Is prosperity a dirty word for people of faith? Is the desire to prosper financially against the will of God?

So often, we hear people comment, “They are richly blessed,” when shortening the sentence is more accurate, “They are rich.” The Bible has warnings for the rich:

“Warn the rich people of this world not to be proud or to trust in wealth that is easily lost. Tell them to have faith in God, who is rich and blesses us with everything we need to enjoy life. Instruct them to do as many good deeds as they can and to help everyone. Remind the rich to be generous and share what they have. This will lay a solid foundation for the future, so that they will know what true life is like.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19

But notice, the warning isn’t, “Warn people not to be rich…,” but a warning, “…not to be proud or to trust in wealth….” God seems to be concerned about the impact financial wealth can have on our hearts. This is seen in the statement by Jesus, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:25, NIV)

We can too often take the teachings of scripture and claim people of God will be blessed with wealth, forgetting that wealth can be detrimental to the spiritual health of some people. Money isn’t the problem, Greed is. Jesus said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” (Luke 12:15, NIV)

Prosperity needs to be kept in perspective. Being wealthy in relationships is one form of prosperity while hoarding wealth can leave you empty in your heart. This first lesson will focus on keeping prosperity in the proper place and perspective.

Sermon Notes:

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” (Mk 8:34-38, NIV).

We tend to interpret __________ through a lens of __________ and __________. Culturally, this lens is used to answer questions like:

• How was your day?
• Did your meeting go well?

According to Jesus, it’s possible to __________ the __________ and __________ your __________ life simultaneously. __________ is a __________ designed to be a blessing for us and a blessing through us. As God-followers, we want to keep in mind that …

• God is our ________________ of profit (Isaiah 48:17ff)
• Creating prosperity can easily lead to ________________ without putting ________________ in ________________.
• God is ________________.
• God wants us to use our ________________ to create an environment of ________________, ________________, ________________, and ________________ for everyone in the world around us.
• Wealthy people have the ________________ of ________________ what others need but don’t have ________________ in and of themselves. (Matthew 27:57)

The Parable of the Talents from Matthew 25:14-30 can help guide our pursuit of prosperity.

Personal Reflections:

Read through the Parable of the Talents and meditate on these words (Matthew 25:14-30). Walk through these questions:

When I think about my physical and financial blessings, I would characterize my blessings from God as making me a… (choose one)

5-talent person 2-talent person 1-talent person

I’ve been most faithful with prosperity when I’ve… (complete this statement)

Honoring God with my wealth could improve by… (complete this statement)

What are three areas of life where you are prosperous…but not in a financial sense? Areas of life where you are richly blessed?

1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________