

The Tragedy of Success

by Herbert Henry Farmer

True fulfillment and happiness cannot be achieved by pursuing wealth and success based on wrong values.

Scripture: Matthew 6:2

Topics: "Wealth And Materialism", "Spiritual Fulfillment"

Description

Herbert Henry Farmer delves into the warning from Jesus about the dangers of placing value in earthly riches and pursuing worldly success. Jesus emphasizes that those who seek recognition for their piety or strive for material wealth may achieve their goals in this life, but ultimately miss the mark in God's eyes. The paradoxical insight reveals that while the consolations of riches may seem sweet and satisfying, they actually lead to spiritual woe and emptiness, as true fulfillment can only be found in God.

Transcript

"Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation"

(Luke 6:24).

To Jesus the terrible thing about having wrong values in life and pursuing wrong things, is not that you are doomed to bitter disappointment, but that you are not; not that you do not achieve what you want, but that you do. The way of these people, He says, is to be avoided, not because they are such miserable failures, but because, in their own way, they are such triumphant successes! They get exactly what they are out for. The person who is out to get a reputation for piety can get it, says Jesus. He blows a trumpet when he is about to give an alms, so that he may have glory of men, and he has his reward, and that is exactly why you must not copy him! The man who seeks the power and the comfort of affluence can get the power and comfort of affluence; he receives his good things during this present life, and he passes hence with his ambitions perfectly satisfied. But he is not to be envied for that reason--quite the contrary. This is his failure, that by his own standards, he succeeds. For there are consolations in riches, for those who have a mind that way. There are few troubles in life wealth cannot lighten and mitigate: and, in any case, if you have come to think, as many wealthy people unconsciously do think, that there is no disaster quite so bad as poverty, there is always some consolation in any trouble in reviewing your possessions. Jesus was too honest to pretend that the consolations of riches cannot be very real and very sweet, just as the pains of poverty can be very real and very bitter. But was the rich man to be congratulated on that account? Not for a moment. What piercing and paradoxical insight is this which says that such a man is really in woe, just at the very point when he is most conscious of being consoled, of being completely justified in his way of life?

Woe unto you rich, for ye have received your consolations! As though one should say, "My friend, your view of life's values is proved wrong by the fact that on experiment it has been proved right; your disaster is that you have had no disaster; your bankruptcy consists in the fact that you are absolutely solvent; your devastating failure is demonstrated by your victorious success. What you asked of life, life has given you. Woe to you!"

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