

FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

May 1, 2011

“The Folly of Seeking Riches”

Focal Passages: Psalm 49

Cross References:

Psalm 56:3-4; Romans 3:23-24; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Central Idea: This Psalm sings of the temporary nature of man’s riches and the power that only God has to redeem souls from death.

Lesson Idea: We need to not put our trust and all our efforts into amassing wealth in this life. We should build our lives instead around the Lord, because He is the only One who has power to redeem us from death and give us eternal life.

Background:

This Psalm deals with the folly of counting on one’s wealth to provide security and joy. No one gains enough wealth to prevent death, so we should examine our priorities and accept our limitations. This Psalm is very similar to Psalm 39 and both deal with the vanity of riches.

The Lord our God is the only constant in our lives, and Jesus Christ is the only One who can grant us eternal life. We need to trust in Him and build our lives around Him, because He will never fail. We have seen the recent downturn in our national economy and have witnessed global disasters that have wiped out people’s possessions in a matter of minutes. Therefore, we need to put our faith in the Rock, our Shelter, our Stronghold, our Deliverer, the One who can “redeem our souls from the power of Sheol.”

Bible in a Year Readings

April 24-May 1, 2011

Apr 24: Ps 43-45/49/84-85/87

Apr 25: 1Chron 3-5

Apr 26: Ps 73/77-78

Apr 27: 1Chron 6

Apr 28: Ps 81/88/92-93

Apr 29: 1Chron 7-10

Apr 30: Ps 102-104

May 1: 2Sam 5:1-10/1Chron 11-12

Highlights of the Week:

1 Chron 1-9: Genealogies

Ps 42: *As the deer pants for water, so my soul longeth after You.*

Ps 49: Folly of riches

Ps 77 Remember God’s greatness

Ps 78:72 *He shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands.*

Ps 92: It is good to praise the Lord

Ps 102: Lord, hear my prayer!

Ps 103: *He has removed our sins as far as the East is from the West*

Psalm 49:1-4
Listen to Wisdom
For the choir director.
A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

*1Hear this, all peoples;
Give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
2Both low and high,
Rich and poor together.
3My mouth will speak wisdom,
And the meditation of my heart will be understanding.
4I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will express my riddle on the harp.*

DISCUSSION:

- To whom is this Psalm addressed?
- Why is wisdom suitable for all people whether rich or poor?
- What does it mean to “incline my ear to a proverb?”
- Why is it important that we choose carefully what we listen to?

Psalm 49:5-13
Trusting in Wealth is Foolish

*5Why should I fear in days of adversity,
When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me,
6Even those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the abundance of their riches?
7No man can by any means redeem his brother
Or give to God a ransom for him—
8For the redemption of his soul is costly,
And he should cease trying forever—
9That he should live on eternally,
That he should not undergo decay.
10For he sees that even wise men die;
The stupid and the senseless alike perish
And leave their wealth to others.
11Their inner thought is that their houses are forever
And their dwelling places to all generations;
They have called their lands after their own names.*

*12But man in his pomp will not endure;
He is like the beasts that perish.
13This is the way of those who are foolish,
And of those after them who approve their words.
Selah.*

DISCUSSION:

- NOTE: The word “Selah” was probably some kind of musical term to designate the end of a verse, or a pause for reflection, or maybe to mark where a certain chorus or response would be sung, or a musical interlude would be played.
- Why should we not be afraid during times of adversity and danger? (see Psalm 56:3-4)
- Why would people “trust in their wealth?”
- According to v 7-9 why should people not boast in their riches? What do these verses say cannot be bought with wealth?
- Who was the only one who could “redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him?” (see Romans 3:23-24)
- Vs 8 says that “the redemption of his soul is costly.” What price did Jesus pay to redeem our souls so that we could “live on eternally?”
- According to v 10 what do all men have in common?
- How should knowing that we will all die affect the way we view the accumulation of wealth? How should it affect the way we live?
- We often refer to “inner thought” (v 11) as our subconscious mind. What evidence do you see in our society that people often have inner thoughts that seem to make them think that their possessions and houses will last forever?

Psalm 49:14-15 ***Only God Can Redeem Us from Death***

*14As sheep they are appointed for Sheol;
Death shall be their shepherd;
And the upright shall rule over them in the morning,
And their form shall be for Sheol to consume
So that they have no habitation.
15But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,
For He will receive me.
Selah.*

DISCUSSION:

- “Sheol” was virtually synonymous with “death” and “the grave.” How will “death be their shepherd?”
- Who can rescue someone from the power of Sheol?
- According to v 15, how does God rescue us?
- Instead of death, God gives Christians eternal life. Read 1 John 5:11-13. Why can we be confident that we don’t need to fear death?

Psalm 49 ***Don’t Worry When Others Get Rich and You Don’t***

*16Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;*

*17For when he dies he will carry nothing away;
His glory will not descend after him.
18Though while he lives he congratulates himself—
And though men praise you when you do well for yourself—
19He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They will never see the light.
20Man in his pomp, yet without understanding,
Is like the beasts that perish.*

DISCUSSION:

- Why should we not be intimidated or impressed when someone becomes rich?
- Why do people celebrate those who gain wealth?
- What is more important to you: the praise of men or obedience to God? Which is more enjoyable and why?
- How do people act like “beasts” sometimes according to v 20?

APPLICATION

- The Expositor’s Bible Commentary states that “the Bible is not against riches as such but the attitude of self-sufficiency and self-confidence so often associated with riches.” (p 581) What is your attitude towards your finances?
- How do you reflect your understanding of your dependence on God by the way that you give your offerings to the Lord? (see 2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
- What do you spend more time doing: working to gain wealth and possessions or seeking to grow in your relationship with Jesus?
- What can you do differently this week to reflect your understanding of this Psalm?