

Proverbs Week #157 (14:22)

Will they not go astray who devise evil? But kindness and truth will be to those who devise good. In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty. The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools is foolishness. (Proverbs 14.22–24 NAS95)

We continue this week looking at the differences of those who are rich and poor. Last week we considered our attitudes towards those who are “super rich” and those who are poorer than ourselves. This week our verses speak about three things and teach us to consider our plans, the actual work done, and the expected results.

What have we heard from the book of Proverbs on these subjects in our previous studies? Earlier we read about foolish and wise sons in regard to agricultural skills and harvest time.

Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully. (Proverbs 10.4–5 NAS95)

If we are chasing after the world’s ideas about being rich, we may find ourselves frustrated and even depressed. While things like the lottery promise happiness, money alone is not a guarantee of being happy. If we hold to God’s definition of riches, then the following proverb will always be true.

It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it. (Proverbs 10.22 NAS95)

When God first created man He placed him in a garden. He taught him to “*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*” (Genesis 1.28 NAS95) Some have made a theology out of this verse. They teach a mandate of dominion. While I don’t necessarily endorse using this verse as the center of a theological movement, I do think that God created a world where mankind was going to be responsible to exercise stewardship.

The Bible often teaches us using the themes of planting and harvest. The feasts that we celebrate each year are based upon these seasons. We see in these times the direct result of either scarcity or plenty based upon the amount of crops that might be harvested by farmers. In my life I remember the joy a plum tree that was fat with fruit gave both me and my family. I also remember with disappointment a specific season where one cherry tree produced almost no fruit.

The value placed upon an abundant harvest depends on what is being harvested and the desires or needs of people. If a person collects thousands of blades of grass via a lawnmower, numerically a harvest of great abundance might be proclaimed. That seems a bit silly doesn’t it? No one I know thinks grass trimmings have enormous value. What if the thousands of blades of grass were really hay? What if they were the result of a farmer using his tractor to reap from his farm? Now in this case the grass gathered has a higher value.

Learning the value of things starts at a young age. As we grow and mature we may learn to change the value we place upon things and relationships. Wisdom helps us to take what God has given and use it in ways that are pleasing to Him. We are encouraged to make plans, work hard at them, and to have realistic expectations of success. God has His own plans and we may not always understand why some things happen. What we do know about God’s plans is that He created a world that follows patterns and laws. He has promised, for example, that seed time and harvest will not end until this world itself ends (Gen 8:22). It seems that God intends for us to have these things present (a garden mindset) from beginning to end. How are we then to approach the creation that God has given us and what plans should we be making for a future in this world?

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (1 Timothy 6.17–19 NAS95)