

Detailed Notes: COV004

True and false sense of well-being 5.6.20

Dear brethren,

In my last sharing, I shared with you on the theme

The danger of a false sense of well-being and security

I mentioned during this period, many may have a sense of fear, worry, anxiety - no true sense of peace, security and well-being - many non-believers may feel this way

- even Christians may feel this way.

The tiny virus seems to be telling us that life is very fragile

- that men are unable to lay strong foundations and build on things that cannot be shaken and will endure
- and we are subjected to circumstances and events beyond our control that can hurt and harm us and even destroy our lives.

On the other hand, there are professing Christians who have a **false sense of peace, security and well-being** – often facilitated by what they have been taught and what they have heard and read - including exhortations they hear during this period.

They wrongly think they can have joy, peace, security and well-being - when they affirm they trust God and God's promises in the Scriptures.

We noted:

There is a false sense of peace, security and well-being that the Scriptures tells us can be harmful and damaging to our lives.

This has been a lively issue throughout the history of man

- from O.T. times to N.T. times, and has persisted till today

- the issue is even more urgent and relevant as we approach the Second Coming of Christ.

We reflected on how God addressed the issue through the prophets during O.T. times – and how the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul addressed this issue – as recorded for us in the N.T.

I will now continue to reflect together with you some related issues.

I will refer to 2 main passages, one in the New Testament, the other from the O.T. - to highlight **2 kinds of problems**

- helpful for us to reflect over during this period.

1st passage: **the poor, rich fool**

Luke 12:13–21

13 Someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.”

14 But He said to him, “Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?”

15 Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”

16 And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive.

17 “And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’

18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

19 ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’

20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’

21 “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

v.16-19 very productive land careful planning

→ sense of well-being and security

- in riches and material well-being.

Issues

(a) wrong perspective – as if life and well-being and security basically revolves around possessions, material wealth and the visible, temporal realm.

(b) self-indulgence **v.19**

(c) presumptuous: many years of ease, plenty, comfort and pleasure **v.19**

(d) greed and concentration on accumulating material wealth for himself: **v.15,18, 21.**

God’s perspective, pronouncement

(a) he is a fool (not merely foolish act) **v.20**

- his approach, attitude, perspective
- not wise from perspective of God's kingdom

(b) life does not consist of possessions **v.15**

(c) critical issue: whether rich toward God: **v.21**

(d) no true well-being and security: **v.20**

The issues in this parable are very relevant to reflect over during this period - relevant for our own lives

(the underlying principles are relevant to different ones in different ways)

and can also help us understand and discern what is going on, and how to be concerned and how to pray meaningfully for the people of the world, professing Christians and the universal church.

To whom are the issues in the parable relevant?

1. the people of the world

(a) **national level:** obvious: affluent countries

but also true of other countries generally including poor nations

- tendency to concentrate on economic development and performance
- false sense that well-being and security and the good life revolves around the availability, preservation and further generation of material wealth
- and enjoyment of the comforts and pleasures of this life
- in the visible, temporal context.

(b) **personal level:** obvious: rich people - but also true of others including the poor

- making money, pursuing career ambitions, wealth and status and the comforts and pleasures of this life
- regarding these as the basis of well-being and security.

2. professing Christians: those who think they are Christians but are not and also those who are Christians/children of God.

- all who in any way are pursuing and relying on material wealth, bank account, well-established career, for a sense of well-being and security.

Q: Do we allow these and other things in the visible, temporal realm to subtly influence our sense of well-being and security or lack of it?

- possessions, good job/career prospects, comfortable home
- general sense of comfort, ease, pleasantness in our living conditions/context.

Serious: believers allowing themselves to be lulled into a false sense of well-being and security like the people of

the world - because in the material, visible, temporal realm it seems all is well.

Note:

Believers need to be alert, careful to ensure that they are truly rich toward God: v.21

- and consciously truly regard this as the true measurement of well-being and security
- whatever the outward circumstances and appearance of things
- even if they seem to point towards a different direction
- and regarded as such by the people of the world or others around us

- critical issue.

Let us be vigilant and careful to ensure that we so order our lives - that our perspective and approach is such that the Lord will not pronounce us 'fool' - serious matter

- or regard our attitudes and ways foolish in any respect

- that we are truly concentrating on what would enable us to be rich toward God
- and not distracted, led astray by the pursuit of what would not give us true well-being and security
- from God's perspective.

It does not mean that the visible, material aspects of life like food and clothing are irrelevant or that a true disciple should not pay any attention to them

But the Lord Jesus tells us: do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat ...put on: **v.22**

For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things: **v.30**

But seek His kingdom,
and these things will be added to you: **v.31**

Matt 6:33: But seek 1st His kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.

Have we learned well this basic lesson in true discipleship?

- the whole approach and spirit with which we live our lives?

Note:

If we are not alert and careful, we may not only become distracted by the attraction and pursuit of material and temporal well-being including career, ambitions, and pleasures of this life - but become absorbed in them

- and be drawn into the world
- our spiritual life, strength and vitality will be sapped and drained away during the process.

There is a pull in that direction - because

- (a) direction and pull/influence of the world and people around us
- (b) tendency of the flesh in that direction
- (c) promoted by the evil one - the wiles and temptations of the evil one to ensnare and destroy us.

We must develop deep convictions on this matter

- and vigilant to quickly correct ourselves whenever there is any deviation.

Many unpleasant and tragic occurrences have been taking place during this pandemic – but the whole frightening and unsettling scenario can help us nurture such convictions and be settled in our hearts to concentrate on what is of eternal value – the things of God's kingdom – which endures through eternity.

Let us pay heed to the words of the Lord Jesus in relation to the state of affairs at His Coming again

Luke 17:26–30

26 “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 “It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

30 “It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

They were eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting, building → destroyed.

There is a proper place for these things

- including eating and drinking
- even enjoying our food.

The issue here is being pre-occupied with the visible, material, temporal aspects of life and not rich towards God

- the pursuit of and concentration on these things
- as if this is what life is all about
- the basis of and evidence of well-being and security

- or sheer indulgence – ‘eating and drinking’
- many in the world live like that.

Q: Are we in any way living like that?

The issues we've considered in **Luke 12:13-21** on the poor, rich fool, is related to and complement these verses in **Luke 17**

- as well as **1Thess 5:1-3** referred to in my last sharing: 'while they are saying 'peace and safety' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape

There is another kind of problem that can be very insidious and can be very hard to detect or perceive accurately for what it is.

Some may say/think:

'I am alright - all will be well with me because my pre-occupation is not with material wealth or the things of this world but with spiritual things and involvement in and pursuit of the things of God

I seek the Lord

I delight to know His ways

I keep my Quiet Time regularly

I delight in the nearness of God

I attend and participate in all the Christian meetings

I serve God in many ways

I fast and pray.

Surely it will be well with me'.

Is it so?

2nd passage: Old Testament

Isaiah 58:1-3

1 "Cry loudly, do not hold back; Raise your voice like a trumpet, And declare to My people their transgression

And to the house of Jacob their sins.

2 "Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways, As a nation that has done righteousness

And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God.

They ask Me for just decisions,

They delight in the nearness of God.

3 'Why have we fasted and You do not see?

Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?

Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire,
And drive hard all your workers.

The Israelites regarded themselves as those who sought the Lord, delighting to know His ways, performing deeds of righteousness, and keeping God's ordinances – obedient/faithful, delighting in the nearness of God fasting and praying.

Yet they did not have God's approval and God did not hearken to their prayers nor appreciate their conduct and ways.

Why?

Because they thought they were seeking the Lord, delighting in and keeping His ways - that they were spiritually healthy and righteous - but in reality it was not so

- it was only the outward appearance of things.

There were various outward activities and practices which gave rise to that false sense that their lives were alright - good

- that all was well with them
- and they wondered why God did not see: **v.3**

God looks beyond the outward activities and practices

- the outward appearance of things.

He is concerned with the reality

- what is in our hearts
- what motivates us and our actions.

In reality the Israelites were sinning and transgressing: **v.1**

There wasn't the corresponding attitude of heart that should go together with the outward conduct and practices: **v.3**

v.3: your desire - self desires – major problem.

v.13 and 14 make clear what was wrong with them
- and also point the way towards enjoyment of God's blessings

Isaiah 58:13–14

13 “If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot
From doing your own pleasure on My holy day,
And call the sabbath a delight,
the holy day of the LORD honorable,
And honor it, desisting from your own ways,
From seeking your own pleasure
And speaking your own word,

14 Then you will take delight in the LORD,
And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

v.13 elaborates on their problem:
They need to desist from their own ways,
from seeking their own pleasures
speaking their own word - self desires and self-life
- expressions of the flesh.

Then they will truly take delight in the Lord: **v.14**
→ God’s approval and blessings.

The issues raised in this passage are significant and common problem – not just amongst the Israelites but throughout the history of the church until today.

Note:

There may be various things wrong in the heart
- unacceptable to God and displeasing to Him
- even amongst many who profess faith and many who observe various outward forms of Christian practices

- including attending worship services and various other Christian meetings, conferences, seminars, seeking to serve God in various ways and doing good deeds.

What is wrong in our hearts – including impurities, wrongful desires and motivations - will taint and detract from the meaning and quality of our actions and deeds and if serious, may be altogether rejected by the Lord and displeasing to Him.

Concluding remarks

For many people, what has been raised in the 1st passage **Luke 12:13-21** is a major problem: **the sense of well-being and security linked to material wealth, career prospects, comforts and pleasures of this life.**

For others, what has been raised in the 2nd passage **Isa. 58** may be the more significant problem:

The false sense that our lives are alright – all is well

- **because we think we are seeking God and keeping His ways and serving Him in the context of various Christian activities**
- but we do not realise that there is little or no spiritual life and reality
- and our actions are tainted by the impurities in our hearts
- and our lives are displeasing to God.

There are varying degrees of seriousness.

Often both kinds of problems are present in the same person - even amongst believers

- in varying degrees of seriousness.

Many believers may have a false sense of well-being and security because they are actively involved in Christian practices and serving God and even holding positions of responsibilities and leadership

but the spirit of true discipleship and healthy relationship with God is significantly lacking.

At the same time their hearts may be distracted or drawn away by the pursuit of personal ambitions, the longing for recognition, material well-being and the pleasures and comforts of this life and living according to personal inclinations.

And where these pursuits have been attained to some degree, they can ironically further enhance their sense of well-being and security - the sense that indeed every aspect of their lives is going on well

- they may even regard these things as evidence of God's approval and blessings on their lives.

Note:

This is a **deadly kind of deception** and a very precarious state to be in.

Some actually preach and teach that material wealth and prosperity are indications of God's approval and blessings on the believer

- easy to understand how such teaching readily find eager acceptance by many and appeal to many.

Today there are whole groups and large numbers of professing Christians who actually subscribe to this teaching and this kind of thinking – there are millions of them!

End with this observation:

The Lord Jesus is not looking for large numbers of professing Christians but those who are prepared to follow Him in the path of true discipleship.

Luke 9:23

And He was saying to them all,
“If anyone wishes to come after Me,
he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

In fellowship,
Kou