

Kingdom Perspectives in Proverbs: Wealth

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[0 : 0 0] We continue our summer study of Proverbs today. Please follow along in your bulletin as we share these verses. In Proverbs 10.4, we find this.

Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth. In Proverbs 6.9.11, How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man. And in Proverbs 12.11, it is written, Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense.

This is the reading of God's Word. Good morning, Watermark.

You all hear me? Okay. As you may have noticed, we have a couple of friends with us this morning. So if you have not met anyone from the English Language Institute, then make sure you'll meet someone afterwards for coffee or just hear their stories.

[1 : 1 5] We're hosting this program the second time with Watermark. And the students will be teaching in local middle schools. And it's just really exciting to have you guys here and just see the energy of people coming all across the world and serving here in Hong Kong.

So a big thank you for you guys raising support and following God's calling. And just hope that you guys will also see what God is doing and the glimpse of Asia.

And hopefully many will return to serve full-time and long-term. So you can give him a hand and just thank him for coming and serving with us. Here at Watermark, we just started a new sermon series.

We're on a journey on the book of Proverbs and exploring a little bit more on that book. And our message last week, I mentioned that most of our teaching, we want actually to happen in community groups.

So I want to emphasize that again, that don't just come on Sundays, but really try to get involved in community and join a community group to really go deeper in what we are doing here.

[2 : 2 6] But I also learned something last week, that most of the community groups are on summer break. So there are two things that I want to highlight again. So first of all, even though the community groups are on a summer break, we still encourage you guys to get plugged in.

So contact us or talk to us afterwards in the foyer if you are not a part of a community group yet. And then maybe you have a chance to meet a community group leader over dinner and just get to know someone before the groups kick off again.

The second thing is, there's a study guide outside in the foyer, a study guide to the sermon series. So if you want, just pick one up. And you may be able to just read through it on your own or just think a little bit about the verses of today on there, but also some questions to think about.

And so maybe you actually want to sit down with your family and discuss some things as a family together as well or just meet a friend over lunch or coffee. So let me give you a quick recap of last week because a lot of people haven't been here last week.

So we're talking about Proverbs. And one of the things we talked about is the wisdom that is found in Proverbs. Proverbs. But we did qualify that the wisdom found in Proverbs is not a formula, not like a one-to-one thing to apply to life, but we do need to understand the context, the people that we want to apply these Proverbs to, the circumstances.

[3 : 50] And then also we looked into the danger of applying Proverbs, that when we take a proverb out of context, that it may just throw us off. And instead of actually consulting God through his scripture, we are starting to just apply human wisdom to life situations however we want.

And so the third thing that we establish is in order to avoid that danger, we need to have a kingdom perspective. We need to have a good picture of what the kingdom of God is like and what Christ is like in order to really interpret the scripture correctly.

Let me look a little bit more into what it means to have a kingdom perspective. Like what do I mean by that term? The Christian message is basically the message of God's reign, of God's story unfolding of God's kingdom.

All of history is that story that unfolds. In the beginning, God created a complete kingdom. Everything in that kingdom was good. The relationships were right.

The relationships among people were right. The relationships with God were right. But if you look around what is happening in this world right now, it's pretty obvious that that's not the case anymore. A lot of things in this world are broken.

[5 : 02] And we see relationships broken. But we also see that our culture and our societies are dysfunctional. We see that our physical bodies and our emotions are damaged. So we see that this complete kingdom that was good, something has happened that is broken.

But the brokenness that we're experiencing right now is not the end of the story as well. As we continue to look at the story of history that God has taken us on, God didn't leave it there.

But 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ stepped into the world. God became man, stepped into human history to redeem a broken world. So as Jesus steps in, he gives us a glimpse, a picture of that kingdom that one day will be restored, a future perspective that we can hold on to to actually see where God is guiding us.

So here we see the starting point of interpreting Proverbs from that kingdom perspective, that kingdom that is restored, that is not broken anymore. And the clearest part of that vision is Jesus' death and resurrection.

On the cross, we see the forgiveness and the grace of Christ, of God, about our shortcomings. And in his resurrection, we see hope.

[6 : 16] We see hope about the kingdom that one day will be restored. So the story of his kingdom is about that whole journey of the kingdom that once was and is now broken, and it will be restored and be made whole.

And in Christ's death and resurrection, we see that story unfolding. So in our sermon series, we are on a journey to see, so what do the Proverbs tell us about that story? How do the Proverbs point us in a vision of that kingdom that is to come to interpret the Proverbs correctly?

And today, we are picking a specific topic that the Proverbs talk a lot about, and that is the topic of wealth. Now, what does the Proverbs teach us on wealth?

Like, we are in a city that deals with wealth a lot. So, I am thinking about coming to Hong Kong for the first time and stepping off the plane.

Many of you have done that about a week and a half ago, or probably just like Saturday or Sunday when you arrived. You get off the plane, and especially when it is night, it is pretty stunning to get off the plane, and you see the skyline for the first time.

[7 : 32] Or you see the energy of the city. You guys have been out in Lantau, if you are here with the ELIC, but when you step into the city, there is this energy about Hong Kong that just really captures you, and you see the diversity of Hong Kong.

Two weeks ago, my wife and I, we came back from a vacation in Germany, and when we stepped back off the plane, and we drove down by taxi, we saw the skyline, that excitement came back.

The excitement that I had seven years ago when I first stepped off the plane, when I first moved to Hong Kong. Not that Europe isn't great, but there is something about Hong Kong that captivates me. The city is buzzing around the clock.

A few days ago, I actually went down to the waterfront, and I was just sitting there, and I was thinking and praying about the sermon, and just what's happening in life, and I was seeing the offices lit, and it was 11 p.m. at night, like all across, there were offices, and people were working there, and I was starting to wonder about the lives of the people that are in these offices at that moment.

A lot of people here are working really long hours, especially after coming back from Germany. That really struck me. I mean, Germans are known for being hard workers, but to be honest, we like to relax at least as much.

[8 : 54] We actually have a term in German, which is called Gemütlichkeit. You know, like all German words are very, very long. Gemütlichkeit basically means to do nothing. It actually, it's kind of like being in a state of relaxation.

We sit in the sun when we have a day of Gemütlichkeit, and we may be doing a little bit of barbecuing, and a little bit of cake eating, and a little bit of talking, but mostly we do nothing.

We have two friends of ours here from the church that just moved to Germany two months ago, Angelo and Phoenix, and if you have been in Watermark for a while, you probably have seen him around serving a lot.

So they moved back, and Phoenix is from Hong Kong, but Angelo is from Germany. And we met up with them while we were back in Germany. It was very interesting, like when I saw them again, and I was thinking, how is Phoenix adjusting to German Gemütlichkeit?

Like tell a Hong Kong person to do nothing for a whole day and just sit in the sun. I think the person goes crazy. So I just wondered how Phoenix was doing with all that. Germany must be a culture shock for a Hong Kong person and seeing the pace of life in this city.

[10 : 05] The Proverbs that we read, they praise hard work, and they criticize laziness. As a German, I may have to look at that and then try to justify, oh, you know, it's just, you know, we want to rest so that we can work more efficiently afterwards, but the reality is, I couldn't say that with clear conscience.

The Proverbs, so as you look at them, you see that they talk about how hard work leads to wealth, that wealth is a positive attribute, wealth is good, and poverty will strike the lazy.

And that we should not just dream all day, but actually get things done and do work. So just listen to that first proverb in your bulletin, lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.

With that said, let me tell you that I'm concerned when I think about what this proverb does in our context, when we take it as a formula and apply it to Hong Kong life.

Looking at the current situation in Europe and some European countries, I think maybe we have to quote them to some of our countries over there, but we are in Hong Kong and we want to look at what the proverb means for us here in the context that we live in.

- [11 : 25] When I watch people live their lives, I can see the extremes unfolding. I can see that it may not be laziness that we struggle here with, but the value we put in work and wealth.
- The values that are meant to be good, but actually they turn somehow into something negative. When I see people working long hours and how it starts to affect their families, how everything begins to revolve around gathering material possession.
- Over the last six, seven years that I've been working with college students, just had a reoccurring conversation. Many talked about the pressure and the competition they are facing and how they deal with that pressure.
- I've seen others that were broken, students and high school kids that are broken in just that feeling of loneliness and a lack of self-esteem, thinking that the only value they get if they perform right and if they do everything right, that society and maybe sometimes even their families expect from them.
- So I see that and that constant fear of falling short of expectations and having to perform. I have had conversations about suicide, that it's actually even better to not even be here and be gone than living up to the expectation that it's less of a shame if they be gone than failing in that.
- [12 : 50] I mean, this is not just an extreme scenario. This is a constant conversation I have on the campus. So when I read the Proverbs and I hear about hard work, I see the positive value in it and how in the scripture we see that value praised.
- But immediately I see that tension, the danger that we apply this proverb as a formula. Seeing the context in Hong Kong, I think we could justify anything. Our society, everyone else works hard.
- And even the Bible tells you that you need to work hard and gain wealth. So what is God saying about how we should apply that proverb? We want to go on the journey today, but before we do that, we just want to be able to rest and breathe and gain that kingdom perspective again.
- We want to take a few minutes to just continue worship and for you to allow to see where are you with that. What are the stories in your life? What are the stories in the lives of your families?
- Do you live a healthy rhythm? What extreme do you fall on in that proverb? In Proverbs 3, 9 to 10, we find this.
- [14 : 06] Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops. Then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with the new wine.
- In Proverbs 11, 28, those who trust in riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf. Proverbs 15, 16, better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil.
- Proverbs 15, 17, better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred. In Proverbs 16, 19, it is written, better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.
- And in Proverbs 19, 22, it says, What a person desires is unfailing love. Better to be poor than a liar.
- This is the reading of God's word. Last week, we talked about a metaphor for the kingdom of God. It is like a rug and you see the pictures up here.
- [15 : 19] It's like a rug. On one side, you see the back side and it's broken and the colors are not very clear and you see the knots and the threads dangling down. Maybe the rug is not completed and you don't even know what the picture will one day be.

And so we look at the world and from our perspective and we can't see the kingdom. And for us, the suffering around us doesn't make sense and different things that happen around us, they don't make sense in light of where we are right now and what we are able to see of the kingdom.

But for God, here's the other perspective. God sees the beauty of his redeemed creation. He sees the beautiful picture of how he made everything and how he intended things to be and what he is moving things towards.

So we need a glimpse of the kingdom, of that picture, of the perspective that God has in order to make sense of this broken world all around us. And when it comes to wealth, this is one of the big topics in the city.

And we can so easily lose perspective. we can so easily lose God's perspective on that issue. And Jesus consistently talks about material possession more than pretty much anything else because he knows that it's something we struggle with.

[16 : 34] It so easily can turn into our idol, into our God, and we can so easily lose that perspective. The world instills us, in us, that value of how important wealth is and how it's important to gather stuff.

Even religion is so often used in that same way. Like in the city you may have temples and fortune tellers and so at the beginning of the year people may go there and make sure that maybe I'll pay a few dollars and make sure that I know what I need to do so that my business will be successful, that I will be prosperous this year.

But it's even a danger to look at the church in that way. There's something we call the prosperity gospel that the message is that God just wants us to be wealthy and healthy.

And we see that scripture in 3, 9 to 10 that so easily can be looked at that. Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops and then we may only focus on that your barns will be filled with overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine.

It's like this magic formula. If I'm just, you know, honoring with like a little bit of my money then I'll be a millionaire in a heartbeat. It's like the slot machine. I put one coin in and I just need to know the formula and then all the coins will come down and we look at a proverb and we want to interpret it in that way because that's kind of like what the world tells us how we should look at the world.

[17 : 58] So we want to go on that journey on like looking at a few proverbs that give us a bit more whole, a more wider perspective on wealth. So we have established wealth is good, hard work is good, but there are certain values, certain perspectives of the kingdom that stand in relationship.

It's not a separate attribute that we can take wealth and separate from everything else. So we will be going through five proverbs that will show us about that a little bit.

I want to give you one example that grows out of our team experience here with our Watermax staff. There's a good friend of ours, Lincoln Liu, that does personality assessment exams with us.

And so he did that with the whole staff and one thing we found out of like 20 people, there are like 16, 70 people that are blue. Now what does blue mean? So what it means to be blue is that we are visionaries and dreamers and future oriented people.

Now that in itself is not surprising. We are a church plant. So a new church that only has been here for a year and a half. So we've attracted people that didn't just want to keep the status quo but we wanted to venture out and do something new and change the community around us.

[19 : 08] And so a lot of visionaries got together and said, yeah, we want to dream something new. Now the value of dreaming something new and being future oriented, I think it's a great value. But what if we would not have Millen and Sylvie?

They are not like so highly blue. They are more the doers. They are the ones that will say, hey, you know, it's great that you're dreaming but we need to get something done.

We can talk about planting a church for years but we need to figure out how to do tech and how to set it up and how to invite people and what we do once they get there and what discipleship program do we do and all these questions that the dreamers never get to.

So what you see, the value of dreaming is good but if it doesn't allow for anything else, suddenly you take away from the richness of the value. So here we see that wealth in itself is described as something good but what can happen for wealth to be taken out of perspective and losing what it was meant to be, a blessing.

So the first proverb that I want to go into from the bulletin is Proverbs 15:17. Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred.

[20 : 19] A few weeks ago I met for a discipleship meeting with one of the mainland students that I met about three years ago. He became a Christian here while studying in Hong Kong and after his graduation his dad helped him to get a job in the finance sector.

Now that he has been in that sector working for a while he starts to realize I am not really the kind of person that should necessarily do this kind of job and it's not really what I expected to do and so he shared that with his father and his father got furious.

He basically threatened him if you quit this job you never call me again you don't even my son anymore. Now to see the dimensions of what was happening there the father used his relationships to get him into that job but he also made very clear that I'm investing in you I've invested in your education I'm investing into you having this job and I'm expecting a return of my investment and if you're trying to step out of this then I don't want to talk to you anymore you're losing your value to me.

What I see there is that the proverb highlights that we have been reading that in kingdom in the God's kingdom the value of relationship matters a lot and it is valued more than just having wealth.

Rather live a little but in loving relationships that's pretty much what the proverb says. I've seen that many times in how relationships are endangered and break apart because of money issues.

[21 : 48] Just think about inheritance. How many people here today have either in their own family or in the friendship circle seen relationships being challenged or breaking apart people never talking to you because of an inheritance.

It's money people didn't even work for but the jealousy creeps in that you want to have that and the money will destroy relationships. So are relationships in our lives in danger because of money issues?

has there ever been a relationship that has fallen out of your life because of money involved and wealth? So we see the value of relationships standing in that tension with the value of wealth.

Now let's look at the second proverb that challenges that absolute value of wealth. It's 16:19. There it says, better to be lowly and spared along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.

It's not a secret that money is a huge status symbol in the city. Author Henry Nouwen writes that the world tells us that our identity is found in what we do and what we have and what people think about us.

[23 : 08] So your identity is found in the things you do the things you have and what people say about you. Now, we can transfer that to Hong Kong and it's pretty obvious that we find value in where we live and which part of town we live in what kind of flat we have.

The titles on our name card and the clothes we're wearing or the club we go to. And we may say it doesn't really matter to me. Like it doesn't really add so much value but I think we are walking sometimes on a very fine line that pride, the idol of pride can creep in and take over our lives and we don't even notice it.

As a church, we are located next to the Bel Airs. It's a place of prestige. Just the setup of our congregation. Being an international church, it's already obvious that we are a part of the higher classes of society and many of us have a pretty impressive name card probably.

so we look at that and we see we are challenged with that wealth that we may have. Does it challenge us in our kingdom attitude?

And I think that it's such a danger to just become prideful in that. I have a couple of questions that we could ask ourselves and see like does it apply to me?

[24 : 27] And one would be think of the story of the rich young ruler. And he is asked to leave everything behind so if someone would come to you and get rid of all your wealth tomorrow, do you feel that your identity would get lost in that?

Or have you had nothing on your name card and every time you would pass your name card you would just have your name and like a nun like in title or something like that? Would you be embarrassed? How would you feel about passing that name card around in your job situation?

Like would you struggle with kind of like feeling worthless and having nothing to offer? Or just think about who are the people that you spent time with last week and last month?

Was there anyone that you spent time with really getting to know a person that had nothing to offer to you? Humility grows out of that awareness that everything comes from God.

If we admit all the things we have we are the stewards. We are not the owners. We realize it is God who is the maker of everything.

[25 : 37] And I think this puts back into perspective the wealth and may challenge us in our pride. The third proverb in the list contrasts an honest character with wealth.

On a wider scope our character in general that for the kingdom character matters more than the wealth we accumulate. The proverbs reads in 1922 what a person desires is unfailing love better to be poor than to be a liar.

After working in a German private bank I entered an elite business school in Germany. I had just become a Christian and so I entered that school and there were about 300 students.

the reputation of that school was to kind of be the outstanding school to shape the future business leaders of Germany. Almost every one of my classmates came from a high class either business or company owners high politicians and thinking back at the time I have to say it was probably one of the worst environments for my character formation that I've ever been in my life.

I could tell you a lot of stories about why that's true but there's one story that kind of struck me and stuck with me over the years. One of the students was the son of one of the European national coaches for football.

[27 : 05] He spoke barely any English or German. It was pretty obvious that he would probably not pass any exams and that he was accepted to the school was kind of strange but when exams periods come his dad would come flying in he would meet with the dean of the school and his son would pass another semester.

I guess I shouldn't be surprised that's what wealth can do but when I thought about that and I was in that school and I saw these things happening around me I asked myself just having become a Christian what does it do to my character?

I just couldn't stay. I actually left the school and transferred to a school in the UK because I was concerned about my character transformation formation and so I'm looking at the story and I'm asking myself what is the kind of DNA that the people around me rub on me the environments that I step into when I look at the people that surround myself the mentors that I allow to speak into my lives the job environments the family environment what is the kind of DNA that all this rubs on you so how in all that can we make sure that somehow the kingdom DNA is rubbed on us more than anything else how is the kingdom rubbing its DNA how is Christ rubbing his DNA more on us than the world I'm not saying that you should do what the disciples did 2000 years ago basically what they did in order to secure that is they left their lives they left their families they joined

Jesus and for 24-7 for the next three years they would live and breathe and eat and learn everything he had to say now some of us may have to do something like that but in general that's I don't think the point the point is to evaluate our lives like one of the values that we have emphasized over and over again in our churches to be a part of a community group and why is that the case because we feel that two hours on Sunday morning competing with 50 hours of family lives 100 hours of work and the values that we hear there will it really be the right DNA so how can we ensure that we have that DNA of Christ alive in us most of our week hopefully in our community groups the conversation will be there that encourage ourselves to question how do we live out the life of Christ hopefully these conversations will happen in our family in the table around with our kids that we see the DNA being alive in our families but also that we need to be ready to go into our jobs and live out the kingdom values in our jobs when I think back at the time in the business school

I wonder whether today I would make a different choice almost 11 years ago when I left I don't think I was ready to have my DNA rub on that school but maybe that's the choice that I would make today seeing that we are called to step into the dark places of this world and allowing to Christ be rubbed on to the world but we need to be ready for this so maybe some questions that we need to ask ourselves is what are the parts in your life that rub the kingdom DNA on you where Christ grows in you where you decrease but Christ increases what are the aspects of your life that draw you away from the kingdom DNA how does the pursuit of wealth impact your character and the DNA that you breathe and live by the next proverb confronts the value of wealth on an even deeper level again let me say wealth itself is not the problem it's a positive attribute but the proverbs show us the danger if wealth becomes more important than other values or they are taken out of that relationship with other values so here the fourth proverb 1128 says those who trust in their riches will fall but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf so here righteousness makes us blossom and bloom but putting our trust in wealth makes us fall so what's righteousness righteousness is an attribute that implies that a person is living a life that's pleasing to

[31 : 38] God so do I live a life pleasing to God I grew up in a pretty secular society so when I think about the question did I live a life pleasing to God I would say oh we are pretty good people like I don't hurt anyone I do my job I pay my tax I don't break the law I even give to some charities I help some neighbors must be a life that's pretty pleasing to God but I think what we need to look at again is a kingdom perspective so what does the scripture say when we look at what the term righteousness really means so in Romans 4 4 to 5 this is not a new bulletin but you can just listen I'm using this one from the message paraphrase and it's really interesting so here righteousness described as the following if you are a hard worker and you do a good job then you deserve your pay we don't you call your wages a gift but if you see that the job is too big for you that it's something only God can do and you trust him to do it you could never do it for yourself no matter how hard and how long you worked well that trusting in him to do it is what gets you set right with

God by God sheer gift let me read that again so if you are a hard worker and you do a good job and you deserve your pay and that's not a gift but if you see that this job that you're doing is too big for you to do that it's only something that God can do and you have to trust him to do it you could never do it yourself no matter how hard or long you worked well that trusting in him to do it is what gets you set right with God by God sheer gift so the job for us to become righteous is too big for us to do like no matter how hard we work no matter what whatever we do we cannot get by our strengths right with God God is perfect and holy who could ever say that I have lived my day holy and perfect so we fall short of what God created us to be so this job of leading a God honoring life is too big for us we wrestle with pride we wrestle with arrogance we wrestle with our self-centeredness but

God's grace has made a way for us for our lives to be counted righteous by faith by faith in the work of the cross and what Christ has done in him coming to save us from a broken world from our own brokenness he sets us right in Jesus Christ not by our works but as a gift now we look at that and we realize wealth loses this positive attribute when it draws us away from the saving love of God when wealth gives us the feeling of I can save myself I can use I can give so much to charity that I can be counted good if by our wealth we get that feeling that we can achieve righteousness we lose sight of his truth so the question would be have you acknowledged that need that Christ and his work on the cross will set you right and you can't do it by your wealth in our final proverb we see one more element of how a positive attribute the positive attribute of wealth can quickly fade in proverbs 15 16 it says better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil sometimes when I ask or when people ask me about faith and about becoming

Christians they say you know Christianity is something for pretty weak people like they go to like struggles and problems and maybe they get ill or relationships fall apart they lose their jobs and then they need something to hold on to so then they hold on to God now when you are if you are here today and you think that you think holding on to God often happens when when people in their lives are out of control then I would say you're right it's the point when we realize that we are actually not in control of our lives that we sometimes only then get the realization that we are in need of God wealth can give you the illusion that you can control your life if you are wealthy and you can you don't have to worry about paying your bills next week and where to live in Hong Kong rent is so ridiculous but if you don't have to worry about that so much you say okay you know even if I you know lose my home like I'll rent something else because I have enough money I can buy myself a sense of security

I can eat whatever I want can go out I don't need worry about that wealth allows me to travel wherever I want I feel like even I'm in control of you in all this world and I can go wherever I want and if I get sick I can pay for the best medical treatment and suddenly we realize that all this wealth can give us the illusion that we are in control of life but what if all that falls apart what if suddenly a cancer diagnosis comes and it says there's no cure what if in all your wealth and in your hard work you see that there are no friends left or your marriage falls apart and by your strength and by your money you can save it what if the world economy falls apart and it's out of your control like Katie and I have this funny conversation about the piece of land that my family owns back in

[37:11] Germany after the second world war there they had to move and flee from where they lived and they settled in central Germany and they started a farm up there and rebuilt their lives so now that the European Union is falling apart I joke with her like what if the whole world economy like just crashes and then I tell her we'll just move to Germany and we will be potato farmers and we will live there happily on our little farm and we will tell all our neighbors about how great Jesus is and that one day there's this world coming that everything will be made new the conversation is 99% joke but I think there's a little bit of a reality check in it the reality check of saying that we don't want to take everything for granted just because we may be in a place right now where you can do what you want and you may have wealth and you have a sense of security that we don't take for granted that sense of security security it turning into a feeling that I am in control of my life ultimately what helps us is to have that perspective of that kingdom that this world is broken and will be broken but it's being restored and one day when Christ comes back we will see it in its full glory it's that fear of the Lord that this proverb talks about that I think gives us a healthy attitude towards our wealth it gives us the healthy attitude toward being in control or not so our wealth can give us that illusion that we have nothing to fear but if we lose the fear of the

Lord and his kingdom to come and his holiness then we lose everything maybe tonight on your own in your family think about it think about what would happen if the holy world economy falls apart what would you do what are the fears that grow in you how would you respond to these fears as an individual as a family how would we respond as a community to be a light of the world to the people around us how would you point in the turmoil of your life how would you point people to the kingdom and have peace about it before we go into the final part of the message and just in the conclusion we want to take a few moments just to really have some people pray over these values that we can really see and reflect like what God says and puts on our heart about this let us pray father we just lift you our relationships Lord we know you put so much value in our relationships and they're just so important to us and to you and I pray that we will just live with others in ways that honor you father and pray that our relationships will not be destroyed by money and that you will help us to keep our priorities right

Lord father I pray that you will keep us humble help us not to find our identity in the things that that we build for ourself on this earth that we wouldn't find our pride in our possessions blessings or the kingdom on earth that we've built for ourselves but that we will keep your kingdom in mind for us and that we will live our lives with an eternal mindset Lord that this life is not all that there is and pray that we would find our worth in you Lord and in the ways that you view us Lord and how you love us and and take care of us and that that would that would keep us obedient to you Lord Abba father when your beloved son came down and dwelt in our midst he chose a life of humility his wealth was not in material possessions but rather in his complete obedience to you and his love and compassion for people help us to emulate

Christ and develop a character like his in a place like Hong Kong free us from the desire for wealth fame and power especially when it's derived from greed deception or taking advantage of others let not the pursuit of wealth damage our character nor take us away from our focus on you and your saving grace father we we left our desire to be righteous to you Lord we know that we can do nothing with our own two hands to achieve our salvation so we just rely on our faith in you and pray that you will increase that faith daily just draw us close to you and let our joy be in you and you alone and not in what we do with our own hands Lord father I pray you would help us to continue to see just how holy you are Lord and and in light of your holiness that we could see ourselves and just our sinful nature

Lord and I pray that that would lead us to be to live lives of thankfulness for your grace that we don't deserve a relationship with you Lord but that you seek us out and you desire that relationship with us and I pray that we would just be mindful of everything that we have and everything that you've given to us that it that it is all from you Lord and that we would just we would know in our hearts that we can't out give you just help us to live lives of compassion for others and just knowing that that no matter what we go through whether we are given things or things are taken away from us Lord that that's what's most important is you and living for your glory and just living out the will that you have for us in this life pray all these things in Jesus name amen and now we will have a scripture reading from Proverbs 23 4 through 5 do not wear yourself out to get rich do not trust your own cleverness cast but a glance at riches and they are gone for they will surely sprout wings and fly off into the sky like an eagle

[43 : 33] Proverbs 11 4 wealth is worthless in the day of wrath but righteousness delivers from death Proverbs 22 2 rich and poor have this in common the Lord is the maker of them all Proverbs 8 18 through 19 with me are riches and honor enduring wealth and prosperity my fruit is better than fine gold what I yield surpasses choice silver Proverbs 30 7 through 9 two things I ask of you Lord do not refuse me before I die keep falsehood and lies far from me give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say who is this Lord or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God this is the reading of God's word so as we conclude our our teaching on wealth in the

Proverbs let's just take a just a few minutes to to paint that picture of that kingdom that is to come to know that if we need the right perspective we need to have that that glimpse of the kingdom in Matthew 6 Jesus calls us to seek first his kingdom in Acts 1 after the resurrection Jesus appears to his disciples and he spends 40 days with them and it says that he took the 40 days to instruct them about the kingdom of God and then he leaves his Holy Spirit to guide us to ultimately see what the kingdom of God is like and to see him drawing us towards that kingdom a vision for the kingdom is like that compass that it can draw us away from just relying on human wisdom and it actually gives us a glimpse a part of the revelation of of Christ it's like that image of the rug that that we looked at God sees the the beautiful side of that kingdom he sees what what the vision is like for where our lives are is already moving but we are stuck in the other side and it's kind of like he's like shaking us and trying to wake us up from a life that can't see the beauty that's still to come when I think about like what what

God's thoughts are as he shakes us out of our lives it's like how can you let money destroy a relationship how can you compromise your integrity just to accumulate more stuff how can you let your character be destroyed how can you be caught up in in that lie that your wealth can give you control of anything that matters in my kingdom Proverbs 23 45 says do not weigh yourself out to get rich do not trust your own cleverness cast but a glance at riches and they are gone but for there was surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle so we establish that wealth is good hard work is good but in light of God's eternal kingdom it loses its value we may live for 80 or maybe if you're lucky or unlucky 100 years in light of eternity it's like glancing on it and it's gone God's kingdom will last for eternity and if you truly understood that I think it would change our outlook on life it would change what we do will we wear ourselves out to gain riches or are we even considering what it means to gain the riches that last for eternity when my dad died two years before his retirement I was 18 I worked through a lot of emotions about anger just missing out I regretted that he spent countless hours building houses I know that he wanted to provide for us but I felt that stuff is worthless to me now so ask yourself when you look back at your life the time that you spend the stuff you accumulate how foolish will you think your life looks what do all the things matter for eternity that you accumulate Proverbs 11 4 says wealth is worthless in the day of wrath but righteousness delivers from death all our wealth will not save us when this world comes to an end in my business studies I learned that scarcity is the fundamental economic problem the problem of having humans with unlimited wants but a world with limited resources but consider that vision of that kingdom of God where the creator of everything rules in the gospel of John it says that there was a not that there's nothing that was made without Jesus he was breathing everything into existence when we look at the kingdom that is to come and we think about being in the presence of the one who created everything the foundations of our economic thinking our economic system they just cease to exist what needs to drive us is not the stuff we accumulate but what we do with it to look to walk in righteousness and our attitude towards it what saves us from from death is our trust in

Christ the one who conquered death and who shows us that there is a kingdom to come in which time and resources are unlimited but they are eternal let me just close and and maybe maybe you want to use it as a prayer as well with proverbs 37 to 9 two things I ask of you Lord do not refuse me before I die keep falsehood and lies far from me give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread otherwise otherwise I may say I may have too much and disown you and say who is the Lord or may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God God we pray that just today is as we look at your word that you will give us the right perspective that you will help us see your your kingdom more clearly we thank you that you are God that wants to bless us richly and that you say that hard work and and wealth are good in your sight while we pray that we would not make it our God and turn it into an idol that takes away from who you are that we would not find a false sense of security and control in the things we own but that we would use it to bless people around us that we would see it as a blessing of you knowing that we are just stewards of what you own father and first of all we pray that we would realize that it's not by our hard work that we will gain the most important thing that is the righteousness in your in your sight we would see that we need to rely on you and see your sacrifice on the cross and what you have done on the cross to save us from our brokenness and we would come alive to you and look at your kingdom and let your kingdom inspire us and in everything we do and say and how we live and we pray this in Christ's name you