

Something to Ponder

Likely you have seen or heard some pointed discussions about “poor people” and “rich people” over the past few months of this election cycle. There are more than 300 verses in Scripture using the terms poor and/or rich but, interestingly, there is not a clear quantitative definition of these two words which we can apply in our culture. A man was said to be rich that had 3000 sheep and 1000 goats (I Sam. 25:2); the rich young ruler had great possessions (Matt. 19:22) and a man that had nothing except one little ewe lamb was said to be poor (II Sam. 12:3). Perhaps a working definition can be found from the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31.

What is God's view of the rich and poor? Does God have one standard for the poor and another for the rich? No! The Lord requires the same for all people, rich, poor and those in between. (Micah 6:8, Deut. 10:12-13). This is demonstrated in numerous examples in scripture. One example is the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. In this parable, God required the same level of accountability of all His servants and punished the servant who was given the least because he was wicked and lazy. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), the rich man was condemned because he did not use the blessing God had given him as he should. God requires more of both the rich and poor than how they manage their possessions.

Another point becomes clear from reading verses which include the words poor and rich. The importance isn't in whether we are poor or rich, but our attitudes toward such people and toward our own personal wealth. Job 34:19b reads, *Nor does He regard the rich more than the poor.* Paul writes to Timothy, *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy* (I Tim. 6:17).

We at Karns typically think of ourselves as neither rich nor poor and a discussion on the subject of rich and poor does not really apply to most of us. Before we dismiss the subject, it would be good to consider Jesus' description of the rich in Luke 16 as someone who has nice clothes, he and his family eat well each day, and someone who lives in a spacious house. Hmmm, that fits the description of just about everyone in the Karns congregation.

For the elders,
Don Denton