

Transcription of 18TM814

Psalm 49           "Valuing True Riches  
                  (You Can't Take It With You)"  
April 22, 2018

All right. Let's open our Bibles this morning to Psalm 49.

The Psalms are part of the wisdom and poetry books of the Old Testament. They run from Job through the Song of Solomon. They're poetic in the way they describe feelings and emotions and understanding of truth. They are written with a present-tense view, so all of the Psalms are meant to be applied today. They make the presumption you're interested in your walk with God, and this will help you. And so even this morning, this Psalm is intended to give you a mind-set that will allow you to walk with God through the day and every day. It's a collection of worship songs and prayers of need and cries for help and declarations of truth, verses on thanksgiving and faith and discouragement and despair and hope. I think when you read the Psalms you almost feel like you're eavesdropping on somebody else's prayer life. The good news, you find out that people are all the same generation to generation. What you're going through, they've gone through. What you've had to face, they've had to face, and you get lots of help and standing by faith and addressing doubt or fear and all.

Notice the superscription of this Psalm tells us that it was sent to the chief musician and written by the sons of Korah. We mentioned, I think, last week there are a section of Psalms to the sons of Korah, Psalm 42 through 49. I think there are four other ones in the Psalm, in the 80s of the Psalms.

Korah was a Levite. He was a cousin of Moses, I think we told you maybe last week or week before. He didn't like the fact that Moses was so in charge. Organized a bunch of leaders of various tribes, as well as families, and then got 250 supporters together as well. And Moses just went to the Lord and says, hey, they're mad at me, and the Lord said, I'll take care of that. You can read the story, I think it's in Numbers 16. But the Lord opened the ground up and swallowed up Korah and his family and their household, and then some fire came out from the Lord and kind of burned to a crisp 250 guys who were standing in

defiance, and that pretty much ended the revolt. But their kids, the descendants of Korah, turned out far better, and by the time that you get to the times of David, they were the chief worship leaders at the temple -- or in the tabernacle, but headed for the temple, I should say. And so you find a lot of these Psalms, either they write the lyrics or they write the music to the lyrics that were delivered to them.

This morning this Psalm is about trusting in wealth, or having the mind-set of what really is valuable, what are true riches, and what do you see as important and not so important.

Jesus told a parable in Luke chapter 12 of a fellow who had a good year in his business. He said, "The ground has yielded much, and I don't know where to put my crops." And then he said, "I know what I'll do. I'll tear down the barns I have and I'll build some bigger barns, and then I'll be able to say to my soul, 'Just take ease and rest. You've got many years laid up. You can drink and be merry. It's going to go good for you in your retirement years.'" And the Lord said to this man, "You're a fool. Tonight your soul will be required of you, and then to whom will it belong, all of those things that you have provided?" But that's just the way it is for those who would lay up treasure for themselves and not be rich towards God. This Psalm is really the Old Testament amen to that parable that Jesus taught.

The opening four verses of this Psalm sounds a lot like the Proverbs. In fact, if you are used to reading Proverbs, this is kind of how most Proverbs, early on in that book at least, begin. And there is this call to listen and to hear what has to be said. We're going to give you a couple things to mark down that I think will, as we want in our present tense to have the right mind-set, that the Lord gives us here in this Psalm to have a good outlook in terms of gain.

There's a problem in Western Christianity in the sense that in the West, because we're so affluent, that most Christians think in terms of what they can see or what they can hold. They emphasize what is seen. It's a materialistic view of your life, even your spiritual life. If you go just about anywhere else in the world, it is oftentimes the spiritual realities that thrill the hearts. Years ago when we went on our first trip to the Philippines, at the time when Marcos was just being overthrown, we were on an island that was basically filled with very poor folks, but we've never seen a more rich people. They were rich in the Lord. They were satisfied with what little they had.

They didn't want for more, not the believers. They were at rest. On the other hand, the largest church on the island was a name-it-and-claim-it church. Everyone that didn't know the Lord wanted to gain what everyone else was having and hope that they would have it themselves. Trusting in riches is a persistent universal problem, and it is that to which these verses from the Lord address. It's that which the Lord would want you to put on and look through as you look at the world around you.

So here's the call, verse 1, "Hear this, all people; give ear, all of the inhabitants of the world, whether you are low or high, rich or poor together. My mouth will speak wisdom, the meditation of my heart will give you understanding. I'll incline my ear to a proverb; and disclose my dark sayings upon the heart." So the invitation is to everyone, because it's an everyone problem. Doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, powerful or not so powerful. Spiritual privilege, social position makes no difference. The danger of loving and depending upon riches crosses every line. It is to all people. It's a war that everyone fights. And gaining wealth is the driving master force in the world. Even in places where there is precious little of it, you will find it to be the motivating factor. If you could take gain out of the equation, most crime would disappear, because invariably most all of it is driven by gain.

So the Psalmist begins by saying, listen up. I'm going to give you some things that will make you wise. I will bring things to your understanding that'll allow you to see beyond the obvious to the dark things, and I'll tell you a proverb. I'll illustrate a parable which will help you to see the greater truth, if you will. And then he said this should be played on a harp, which isn't a rock and roll instrument. So I suspect that this song was kind of slow and not so fast, and you probably couldn't dance to it. But it is designed to drive it home to the heart. So there's the call.

Point one, it is foolish to trust in riches because they can't save you. Verse 5, "Why should I hear in the days of evil, when the iniquity at my heels surrounds me? Those who trust in their riches, those who boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him -- for the redemption of the soul is costly. It shall cease forever -- that he should continue to live eternally and not to see the pit." So the Psalmist compares the evil man, the wicked man, the one who has confidence in what he has, with a person who doesn't have it, and is often persecuted by those

who do. I love verse 5, because it seems to be a declaration only a believer can make. Why should I worry or why should I be upset or why should I become afraid when the iniquity that is biting at my heels, surrounded me. Or, the sin of those who, verse 6, trust in their wealth, boast in their riches, when they begin to be the oppressor of someone who doesn't have it? His insights and why he's so confident you'll find at the end of the Psalm, in verses 16 through 20. It's kind of the application verses. But the point that he is making is this: That the rich man oftentimes gets wealthy on the back of the poor. They use people. They bite at their heels. It is sin. While they boast in themselves of how successful they are, people around them suffer.

The world is filled with con men. That's true. Whatever happened, by the way, to the "no calls" list? I'm getting lots of calls from the I.R.S., and apparently the cops are coming to my house. Now, they haven't got there yet. Pretty slippery. But they're coming. And literally we get these calls constantly, I don't know what happened. It used to be you just get off the list. Now I don't know. There are lottery scams. In fact, we're teaching in a couple of weeks to our seniors group, which oftentimes becomes victims, a whole class just on what to avoid and how to take care of themselves in regard to the hustle, because there is so much hustle.

But notice in verse 6 that it is the person who trusts and boasts in his wealth and in the multitude of his riches that oppress or make fearful or can make fearful the one who would walk with God. Jesus called that the deceitfulness of riches that can choke the word of God out of someone's life.

The Psalmist here declares that that person, though he is influential in the world around him, can even make others suffer, is really powerless when it comes to eternal life. His money can buy a castle, but he can't buy a mansion in heaven. And he can buy pleasure, but he'll never be able to buy peace. He can purchase a service, but he can't find salvation. He might even be able to buy men, but he can't buy God. So here's a wealth that devours any man's hope when his confidence kind of just extends to the decimal point.

I know I shared with you before about the French atheist discouraged to Christianity in the enlightened philosophical days of the 18th century, the guy named Voltaire, who spent his life going after Christians. I mean, he really was a powerful, wealthy, well-regarded man in the culture, who wrote a play

called "Candide," which is -- it's just vile and filthy in terms of, your faith and mine. And he reveled in his hatred for God's people until he was dying, when he offered the doctor all of his wealth for six more months of life, and the doctor says, "I can do a lot for you, but I can't do that." And he found himself broke in terms of cost. Here in this same vein, one step past, I guess, Voltaire's pathetic cry for help, we are told that the cost of redemption is far beyond our ability to pay; that we cannot pay what salvation costs. None of us can by any means redeem his brother. Give to God a ransom for a man's soul. The redemption of the soul is costly.

When Peter wrote his first epistle, he said in chapter 1, I think verse 17 or 18, "You should know that you are not redeemed with corruptible things like with silver or gold from your aimless conduct, from the traditions of your fathers. You're redeemed by the precious blood of Christ." And then he ended by saying, "It is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment." So there's only one hope that you and I have, and it's not money or power. It's the blood that Jesus shed to save us. That's the only thing that we have to hang on to. A rich man might bribe a judge, but he can't bribe God. He might be able to buy the best medical care that money can buy, but he's going to die anyway, and then he has no resources left to keep himself out of hell. Because to redeem or to buy a soul is a steep price and only Jesus paid that price. No amount of wealth will bring that to pass.

Now, if you look at verse 8, and it's -- it reads a little difficult, but I'll try to help you with it. It says, "For the redemption of these souls is costly," comma, "and it shall cease forever." And I know that seems a little bit difficult. It is literally translated; the eternal weight of the sacrifice God makes will continue to be effective for all of eternity. So it literally says -- it shall cease forever means it will last forever, if you will, or His death will save you once and for all. The payment or the force of His sacrifice, the eternal weight of that wealth, will keep you forever. You'll never have to worry again. His blood will call you forever. That's the idea there; right? So it's foolish to trust in riches, which can't deliver you from death and cannot purchase life, when you can find life in Jesus and the price He pays is enough to keep you forever. In fact, his description in verse 15 is, "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave and He will receive me." So why don't I trust in riches? Because they can't save me. They can do nothing for me beyond this life. And so I shouldn't fear when I suffer at the hands of those who are more

powerful or wealthier or have the ability to make my life difficult, because in the end, the salvation that I require comes only from God.

Second of all, to add to the first point, you are unable to escape dying, or the inescapability, if you will, of death. Verse 10, "For he sees wise men die; and likewise the fool and the senseless person perishes, they leave their wealth to others. Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever, that their dwelling places will last to all generation; and so they call their lands even after their own name." There's a second issue and there's a further blindness. One is to trust in the wealth that you possess. The other is, when you do that, you lose sight of the fact that this life is short. Even though you experience the truth, you don't grab hold of it. So we read, he watches people die. The rich die, the poor die, the powerful die; yet somehow they don't take it to heart that it applies to them. Their power and their wealth has given them a place where they feel like they are above the law, if you will. So they have confidence. He forgets how temporal things are. He believes he's wiser and he's better, and he's more powerful because he owns much, but in reality it owns him. It blinds him. It keeps him from seeing that salvation is beyond his grasp, and that a time is coming soon enough where this life will be over. In fact, notice according to verse 11, they believe in their own greatness so devoutly that they console themselves that after they die, their dynasty will continue forever. So they name buildings and lands and projects after themselves. My influence will last. Well, verse 12 just says nope, it won't. Want to believe God or you want to believe the lie? "Therefore man shall, in his honor, die and nothing shall remain. He's like the beasts that perish." It's an interesting picture, isn't it? He's like the beast that perishes. To live without understanding spiritual truth is to die like a dog.

Do you have a dog? I have a dog. I used to hear the thing about living a dog's life. My dog is spoiled. In fact, he runs the stinking house. He barks in the morning and guess who gets up to let him out? We do. He wants to eat, he whines. He sleeps on the couch where I should sit. He rolls over and tells you to scratch his belly. Thank you very much. I'll be back later for more of that. He really doesn't care. But he also doesn't plan. He's not worried about tomorrow. He is not thinking about a retirement plan. He doesn't, like, bury dog bones for, you know, the later years. He just lives his life. And runs ours. We've got to where we buy these, like, cattle hooves with peanut butter in them. They're expensive. I don't

know what we're doing. And then the dog, he lays, like, in a coma for, like, six hours, licking that thing out, glazed-over eyes. But he doesn't care about tomorrow. In fact, if we left, he'd just die. That's how much he plans. And the Lord compares man to that. He's like a beast that perishes. Oh, he lives his life as if there is nothing else to look forward to. He goes from meal to meal and from nap to scratching for fleas. Day-to-day, without a view towards tomorrow.

And though they are held in esteem by men, notice verse 12, though people honor them, they have no influence with God. I'm always -- I guess maybe because we live near Hollywood, you know, we are exposed to the stupidity of these rich actors who tell us that their political opinions matter, as if we should care at all what they think. Or somehow they have money, so they must know stuff. They pretend to be something they're not. That's their claim to fame. They're pretending to know stuff, and they don't. So maybe it's because we live here that you find men honoring these folks and wanting to be like them, but God isn't moved by the opinions and the value of men. In fact, God says of the rich, who just trust in their wealth and in their power, they're going to perish like a dog, like an animal. They don't have any ability to look forward. In fact, if you look at verse 12, it says, "Nevertheless man, that is held in honor does not remain." And the literal words in Hebrew for "does not remain" is literally "won't pass through the night." The imagery is, life is so short here that it's like someone traveling and he stops for the night and he goes to bed, but he never sees the morning. Life here doesn't get you through the night. On the other hand, verse 14 will say, "The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning." God will see you through to eternity.

So trusting in riches is foolish because it cannot save you. Secondly, everyone dies. So here's the contrast, verse 13, "This is the way of those who are foolish, and also of the posterity who approve of their sayings. They are like sheep laid in the grave; death will feed upon them; the upright, however, shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling, but God" --

I put in a note in my folder -- we'll see if I remember -- I want to do a service next Easter with that as the theme, "but God." I was amazed looking it up how often the Bible says something and then says "but God." And if the Lord allows me to do that, I think that will be my plan for next Easter; if He

should tarry, that we could talk about what God has promised.

So here's the world, here's the rich, here's the powerful, rotting in the grave, not able making it to the morning, their beauty being consumed in their death. Far away from their fancy houses. "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave and He shall receive me." Unlike the rich, even in verse -- let's see, 13, there are those who just admire the rich, their posterity, who approve their sayings. These aren't the rich; these are folks who quote the rich. I remember years ago my dad used to quote John Rockefeller. You know, he was a rich guy. But his famous saying was, "There are two kinds of people: Those who work for money, and those who make money work for them." And I went oh, that is very witty, but it won't get you to heaven. It really doesn't help you get from here to there at all. It's clever, but it's no value for the next life, and yet people were walking around, quoting Rockefeller. That's what I'm trying to do, make money work for me. Great. Good for you. And then what? Jesus said of the children in this world, that they were shrewder in this generation than the people -- than the children of light. His -- in the context, He meant that the world knows how to use the world to get ahead in the world and gain what the world has to offer, so the children of light should use what God has given them to get and to accomplish His will. This was the point. But He said they're smart in the world. They know how to go, but look at the end of the foolish. For a while they have power and security and health and good life and 20 million Instagram followers. I was reading one of the actress ladies saying that she got paid \$70,000 for every little ad she puts on her Instagram because of the number of people that could be reached. I thought, well, that's pretty bright, but it won't get you to heaven. It'll just get you 70 grand. But the end of this person trusting in wealth is death, not only physically but spiritually, and so is everyone who aspires to be like them.

And then I love the little "selah" at the end of verse 13. This is the way of the foolish and those who approve their sayings, "selah." They're like sheep laid in the grave. Sheep in the sense of just being foolish and not very bright and just following along, and just getting in line and, like lemmings, just jumping off the cliff.

In contrast, verse 14, which is kind of the swing verse, right? The swing verse. From the sheep who are beasts that perish, there are the upright, who unlike those who follow the rich and their confidence will have dominion over the philosophy and the

ways of the rich and their trust in it, so that you'll see the morning. Notice verse 14, you'll see the morning. You'll have dominion over them in the morning. When the sun comes, then it will be clear. So the worldly confident man, the rich guy, if that's your ambition, his shepherd is not Jesus. His shepherd is death. And death comes to just lay him in the grave, and he doesn't quite get through to the morning. Oh, he has everything in this life, but he has nothing in the new life. And in verse 15, and you read that word "selah" again, what do you think about that? I'll tell you what: In the day that Jesus comes to judge, if you're on the Forbes 500 list, it won't do you much good. If you're in church worshipping Jesus, you'll be fine.

And so the rich are dethroned in their death, and those who used to, verse 5, oppress the poor now find themselves oppressing no one anymore. The table will be turned. You can see that rich guy in his designer clothes with no welcome in heaven, and lying in a grave reduced to a box, ashes of a memory soon forgotten. That's not a good way to live, and yet it is the lure, and we live right in the midst of it. Their beauty consumed in the grave, far from their wealth and their possessions, but God. Wouldn't you rather just have God remember you?

So here's his appeal. Verse 16, "Do not be afraid when one would become rich, or when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lives he blesses himself (and men will praise you when you do well for yourself), he shall go to the generations of his fathers; and never see the light. For a man who is in honor, without understanding, is still like a dog, a beast that perishes." First the comfort to the believer in verse 16 and 17, you've got nothing to fear from the pride and injustice and oppression of the wealthy man in this life. Doesn't matter how powerful he is, doesn't matter how much he pushes himself around. It's a temporary power. In the end, death kind of evens the playing field, and it will rob this man of his fortune, the kind that made him proud and forgetful of God. He's just in the wrong world, isn't he? His hope is in the wrong place.

So don't be upset with the wicked. He can't take it with him. The old line, you don't see a U-Haul behind a hearse. You can't drag it around with you; right? Gosh, you are so -- some of you. You're not going to carry anything away; that's what it says right here. Which is interesting, because if you've ever gone to see an exhibit I don't know if you've ever seen the Tutankhamun thing that was out at the museum here in L.A. You

know, Tutankhamun, I think the boy was 18 when he came to the throne. He ruled for only 10 years. But when they buried him, they put so much stuff in his grave, such wealth, that when they finally uncovered it, the curator in Egypt, one guy, took 11 years to catalog everything. 11 years. There are two of these, three of those, five of them. And the poor kid, he's gone, and now everyone else is messing with it. You can't take it with you. You got to leave it here.

So if your whole life is driven by gain and you forsake church and your Bible and serving and making yourself available, you're ripping yourself off. You've bought into the lie. And unfortunately you live in the West, which means that you've got a lot more temptation than most. The truth still applies. Don't let it rip you off, man. There's eternal things and then there's the temporal things. And they should always stay in that order, the eternal first. The eternal first.

So verse 18, the rich man will bless himself and others will gladly bless him, because there's a lot of people that bless rich people hoping they'll get some of it. But no one's got an eye towards the future, unless just like my dog at home with that hoof and that peanut butter, glazed-over eyes looking at the world. I've got everything I need.

I was reading the other day, I won't tell you who it is, a movie star who is moving out of their mansion in Miami and selling it \$48 million so that they could buy a place for \$97 million. And I thought, what in the world do you put in there? You can have a bunch of dogs, so you could see how you're living.

Honor in this life, but soon the glory fades. So I would suggest this to you: Don't hang on to treasure here too much. I think it's Psalm 62, I think, verse 10, "If riches increase, don't set your heart upon them." You're rich today if you know Jesus. And God will always provide your needs. He may not provide your wants, but sometimes that's good. You know, there's that Proverb 30 that says, Lord, don't make me so wealthy that I forget about you, or so poor that I think about stealing from others." And I think that's usually where you're at; you're just there in the middle somewhere. It's a good place to be. So instead of laying your hand on the treasures around you, lay your hand upon the hand of Jesus, and then verse 15 can be yours. Worthless wealth is what you trust in that cannot give you eternal life. It's kind of like a millstone around your neck. It's just dragging you straight down to hell.

So God help us. In the morning you want to be standing; right? You want to be received. He's going to receive me. If you believe that, know that, you're a rich man, you're a rich woman. That's a rich life. Don't be fooled into the rest of the stuff. Don't listen to Hollywood. They're lying to you. God is telling you the truth. If you don't believe it, come look at my dog.