17*

“I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

**Practical challenges for the  
evangelical Christian.**

- 1. Understand that the Gospel message is all about wealth and poverty (of spirit).**
- 2. Seeing ourselves as the least of all is necessary to being a servant of all.**
- 3. Seeing ourselves as without merit is necessary to finding eternal life.**